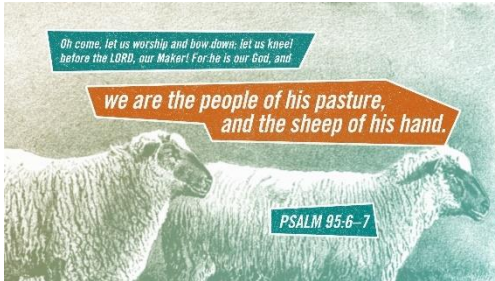


Victorious!

Our Victorious Good Shepherd

The Fourth Sunday in Easter



Dear brothers and sisters loved by the Good Shepherd: It is Good Shepherd Sunday. What a wonderfully comforting picture for us during these days. The Good Shepherd, Jesus, looks out over his flock, every one of the flock is on his heart, every one he knows by name. He cares for them. He fiercely protects them. This Shepherd doesn't slumber or sleep. More than that, he lays down his life for his sheep, for you and me! Jesus is our Good Shepherd.

The theme as you worship: Today we are reminded that our relationship with the Good Shepherd is all important. Either we follow him and listen to his voice and enjoy the "good life" he gives or we don't. God strengthen us to follow him and listen to his voice and in so doing, enjoy the full life he promises.

Announcements: There will be a live, online Bible Study at 11:15 AM EST this Sunday morning. If you haven't already, check it out, you can join in and just listen in or join the conversation. Continue to check the website for updates and resources such as:

On our website under Peace Membership Documents, if you haven't found it already, there are documents posted for Bible Study as well as... Minutes from recent Church council meetings.

A task force from our church is working on when and where we can gather again. Trinity Elementary is closed through the end of May and we have not heard if they will re-open in June. We hope to gather in May. It could be very soon. Continue to check our Facebook page and website for information on worship in the coming weeks. We realize some are ready to meet and still others may not be ready to gather again right away, we understand. Everyone is looking forward to gathering again soon this team is doing their best to take everything into account as we make these decisions.

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INVOCATION & PSALM 23

M: In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

M: The Lord is my shepherd

C: **I shall not be in want.**

M: He makes me lie down in green pastures;

C: **He leads me beside quiet waters.**

M: He restores my soul;

C: **He guides me paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**

M: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,

C: **for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

M: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

C: You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

M: Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,

C: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen.

CONFESSION

M: We have come into the presence of God, who is our Good Shepherd. And despite his goodness and mercy, we have often strayed from his paths of righteousness. We deserve his punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

C: Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.

ABSOLUTION

M: Upon this, your confession...God, our heavenly father has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.

C: Amen.

SONG

I Am Jesus' Little Lamb

♪ I am Jesus' little lamb;
Ever glad at heart I am,
For my shepherd gently guides me,
Knows my needs and well provides me,
Loves me ev'ry day the same,
Even calls me by my name.

2 Day by day, at home, away,
Jesus is my staff and stay.
When I hunger, Jesus feeds me,
Into pleasant pastures leads me;
When I thirst, he bids me go
Where the quiet waters flow.

3 Who so happy as I am,
Even now the shepherd's lamb?
And when my short life is ended,
By his angel hosts attended,
He shall fold me to his breast,
There within his arms to rest.

Text: Henrietta L. von Hayn, 1724–82; tr. composite.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

M: Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Good Shepherd who laid down your life for the sheep. Lead us now to the still waters of your life-giving Word that we may abide in your Father's house forevermore; for you live and reign with him and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

THE FIRST LESSON

Acts 6:1-9, 7:2a,51-60

We hear about more shepherds designated to care for Christ's flock. And Stephen's story teaches us to hold on to Christ no matter what the consequence.

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

⁵This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Stephen Seized

⁸Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen.

To this he replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me!...⁵¹ "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵² Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him—⁵³ you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it."

The Stoning of Stephen

⁵⁴ When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

⁵⁷ At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ⁵⁸ dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

⁵⁹ While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep. ¹

THE SECOND LESSON

Hebrews 13:20-21

Only in Christ Jesus do we find the gate to peace with God, only in the power of his resurrection are we equipped for doing his will.

