

## April 21, 2024 – Fourth Sunday of Easter

www.GloriaDeiWinnipeg.org

### **Introduction**

The image of the good shepherd shows us how the risen Christ brings us to life. It is the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, one of mutual knowledge and love, that gives the shepherd authority. The shepherd's willingness to lay down his life for the sheep shows his love. First John illustrates what it means to lay down our lives for one another by the example of sharing our wealth with any sibling in need.

### **Prayer of the Day**

O Lord Christ, good shepherd of the sheep, you seek the lost and guide us into your fold. Feed us, and we shall be satisfied; heal us, and we shall be whole. Make us one with you, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **First Reading: Acts 4:5-12**

<sup>5</sup>The next day [the] rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, <sup>6</sup>with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. <sup>7</sup>When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" <sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup>if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup>let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. <sup>11</sup>This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.'

<sup>12</sup>There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

### **Psalm 23**

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not <sup>1</sup> be in want.

<sup>2</sup>**The LORD makes me lie down in green pastures  
and leads me beside still waters.**

<sup>3</sup>You restore my soul, O LORD,  
and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>**Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil;  
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

<sup>6</sup>**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

### **Second Reading: 1 John 3:16-24**

<sup>16</sup>We know love by this, that [Jesus Christ] laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. <sup>17</sup>How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

<sup>18</sup>Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. <sup>19</sup>And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him <sup>20</sup>whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. <sup>21</sup>Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; <sup>22</sup>and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

<sup>23</sup>And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. <sup>24</sup>All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

### **Gospel: John 10:11-18**

[Jesus said:] <sup>11</sup>“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup>The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. <sup>14</sup>I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup>just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup>I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. <sup>17</sup>For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. <sup>18</sup>No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

## Prayers of Intercession

Rejoicing that Jesus is risen and love has triumphed over fear, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need of good news.

*A brief silence.*

Shepherding God, gather your church whenever we wander from you and one another. Empower our church in ministries around the world to worship and serve alongside global companions as equal partners and coworkers in the gospel. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Nurturing God, preserve the health of biomes and ecosystems. Inspire scientists, researchers, conservation organizations, and all people entrusted with the task of caring for creation, that we may be better stewards of the world around us. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, lead nations and communities to share resources, cooperate in solving conflicts, and listen to the wisdom of Indigenous peoples. Help all those with power to share it and to use such power for good. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God, protect the very young and the very old, those living without housing, victims of domestic abuse, and all who live with chronic illness or compromised immune systems. Guide communities to actively care for people who are vulnerable. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, help this and all communities of faith to listen for your voice. Call us away from things that distract us from following you. Invite us to more deeply love and serve people who are lonely, isolated, and on the margins. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Living God, we give thanks for our ancestors in faith. Strengthen us to share the good news in our own day. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, most merciful God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abiding love; through Jesus Christ, our resurrected and living Lord.

**Amen.**

## **A reflection for this Fourth Sunday of Easter**

### **Life Laid Down**

How does faith in the risen Christ call one to live? What shape does one's life take?

The readings for this fourth Sunday of Easter are rich in their imagery, and at the center is the image of the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. Five times in eight short verses Jesus mentions laying down his life for the sake of the sheep.

The First Letter of John picks up the same theme: "We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" (1 John 3:16-17). Laying down one's life for another might take many forms, but it at least means this: extending help, as much as you are able, when another is in need.

A friend tells the story of her grandfather, a faithful man who earned a modest income. Each year when tax time rolled around, he was audited. According to tax records he earned so little and gave away so much. The astounded auditors questioned him, wondering why he gave so much of his income to the church. Incredulous, he responded, "You can't outgive God."

The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, and joined to the risen life of Christ, the lives of the baptized are shaped by generosity and sacrifice. Giving one's life, resources, gifts, or whatever one holds most dear for the sake of another is both a witness to the love we have first been shown and an act of faith. Hearing Jesus' words in this Easter season reminds us that laying down one's life is not an act to be feared; rather, it is an act that defies death, as we trust that, washed in the waters of baptism, we already live in the resurrected life of Christ.



**Gloria Dei**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH