

THE LIVING  
WORD  
OF  
EASTER

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

April 23 - April 29



# SEASON OF EASTER

## *Fourth Sunday of Easter*

Sheep have a bit of a reputation as dumb creatures. They aren't great at leading themselves, they can get tangled up in all sorts of situations, and they're prone to wander off. Worse still, in Jesus' time there were all sort of dangers to sheep: heat, years of unending drought, rocky and perilous terrain, dust storms, thieves, and more. Combine that particular animal with that type of wilderness and tragedy is always lurking at the door.

The Gospel text that anchors this week's readings is a beautiful picture of Christ our shepherd. He calls us and we recognize his voice. He calls us into the safety of his pen and he lays across the entrance, his own body the gate. He is the one who controls who goes in. And, in contrast to the thief who comes to steal and kill and destroy, our shepherd gives us an abundant, good life. (A snapshot of that good life is shown to us in the reading from Acts 2, which describes a thriving community.)

And yet, as the hymn "Be Thou My Vision" reminds us, we sheep are prone to wander. Maybe we bolt whenever we experience suffering (see 1 Peter 2). Maybe we are tempted by the false promises of other pens. Maybe we think life with Jesus is too restrictive and forget that he offers both provision and protection. (Think of the abundant green pastures described in Psalm 23. What a vision for people living in a land marked by harsh wilderness and drought.)

Our readings this week center on the theme of shepherds—both God as our our good shepherd, but also other leaders, like Moses in the Old Testament. Moses was a great leader who was called the shepherd of Israel. In Exodus 2 and 3 we see the start of his call to lead God's people. (It is not uncommon in the Old Testament for God to call leaders who have experience in shepherding.) And Psalm 23 is probably the most well-known text on the Lord as our shepherd.



***As you read this week, ask yourself where you are most prone to wander. Are there other pastures or other shepherds that you tend to want to follow? How have you experienced both protection and provision from God? What about Jesus as a shepherd comforts you?***

Ezekiel 34 reminds us of the call to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind the injured, bring back strays, and search for the lost. How can you join God in this work this week?



## **FOR** reflection

***What are the ways that God has prepared a table for you when you were in need? How can you thank God for his provision this week?***



# SCRIPTURE

## READINGS FOR THE WEEK

<b>Thursday</b>	Psalm 23; Exodus 2:15b-25; 1 Peter 2:9-12
<b>Friday</b>	Psalm 23; Exodus 3:16-22, 4:18-20; 1 Peter 2:13-17
<b>Saturday</b>	Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Luke 15:1-7
<b>Sunday</b>	Psalm 23; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10
<b>Monday</b>	Psalm 100; Ezekiel 34:17-23; 1 Peter 5:1-5
<b>Tuesday</b>	Psalm 100; Ezekiel 34:23-31; Hebrews 13:20-21
<b>Wednesday</b>	Psalm 100; Jeremiah 23:1-8; Matthew 20:17-28

### ***Why do the daily readings begin on Thursday?***

The daily readings for each week begin on Thursday and end on the following Wednesday. The Thursday through Saturday readings prepare the reader for the Sunday ahead. The Monday through Wednesday readings reflect on what was presented on Sunday.

# The Morning Liturgy

## **Opening Scripture**

If you then be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

*Colossians 3:1*

## **Opening Prayer** (based on Psalm 51)

Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Give me the joy of your saving help again and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. *Amen.*

## **Scripture Reading** (read Psalm and Gospel text here)

## **Period of Silence**

## **Confessing Our Faith** (Apostles' Creed)

## **The Lord's Prayer**

## **The Collect** (Fourth Sunday of Easter)

*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, forever and ever.*

*Amen.*

## A Midday Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, “Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you.” Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly City, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and forever. *Amen.*

## An Early Evening Prayer

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. *Amen.*

## A Bedtime Confession and Prayer

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, spare thou those who confess their faults, restore thou those who are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord; and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name. *Amen.*

*Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and let your blessing be upon us always; through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*





