

The Fourth Sunday of Easter YEAR C April 17, 2016

INTRODUCTIONS

The celebration of life continues, this week with a story from the early church of Tabitha being raised from death, and with Jesus proclaiming himself as the Shepherd whose sheep know his voice and who find life in him. There is comfort here for all who are wrestling with the forces of death, however big or small, in their lives.

May you continue to know the life of Easter in your worship this week.

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

The First Reading - Acts 9: 36-43 or Numbers 27: 12-23

Acts 9 : 36-43

After the resurrection, the disciples found themselves filled with the same teaching and healing power of Jesus himself. Peter's gifts were such that, like his Master, he miraculously brought the dead back to life.

The Psalm - Psalm 23

The Second Reading - Revelation 7: 9-17

In John's vision of heaven, God has gathered people from all over the world. They are free of all pain and sorrow, brought into the presence of God through the work of Jesus.

The Gospel Reading - John 10: 22-30

During Jesus's human lifetime, most people did not perceive him to be the expected Messiah. In this reading, as so often, Jesus points to the things he does as signs of who he is. To those who see, and follow, there is his promise of eternal life.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Acts%209:%2036-43%0A%2BOR%0ANumbers%2027:%2012-23%0Acw%20Psalm%2023%0ARevelation%207:%209-17%0AJohn%2010:%2022-30

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Almighty God,
who showest to them that be in error
the light of thy truth,
to the intent that they may return
into the way of righteousness;
Grant unto all them that are admitted
into the fellowship of Christ's Religion,
that they may eschew those things
that are contrary to their profession,
and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Collect Two

Almighty God,
whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life:
Raise us, who trust in him,
from the death of sin to the life of righteousness,
that we may seek those things which are above,
where he reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Presider or deacon

Gathered before the throne of the Lamb, let us pray for the needs of the flock of God throughout the world.

Deacon or other leader

For the holy churches in every place, and for the unity of all.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For this holy assembly
and for all who gather in the name of the risen Christ.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For NN and all illumined by the light of Christ.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For N our bishop and the presbyters,
the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the world and its leaders, our nation and its people.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all those in danger and need, the sick and the suffering, the strayed and the lost.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For those who walk in death's dark valley.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

Remembering Saint *Name of parish church*, and all the saints,
let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

Presider

Blessed are you, God our Father, whose Son lay down his life to take it up again. Hear the prayers we offer for every need, and make us one through your Holy Spirit; through

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Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Lord, we ask for the courage of the Good Shepherd,
who lays down his life for his sheep.

We pray for those prepared to suffer
and even to die for what they believe in.

We pray for those whose lives and rights are sacrificed
in the name of power and greed.

We pray for those who risk themselves
by accompanying others along paths of deep suffering,
through valleys of fear and despair.

Lord we ask for the compassion of the good shepherd
who leads his sheep to safe pasture.

We pray for those who work to feed and shelter and educate
the poor peoples of our world.

We pray for those skilled at nursing and healing
those who are suffering or ill In body, mind or spirit.

We pray for those who care, for the victims of our society,
those unable to cope with life, the neglected, the abused.

Lord, we ask for the love of the Good Shepherd
who knows his sheep by name.

We pray for our church, for minister and office bearers,
for its preachers and teachers and all engaged in pastoral care.

We pray for those we know,
relatives or friends who are facing difficult times.

(Silence)

We pray for ourselves
that we might hear the call from our Good Shepherd
and follow his way of love.

We make all our prayers in Christ's name. **Amen.**

— from *Companion to the Lectionary*, Volume 4, by Christine Odell.

POST COMMUNION

Merciful Father,
you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd,
and in his love for us to lay down his life and rise again.
Keep us always under his protection,
and give us grace to follow in his steps;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

Let us pray (in silence) [that we hear and follow Christ the Good Shepherd]

pause

God of peace,
by the blood of the eternal covenant
you brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep;
make us perfect in every good work,
and work in us that which is pleasing and good;
through Jesus Christ [to whom be glory for ever and ever]
(who is alive with with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and for ever.). Amen.