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, ²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. ²

SONG

The King of Love My Shepherd Is

♪ **The King of love my shepherd is, Whose goodness fails me never;
I nothing lack if I am his, And he is mine forever.**

**2 Where streams of living water flow, My Savior gently leads me;
And where the verdant pastures grow, With food celestial feeds me.**

**3 Confused and foolish oft I strayed, But yet in love he sought me
And on his shoulder gently laid And home, rejoicing, brought me.**

**4 In death’s dark vale I fear no ill With you, dear Lord, beside me;
Your rod and staff my comfort still, Your cross before to guide me.**

**5 You spread a table in my sight, A banquet here bestowing;
Your oil of welcome, my delight; My cup is overflowing!**

**6 And so through all the length of days Your goodness fails me never.
Good Shepherd, may I sing your praise Within your house forever!**

Text: Henry W. Baker, 1821–77, alt.

THE GOSPEL

John 10:1-10

The Gospel according to John, chapter 10. (This will be the basis for our message today. I’d encourage you to have your Bible open to John chapter 10)

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” ⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be

¹ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Ac 6:1-9; 7:2a; 7:51–60). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

² [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Heb 13:20–21). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the Good Shepherd. The shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.³

M: This is the gospel of the Lord.

THE MESSAGE

John 10:1-10

Theme: *Our Victorious Good Shepherd*

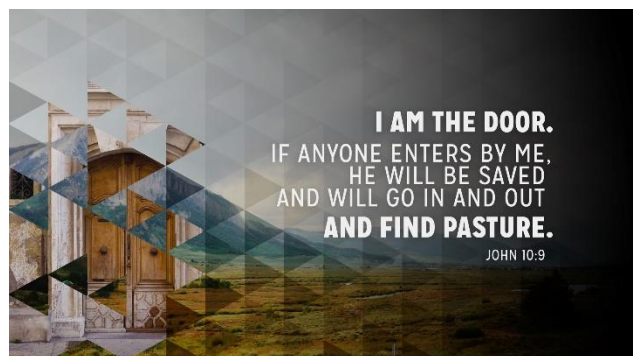
If you have your Bible open... What Jesus is saying in John 10 reiterates what just happened in John 9. A man born blind did the only thing he could do. What else could he do? He heard him say, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." He listened to Jesus' voice. He went and he washed and his eyes were opened. The Pharisees didn't want more people to listen to Jesus' voice. They went to question him. The formally blind man recognized the Pharisees were the ones with a strange spiritually off base. They said to him "We are disciples of Moses, but this fellow, we don't know where he comes from" the Pharisees told him ... The man replied, "Isn't that strange...If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." In other words, he recognized the Pharisees to be a strange spiritual voice. What they were saying didn't jive with what Jesus said and did. The Pharisees then throw him out of the temple. But no matter. Jesus finds the man formally blind later that day. Jesus opens his eyes to something even more amazing. He sees Jesus for who he is, the Messiah, his Savior! Three key things, He listened to Jesus' voice, he recognized the voice of a stranger, he came to realization of something amazing in Jesus his Savior.

It is on the heels of this story that Jesus then begins to talk about being the Good Shepherd. We will see again that Jesus wants his sheep to listen, to not listen to the voices that spiritually lead us astray, he wants our eyes open to see that in him is something quite amazing. Jesus calls it the full life.

Lets dig in to John chapter 10.

"Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way is a thief and robber" (:1) The Pharisees had just showed that they were trying to enter into the sheep pen, the kingdom of God, another way. They were trying to enter apart from Jesus. They were desperate to disparage Jesus and the man he had healed. They were desperate to climb into the sheep pen through their outward actions. They don't want to enter through the gate. They want to build a ladder with their good deeds to get into heaven.

Later in verse 7 and verse 9 Jesus says he is the gate or door. But when you hear him say that he is the gate, think of a doorway, an open doorway. An open doorway invites us to go through it. Think of an open doorway in a museum. It invites you go through it, see what is next. Jesus is the open door for all go in and out of God's kingdom. Through Jesus the Pharisees would find that all the promises of God were fulfilled: the promises that God would send a prophet like Moses, someone who would intercede for God's people, the promises of souls being washed clean, as white as



³ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Jn 10:1–11). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

snow, the promise of the shroud or covering of death that hangs over all humanity, being removed – it was all done in Christ and faith in Christ.

The Pharisees didn't want to enter the kingdom of God through Christ. As long as they rejected Jesus they were doomed to an exhausting life, a life constructing their ladder with their holy deeds to get to God. They would be burdened with having to climb into heaven by keeping the law of Moses. They would come toppling down in the end and it would be to their undoing.

