

Sunday, May 3, 2020 Easter 4

From Pastor Stephen, Zion Lutheran Church

Welcome:

Apart from each other but still together in Christ, we worship today in this fourth week of the Easter season.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Prayer:

Gracious and tender-hearted God, your beloved one is our Good Shepherd, and he leads us on the Path of Life. May we always listen to his voice and gladly follow him where he leads, for where our Lord leads we can go with faithful confidence and joy. **Amen.**

Readings:

Acts 2:42-47

Psalm 23

John 10:1-5

Homily:

My Great-Grandfather was a shepherd in Scotland when he was a young lad. He detested and despised sheep, calling them turkeys with fur. They were, in his opinion, the dumbest creatures on the face of the earth and he detested them.

His favourite joke was, “What do you call lamb for dinner?” “Revenge”, he would say, with a great smile. He was, for all accounts, a very bad shepherd. He simply did not care for his sheep. He also thought that Psalm 23, The Lord is my Shepherd, never told the entire truth about sheep - nor did it mention that shepherding was a rather thankless task.

He was quick to point out that the sheep in the 23rd psalm had to be led to still waters because drinking from a river was not in their skill set. He also noted that sheep could get lost simply by eating and not watching where they were going.

On this Fourth Sunday of Easter, often called Good Shepherd Sunday, we always read or sing Psalm 23 – The Lord is My Shepherd. Besides the Christmas story from Saint Luke, the 23rd psalm is probably the best known passage of scripture among Christians. Perhaps it is because it reminds us how much God loves us in Christ our Lord and how far God is willing to go to hold us in love and mercy. It reminds us that God refuses to let go of us, let us wander away, or let us perish in the wilderness.

In our reading from the Acts of the Apostles’ today we hear how our Lord shepherds us into a community where we care for each other...and where our greatest treasure is to share Christ’s life and his presence among us...living gracious and generous lives that are a reflection of Christ’s compassion and love.

Our Lord is the Good Shepherd because he is so patient and kind. He shepherds us from despair to hope, from fear to trust, from death to life. And we hear his voice and we follow him, not without his constant care and attention, but because of the tenderhearted love that comes from the heart of our Good Shepherd.

May we cherish all that Christ our Lord has done for us and continues to do for us as he gently leads us on the Path of Life. Eager to hear his voice and follow him, we will confidently go wherever he leads, and trust forever in his tender-hearted kindness - for he is indeed our Good Shepherd and we are the sheep of his pasture, lambs led by his voice and carried in his arms. **Amen.**

Prayers of the Faithful:

Gracious God, bring your healing touch to our world plagued by disease and despair. Watch over all who struggle with illness or adversity in this difficult time. Grant wisdom and skill to all who work on treatments and vaccines. Help us be patient and caring during this time of uncertainty and fear. Hold us in your mercy and keep us in your love... Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all our loved ones who we cannot be with in this Easter season. We pray for all in our parish and community who are ill, or who are struggling in body, mind, or spirit... Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who mourn and for all in Nova Scotia who grieve for family and friends. Bring comfort to their hearts and peace in the midst of their great sorrow... Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who do work that now endangers them as they for our basic needs. Watch over them and bless their holy work... Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Help us look forward to the future, for wherever you lead us we will go trusting in your mercy and compassion... Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gathering all our prayers into one, we pray the prayer our Lord taught us...Our Father, who art in Heaven...

May Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us always in the Risen Life of Christ our Lord. **Amen.**