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people:
Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who
calls us each by name, and follow where he leads;
who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

God of comfort and compassion,
through Jesus, your Son, you lead us
to the water of life and table of your bounty.
May we who have received
the tender love of our Good Shepherd
be strengthened by your grace
to care for your flock. Amen.

Almighty and ever-living God,
give us new strength
from the courage of Christ our shepherd,
and lead us to join the saints in heaven. Amen.

Good shepherd, who leads us beside still waters and into green pastures, be close to us in
our gathering today. May we feed on your word, know your protection and be sustained by
your Spirit, this day and all days. Amen

God of love
You care for us as shepherd,
leading us to fresh pasture and living water.
You care for us as Father,
drawing those you love close into your embrace.
You care for us as Saviour,
forgiving all who draw near to you in faith.
You care for us as Lord and King,

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bringing us into the heart of your kingdom.
God of love,
accept this sacrifice of praise,
and the service of our lives,
this day and all days. Amen

When we stray from the path you choose for us,
distracted by the promise of better days,
tempted by the scenery around us
searching for a different way.
forgive us.
Show us the better way;
walking in your steady footsteps,
listening to your voice which calls us,
feeding on your Word which nourishes,
living our lives in grateful service. Amen

Praise and honour,
glory and power,
belong to our God
for ever and ever.
Accept the offering of our praise,
our thankfulness
for all that you have done for us.
Accept the service of our lives,
our sacrifice
and all that we might do this day.
Praise and honour,
glory and power,
belong to our God
for ever and ever. Amen

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Beyond Death's Reach

Psalm 23; Acts 9:36-43; Revelation 7:9-17; John 10:22-30

The world believes that we are finally in the grip of death. We spend our frightened energy trying to stay young and be healthy. We use our money to secure our existence. We work frantically to establish our worth. We are propelled by fearfulness that evokes violence and produces policies of aggression and militarism.

Against that, these texts assert Jesus offers a way of "eternal life" that puts us out of the reach of deathliness. By "eternal life" the church means the full and final establishment of our worth, our identity, and our destiny in God's rule.

The readings mediate on God's power for life. Psalm 23 voices confidence in the protector who "restores my life" in the danger zones of hostility and threat. God leads "beside still waters," an image picked up at the end of the great doxology in Revelation 7:17, where the good shepherd will finally prevail.

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Between the ancient psalm and the sweeping doxology is the story of Peter restoring life to Dorcas. In his utterance, Peter reiterates the earlier command of Jesus in Mark 5:41 (Acts 9:40). This sequence of texts attests that God has entrusted to the church the capacity to defy death and evoke life. Imagine a world peopled by those unafraid of death. Those who join this narrative may cease to be “arms dealers” and become gift givers who share the water of life.

By Walter Brueggemann

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The season of resurrection continues, and this week is brought together with the ‘Shepherd’ metaphor, which appears in three of the four readings. The two underlying messages that emerge appear to be: 1) In Christ life is to be found even in the face of death – from Peter’s raising of Tabitha, to the Psalmists confidence of travelling through the valley of the shadow of death to finally dwell in God’s house, to the heavenly gathering of those who have died as martyrs in the persecution of the church, to Jesus’ promise that his sheep receive eternal life from him, this message is clear. 2) The Shepherd is also a messianic, and a subversive, image. Where the leaders of Israel had failed to be faithful shepherds, and where the Roman Empire had slaughtered followers (sheep) of Christ, Jesus stands as the one who has died but has risen – defying the death-dealing powers that be, and winning life and security for his sheep.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: The last few years have left the world reeling in shock, from the repeated impact of natural disasters, to revelations of corruption in many governments, to ongoing wars in Africa, the Middle East, Iraq and Afghanistan, to the growing concern about climate change, to the economic crisis. In the midst of all of this bad news, the message of resurrection is both a comfort and a call to remain strong and courageous in working for a more just and peaceful world. In addition, this week’s readings speak a prophetic message to those in any kind of leadership, challenging them to be true, life-giving shepherds, and calling us to hold them accountable, while retaining our primary allegiance to Jesus as the one true Shepherd.

LOCAL APPLICATION: The dual theme of this week is an invitation to Christian communities and individuals to enter more fully, and more practically, into the Easter journey. On the one hand, we all face the threat of death – the big deaths of loss of loved ones or personal tragedy, and the small ones of broken relationships or difficult life circumstances – and we need to be reminded that life is found in the midst of death. The comfort this message offers is also a call to keep faith, to continue to strive to live in compassionate and life-giving ways, and to live our own leadership – as parents, educators, business or community leaders – as good shepherds, providing, protecting and guiding those under our care. Ultimately, when justice fails in any community, it is both a crisis of leadership and a crisis of faith. The resurrection addresses both needs, and gives us the resources we need to engage the hurting places in our world.

SERMON OUTLINE

John 10:22-30 It was winter...

In Jesus’ time the magnificent Herod’s Temple was the showpiece of the Temple Mount, but today the Muslim Dome of the Rock occupies that space – the Temple having been destroyed by the Romans in the siege by Titus in AD70... Here we see Jesus...

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1. Walking about – the Temple compound 22-23: ²³ *Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon* – probably in the shelter because it was winter – **25th Kislev** = December - the time of *the festival of the Dedication* – **Hannukkah** – **festival of lights** – celebrating the rededication of the Temple after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168BC & his defeat by Judas Maccabaeus

2. Wondering about - the Messiah 24: So the Jews gathered around him & said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' For 3 years they had watched him – listened to him but couldn't make up their minds..

They celebrated the great event in Jewish history – but missed the greatest – the coming of the Messiah...!

3. Witnessing about – the Father 25-31: HIS Father in heaven...

a) Messiahship - *'I have told you, and you do not believe.*

b) Miracles - *The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; ²⁶but you do not believe – Why? you do not belong to my sheep.*

They remained outside the fold of faith – their choice/failure... **i) the sheep to whom he refers** - ²⁷*My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me* – He is *the Good Shepherd v1*

ii) the salvation which he offers - ²⁸*I give them eternal life, & they will never perish* - what a wonderful gift to the faithful! Jn 3.16

1. the Guarantee - *No one will snatch them out of my hand* – We are "safe in the arms of Jesus" – *the Good Shepherd...*

2. the Gift -²⁹*What my Father has given me is greater than all else, & no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. ³⁰The Father & I are one.'* – **hen = united in purpose** – the salvation of the world

By Norman Porteous

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"[There Is Something About That Name,](http://day1.org/1892-there-is-something-about-that-name)" the Rev. Dr. Royeese Stowe, *Day 1*
<http://day1.org/1892-there-is-something-about-that-name>

"[Noticed, Named and Nurtured,](http://day1.org/1040-noticed-named-and-nurtured)" The Rev. Elizabeth Mitchell Clement, *Day 1*
<http://day1.org/1040-noticed-named-and-nurtured>

"[Raising the Dead, Shepherding God's Sheep,](http://day1.org/4748-raising-the-dead-shepherding-gods-sheep)" the Rev. Dr. Donald Fishburne
<http://day1.org/4748-raising-the-dead-shepherding-gods-sheep>

"[Hearing the Voice of the Good Shepherd on Earth Day,](http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2013/04/06/4-easter-c-2013/)" Frederica Helmiere, *Sermons that Work*
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2013/04/06/4-easter-c-2013/>

CHILDREN

Worshiping with Children, Easter 4C, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/year-c-fourth-sunday-of-easter-april-21.html>

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"Giggling with God," On the Chancel Steps, children's resources by Frances Woodruff
<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2013/04/07/giggling/>

"Sermon of the Week," Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles.
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity, at word-sunday.com: A Catholic Resource for the Lectionary by Larry Broding.
<http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

The King Of Love My Shepherd Is
Saviour, Like A Shepherd Lead Us
The Lord's My Shepherd
Abide With Me
Never Let My Hunger Die
Blessed Be Your Name (YouTube video)
Always Forever (YouTube video)
Your Grace Is Enough (YouTube video)