

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY
30 April – The Fourth Sunday of Easter

HYMNS: 105 387 604 320 287 602

INTROIT: Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd. I shall not lack anything.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me to water where there is quiet.

He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of deep darkness, I shall fear no evil. For You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows.

Surely, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

COLLECT: Almighty God, merciful Father, since You have wakened from death the Shepherd of Your sheep, grant us Your Holy Spirit that, when we hear the voice of our Shepherd, we may know Him who calls us each by name and follow where He leads; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Welcome to all worshipping with us today!

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaalc@gmail.com.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

READINGS: Acts 2:42-47 The growth of the church at Jerusalem.

1 Peter 2:19-25 The Shepherd of your souls.

John 10:1-10 I am the Door for the sheep.

Acts 2:42-47

⁴² They continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles and in the fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and in the prayers. ⁴³ Fear came on everyone, and many wonders and miraculous signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and shared everything with one another. ⁴⁵ They used to sell their possessions and goods and divide them among them all, as anyone was in need. ⁴⁶ All were one at heart as they continued to go to the Temple every day. They used to break bread from house to house and eat their food with glad and generous hearts. ⁴⁷ They kept praising God and had the good will of all the people. Every day the Lord kept adding together those who were being saved.

1 Peter 2:19-25

¹⁹ For this is a commendable thing, if someone is moved by his conscience toward God, to bear the pain patiently when he suffers unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if you are beaten for doing wrong and you patiently endure it? However, if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, this is commendable with God. ²¹ For God has called you for this purpose, because Christ also has suffered for you and has left you an example, that you may follow in His footsteps. ²² **He did not commit any sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.** ²³ When others insulted Him, He did not insult them in return. When He suffered, He did not make threats but handed it over to Him who judges justly. ²⁴ He Himself **carried our sins** in His body to the cross, that we might die to sins and live to righteousness. **By His wounds you were healed.** ²⁵ For you were **like sheep going astray** but now have returned to the Shepherd and Caretaker of your souls.

John 10:1-10

¹ “Truly, truly, I tell you, the man who does not come into the sheepfold through the door but climbs over somewhere else is a thief and a robber. ² However, the One who comes in through the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. ³ The doorkeeper opens the door for Him, and the sheep listen to His voice. He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out.

⁴ “When He brings out all His own sheep, He walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow Him because they know His voice. ⁵ They will not follow a stranger but will run away from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

⁶ Jesus told them this dark saying, but they did not understand what He was telling them. ⁷ Therefore, Jesus spoke again: “Truly, truly, I tell you, I am the Door 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 Door. If anyone comes in through Me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

JESUS ALONE IS THE DOOR TO ETERNAL LIFE
Sermon for the Fourth Sunday of Easter 2023
John 10:1-10

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

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel read before, John 10:1-10: **“Truly, truly, I tell you, the man who does not come into the sheepfold through the door but climbs over somewhere else is a thief and a robber. ² However, the One who comes in through the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. ³ The door-keeper opens the door for Him, and the sheep listen to His voice. He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out.**

⁴ “When He brings out all His own sheep, He walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow Him because they know His voice. ⁵ They will not follow a stranger but will run away from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

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Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Earlier this year, as we moved through the Sundays in Lent, one of our Gospel readings dealt with a man who had been born blind. Perhaps you remember the story. This blind man did not ask Jesus for help, yet when Jesus saw Him, He gave this man sight. You may recall that this caused much controversy because Jesus gave sight to this man on the Sabbath. Some religious leaders felt this violated the regulations against working on the Sabbath. They interrogated the man who had been blind and eventually ejected him from the synagogue. At the end of that reading, Jesus declared that while the Pharisees could see with their physical eyes, they were *blind spiritually*.¹

Our Gospel reading today follows from that incident, showing that Jesus continued teaching, and among His listeners were the man who had been blind, those Pharisees, His disciples, and others.

In His words, Jesus told them some fundamental earthly truths that have a heavenly meaning. He spoke about sheep, shepherds, thieves, and robbers and applied these earthly observations to our *spiritual condition*. No story is involved, so we can't call it a parable; instead, we call it a figure of speech.

To help understand today's text, our Gospel, and what Jesus wished to teach, it is helpful to know that shepherds often banded together to erect sheepfolds. In an area with plenty of rocks, they would use those rocks to build a large pen, large enough to accommodate the flocks of several shepherds. Then imagine a small door at one end that allowed the sheep and the shepherds to come and go as needed. At the end of the day, the shepherds would bring their flocks into this enclosure and then take turns keeping watch over their flocks by night. Then, in the morning, the shepherds would call their sheep out of the sheepfold and lead them to still water and green pastures. And even though the sheep were all mixed in together, they would only follow the voice of their own shepherd when being called out.

From an earthly standpoint, Jesus' remarks about the sheepfold are common sense. People who enter the sheepfold by climbing over the wall are up to no good. Jesus calls them thieves and robbers. People who have legitimate business in the sheepfold enter through the door. From an earthly viewpoint, this is pretty obvious stuff.

¹ John 9:1-41, The Gospel Reading for the Fourth Sunday in Lent

The question is, “*What was Jesus’ meaning from a heavenly viewpoint?*” Who do the sheep represent? Who do the thieves and robbers represent, and who are the shepherds?

Some sheep who had listened to Jesus on that day were the man who had been blind, Jesus’ disciples, and others. The Pharisees are the thieves and robbers - people who pretend to be part of the church but, in fact, lead people away from the true church. Of course, Jesus Himself is the Shepherd who “**calls His own sheep by name and leads them out.**” As sheep follow their shepherd, so those drawn to Jesus by the Father follow Him.

How is it that the Pharisees are among the company of thieves and robbers who enter the church by illegitimate means? The Pharisees taught salvation from obedience to the Law of Moses. Their teaching is one example of the many world religions that all have that one fatal flaw. This world’s religions teach that people are responsible for their salvation.

Ultimately, there are only two religions in the world. This is what the Scriptures themselves teach. There is the religion of the Law, which endeavours to reconcile God through man’s own works, and the religion of the Gospel, that is, faith in Jesus, belief wrought through the Gospel by the Holy Spirit that we have a gracious God through the reconciliation already effected by Jesus, and not of our own works. So it was that the Pharisees had a code of ethics that a person must follow to obtain salvation - the Law of Moses for the Jews. That is still how it is today for the Jewish religion. Then there are others, like the Muslim faith, which teaches the Five Pillars of Islam. Mormons have their Book of Mormon, and there are many others, like those who look for salvation through their own inner light, following their heart, letting their conscience be their guide, and so forth. Still, others say, “*It doesn’t really make any difference as long as you pick a good set of moral guidelines and do your best to live by them; everything will work out.*” Most of these teachings can sound quite reasonable, but Jesus tells us they are all thieves and robbers intent on our destruction.

The simple fact is that we shall lose any time we take responsibility for all or even some small fraction of our salvation. That is the reason that Jesus compares us to sheep. In fact, the Bible compares us to sheep in many places. The psalmist said, “*I have strayed like a lost sheep*” (Psalm 119:176). Isaiah said, “*We have all gone astray, like sheep. Each one of us has turned to his own way*” (53:6). Jeremiah said, “*My people have been lost sheep*” (50:6). Today’s Second Reading from 1 Peter says, “*you were like sheep going astray*” (2:25).

Ask anyone who raises sheep. They will tell you that if you allow sheep to make trouble, they will take it. Since we are so much like sheep, we can't maintain the perfection that even the tiniest fraction of salvation must have. Jesus said, "*You shall be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect!*" (Matthew 5:48).