Doesn't it still happen today in the world? People try to climb into the kingdom of God with a variety of ladders they construct. Maybe it is their works, maybe it is their charity, maybe we, we find some assurance in some religious experience we've had. Maybe we tend to think our Bible knowledge is enough. Maybe we take pride in our charity our good life compared to others. The bottom line is, no one gets in by constructing their own ladder and climbing up to God. To try to ascend to God is spiritual madness. It is exhausting and it will end in our doom.

No one gets into God's kingdom by climbing up...It is God who comes down to us. All the way down. He goes to the manger. He stoops down to the lowly, the sinner, the poor in spirit, he forgives. He saw that the Law of Moses demanded perfection and he was able to provide that perfection. Then the holy and innocent Son of God was willing to take our punishment for sin. Jesus willingly took on himself the punishment we deserved. He is willing to die the most degrading death of all, on a cross, forsaken by his Father, and he is laid in the dust of the earth, in the grave. How much lower could he have reached.

We wandering and wayward sheep surely didn't deserve such love and sacrifice. But it was all for us! His sinless life is for us. His death was in our place.

So throw away the ladders you've tried to construct, you know what those ladders are, things you've constructed in your mind that get you to God. Throw them away. Jesus' invitation to enter through the door is right here, with us, at our level, we need not ascend to him. Every time he speaks to you in his Word he is calling you by name, "Child, enter into a relationship with God through me, stay with me, I clothe you in righteousness and I bring you safely before the Father's throne. I am the door to eternal life, you will be blessed beyond belief."

We've seen that Jesus is the gate, through him and him alone, we enter into the kingdom of God. But you might have noticed that Jesus mixes metaphors throughout these 11 verses. That is because just one metaphor won't do the trick when it comes to describing Jesus our Savior. He is also our shepherd who leads us with his voice, we follow him. We follow him because he leads us in and out to find pasture. Notice, he leads us. He doesn't drive us. He gently leads with his voice.

What does it say in verse 9? They will go in and they will go out. You enter into a relationship with God through faith in Christ Jesus. Those with faith in Christ will then go out in the name of Christ, they will go and live for God and serve others without the burden of having to be good enough for God. They are free to love and serve and obey God's commands. They will go out into the world to serve God and neighbor without constantly worrying if they are good enough for God's sheep pen.

Listen to the voice of Jesus your Good Shepherd. His voice is leading you to all that you need. He leads you into pasture. You can say with the Psalmist, "I shall not be in want." You often hear leaders telling us during this COVID-19 crisis they are going to be "data driven." In other words, they are going to look at the statistics to make their decisions. That is not how your Savior Jesus treats you, sheep in his flock. He looks over you and sees your fears, your pains, your rebellion and brokenness. He doesn't condemn you, he loves you and embraces us. Is 40:11, "He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart."

He sees the predators that threaten us, he sees the death and disease around us, the heartache and hurt that threaten to overwhelm us. In Bible times the shepherd is said to have spent the night in the gateway of the sheep pen. By doing this predators could not get in and the sheep couldn't wander out. Jesus our Good Shepherd stands between us and our enemies and promises, "Fear not, I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters (i.e. trials of life) I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you" (Isaiah 43:1).

Those two passages tell us we have gentle, tender, caring Savior who is also powerful. He is powerful enough to protect us in the times of trouble and lead us safely to our home in heaven. Isaiah shatters any notion that this shepherd can't protect and care for us. Right after he says he is a gentle shepherd he says this Good Shepherd, "has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens, he has held the dust of the earth in a basket and weighed the mountains on scales (Is 40:12). He goes on later to say that this God is the one who nightly puts the huge stars in their place, not one is missing or lost.

But perhaps his greatest act of humility and love and power was when he laid down his life for his wayward and wandering sheep. He lets the jaws of death chomp down on him on Good Friday. Then Easter Sunday morning he is alive and well of his own power and might. The chains of death are gone. This Good Shepherd is someone you can put your trust in. The words of the Psalmist are true, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want, he makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters." (Psalm 23:1).

It is a picture of complete contentment and peace. This is the full life that Jesus alludes to in John 10:10. "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (or another translation is "abundant") (:10b). Do you have the full or abundant life? The question is, what exactly is the full, the abundant life that Jesus is talking about here?

We tend to define the full or abundant life by those things we have or don't have in our life. But the things Jesus wants to give us are more than just physical things. In fact, the word that is used for "life" here is not the word describing our physical life, but our spiritual life. The Christian life is more than food and clothing and shelter, God wants to give us so much more.