Therefore anyone who asks us to do anything to earn our own salvation is asking us to do the impossible, trying to set us up for the fall. They are one of those thieves or robbers who want to steal us away from God and destroy us.

Jesus said, "**Truly, truly, I tell you, I am the Door for the sheep.**" When Jesus says He is the door of the sheep, He is telling us how to know false teachers. All true teachers focus on Jesus - the Door. With Paul, they say, "*I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

False teachers do not enter through Jesus - the Door. They want us to forget that all the teachings in the Bible have their source, their foundation in who Jesus Christ is and what He alone has done to save us from our sins.

The simplest way to test anyone who wants to teach us about salvation is to ask, "*What does this teacher say about Jesus?*" Does this teacher enter the sheepfold through Jesus, or does he climb over the wall? Is Jesus true God begotten of the Father from eternity? Is Jesus true man born of the Virgin Mary? Is our salvation free to us by means of the price Jesus has paid on the cross? Is our resurrection assured by the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Is salvation in God alone with no contribution on our part? "**The man who does not come into the sheepfold through the door but climbs over somewhere else is a thief and a robber.**"

Jesus has a different path to salvation for us. When it comes to our salvation, God has done ALL the work. Jesus purchased salvation for us with His holy life, innocent suffering, and sacrificial death. In this same discourse about sheep and robbers, Jesus says, "*I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep*" (John 10:11). As the Good Shepherd, Jesus gave up His life to secure that bond and keep His sheep safe. He died for all the world, and His sheep all over the world receive the benefit. We are His sheep. He is the One who calls us by name as the Holy Spirit works faith in us through the Word - when we hear the Word and read it - when we feel the Word as it is combined with the water of baptism - when we taste and smell the Word combined with

the bread and wine of the Lord's Table. ***Jesus Christ is the true Good Shepherd who calls us by name and leads us in the paths of life everlasting.***

Jesus has paid the ultimate price for us. He has suffered God's wrath against every one of our sins. Our salvation cost Jesus everything, but it costs us nothing, and we are given this precious salvation as a free gift. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, that no one may boast"* (Ephesians 2:8). God shows His generous mercy toward the undeserving. Luther writes in his Large Catechism, *"So you see plainly that there is no work done here by us, but a treasure, which God gives us and faith grasps. It is like the benefit of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, which is not a work, but a treasure included in the Word. It is offered to us and received by faith"* (Large Catechism IV 37). God's free gift is the complete opposite of both works and sight. Faith is a simple trust in God's gifts, now and to come. Faith is not a bare knowledge of Christ's history, but it is God's gift². Neither Jews who obey the Law of Moses, followers of Islam, Mormons, or any who heed their conscience, may claim a reward from God.³

Since we are His sheep, Jesus leads us on the path of everlasting life. We know this because He rose from the dead. Just as He rose from the dead, the day will also come when God will raise all people from the dead. On that day, all those who believe in Jesus will be united body and soul in the eternal joys of heaven. In that place, false teachers will never again tell us that we must make some kind of contribution to our own salvation. We shall be free from their harassment.

In today's Gospel, Jesus warns us against spiritual thieves and robbers. It is bad enough that con artists use sweet words to empty the bank accounts of others. It is even worse when spiritual con artists use sweet words to empty heavenly accounts of God's grace and replace it with our worthless human effort.

Jesus Christ calls us by name. We are His sheep whom He purchased at a very heavy cost. He is the only way to salvation. All true shepherds will point to Him - our one Good Shepherd. **"I am the Door. If anyone comes in through Me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture."**

² Formula of Concord, Epitome, III 6

³ Romans 3:19-31

In Jesus alone, the door to eternal life has been opened for us. He is the Good Shepherd who has laid down His life for us. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Lord our God, we praise You for Your great goodness; and for the good things that You have prepared for those who love You! Grant that we may obtain those glories, which no human being has ever seen or heard or ever thought could happen, through Jesus Christ, Your holy Servant.