What does God want to give us? Perhaps there is no better place to find what God wants to give us than in the Lord's Prayer. There we have Jesus telling us what we lack, what we ought to pray for... and it so happens that the things we lack, are exactly the things he wants to give us. He gives us a relationship with our dear father in heaven so we can pray to him boldly and confidently, he brings us into his kingdom of God through the forgiveness of sins and gives us the power to forgive those who sin against us. He teaches us to say in good times and bad, "Thy will be done." He protects us in times of temptation and delivers us from the evil one. Only in one short part of the prayer do we pray for food, clothing or shelter, "Give us today our daily bread." The rest are all spiritual things that we lack and God gives through Jesus...

To have these things (prayer, forgiveness, protection) is the abundant life, the full life. The contrast Jesus is making here isn't between the good but kind of boring life vs. the fun/eventful life by following him. The contrast that Jesus is making in verse 10 is that of death and life. The devil tries to trick us into thinking that Jesus is going to ruin our life. The devil tries to convince us that God's laws and God's gifts are going to steal life, rather than support life. The devil wants us to believe that real freedom is apart from Jesus. He convinces many, "Do what feels right and you will have real life, do you what you want and you will enjoy real freedom." His freedom is the worst kind of slavery.

Instead, the full life, abundant life, is nothing other than knowing Christ Jesus and his Word. His Word that tells us he didn't leave us in our sin, instead he takes it on himself. He gave his life for us on the cross. A full life is not the absence of sickness, sorrow and crosses that we bear. It is the peace of knowing through the sickness, the sorrows, the crosses we bear, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you are with me."

The full life, the abundant life is found when we are in faith in Christ. Think about it. What is seemingly the worst thing the devil can do to us? Take our life? Now, because of Jesus' death and resurrection, even the moment God calls us out of this life is a gift from God, we open our eyes to see Jesus. We say with Paul, "It would be better to be with Jesus by far." The devil wants to persecute us through mockery or even physical persecution and what do Jesus' followers do? They rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus. We say with Paul again, "Consider it pure joy my brothers when you persecuted." No matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, again we say with Paul, "For me to live is Christ." Nothing of this world, nothing that we gain in this life will ever compare to the peace I have in Jesus. In Christ Jesus I have it all. Whether life on this earth is long or short, The Lord is my Shepherd and that is enough. Amen.

APOSTLES CREED⁴

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

OFFERING

"If the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have" (II Corinthians 8:12). God wants us to give in proportion to what he has given us. This is proportional or percentage giving.

Peace Lutheran offers a secure Give by Text option. To donate via text, send the dollar amount you wish to give, including a dollar sign, to 888-314-2975. Example: \$40. You will receive a secure registration link.

THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: O Lord God, we thank you for the wondrous gift of Jesus Christ your Son and for all the promised graces we have received through him: that in his obedience to death on the cross we have been granted cleansing pardon for all our sins; that in his resurrection we have the promise of life everlasting; and that in his ascension to the right hand of your majesty we have the assurance of his intercession for our every need.

Help us that we may so truly believe and trust in him, and so faithfully love and serve him, that in all thought, speech and action we may imitate his obedience and humility. Rebuke our selfishness and subdue our self-indulgence. Enlarge our sympathies, deepen our hope, and confirm us in faith.

Dwell in our homes, O Lord, and let the trust of our families be centered in you alone that no difficulty, trial or adversity shall be able to daunt them or take from them the conviction that you are their helper in every time of need. Relieve the afflictions of the weary and sick, and dry the tears of the troubled and sorrowful. Lead them to look to you as the unfailing spring of all healing and hope.

⁴ Public confession of what we believe is faith's response to God's saving Word. Today we confess the Apostles' Creed.

To you, O Lord, we bring our thanks and our private requests...*Silent Prayer*.

All these things, and whatever else we should have asked, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

CLOSING SONG (ESPECIALLY LOVE THE LAST VERSE...)

How Firm a Foundation

♪ How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus hath fled.

"Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen thee, help thee and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand."

"When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress."

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"

"Throughout all their lifetime my people shall prove
My sov'reign, eternal, unchangeable love,
And then, when gray hair shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still on my shoulders be borne."

Text: Henry W. Baker, 1821–77, alt.

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and ✝ give you peace.

C: Amen.

FRUITS OF FAITH

Cumulative gifts given in April 2020:	\$20,262
Budgetary funds needed for April 2020:	\$14,056
Cumulative gifts given in March 2020:	\$14,019
Budgetary funds needed for March 2020:	\$14,056
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Total cong. commitment for "Building Peace for the Future":	\$159,942
Total gifts and pledges received to date:	\$162,054