We thank You for sending Christ, the Good Shepherd, into our world, to lay down His life for the sheep, to pay the price of His blood to free us from the power of Satan, from the deserved results of our sins, and from the lifelong fear of death. We praise You also for His triumphant resurrection, and for the glorious promise that all who listen to His voice and follow Him will receive eternal life.

We thank You for His pity and love for us, who were straying and helpless like sheep without a shepherd, but who are now through Your great mercy brought back to fellowship with the true Shepherd and Keeper of our souls. We thank You for Your gracious forgiveness for all our sins, for Your promise of peace, for Your assurance of salvation, for Your presence and power in our lives, and for every gift in Christ Jesus.

Enable us, by Your grace, to follow the example of Jesus, our Saviour and Head, by seeking the lost, lifting up the fallen, strengthening the weary, rescuing the straying, feeding the poor, helping the suffering, sheltering the homeless, and being sensitive to each other's needs. May we thereby proclaim Your praises for calling us out of darkness into Your marvellous light.

Give us the voice and leadership of Jesus the Good Shepherd in all parliaments and councils of the nations, in commerce and industry, in all civic and social life.

Direct our way through the sin, strife, and uncertainty of this age, O Lord. Give us true faith and godly hearts. Strengthen the sick, cheer the depressed, and supply the needy, showing that You are always ready to help in every trouble. Because our eyes have seen Your salvation, when our last hour comes, release Your servants in peace, and receive us into everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ Your Son, our risen Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Article: The Shepherd

A pastor is in an awkward position. “Pastor” means “shepherd.” The Bible talks about men being called by God to be shepherds of Christ’s flock on earth (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28). Jesus told Peter to feed His sheep and lambs (John 21:15-17). Peter later wrote to other Christian preachers, “*be shepherds of the flock of God that is with you and care for it*” (1 Peter 5:2).

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Some mere men are also shepherds, pastors by the will of Christ, to feed and lead Christ’s flock. When mere mortal men are called shepherds or pastors, it must be remembered that Jesus is “*the Chief Shepherd*” (1 Peter 5:4).

What is awkward about being a pastor? While a pastor is a shepherd under Christ’s authority, he must also admit that he is only a sinful, fallible human being like any other Christian. He may feel “sheepish” about that, for he is also one of the sheep, one of Christ’s little lambs.

It is sometimes uncomfortable to be both sheep and shepherd. When dad and mum leave big brother in charge, big brother is still only one of the children. He has no authority to do anything but what his parents told him to do. He is accountable to them and to his brothers and sisters.

Would it not be better if Christ were here in His physical presence? Would it not be better for Jesus Himself to preach, teach, counsel, guide, and instruct? Or would it not be better for God to send angels from heaven to lead and direct churches? It may seem to us that it would be better for Jesus Himself to preach or at least to send an angel to preach. But God knows better and is wiser than we are. God has chosen to have sinful men do the preaching and teaching, the feeding and leading.

There is one way in which it seems better to have a human, not an angelic, preacher. An angel could only say: “*You are sinners, but Christ died for you to forgive your sins.*” A man can say: “*We are sinners. But Christ died for us to forgive our sins.*” Jesus knows best. The chief Shepherd knows - for reasons that we may not know in this life - that it is better for Him to do His work as Shepherd of the Christian church indirectly through the persons of weak, fragile, sinful men. That is His choice. That is His will. But that does not mean that Jesus is not the Shepherd of His flock.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. He died for our sins in our place. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows and loves the

sheep. He makes us His own. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who chooses and calls the sheep. Jesus said, “*My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give them eternal life, and they will certainly not be lost, and no one will snatch them out of My hand*” (John 10:27-28).

Jesus is still the Good Shepherd after His ascension into heaven. He has not given up that work. He does His work as Shepherd through His Word. That means that a pastor’s work, as a subsidiary shepherd, is simply to present God’s Word, Christ’s Word, to people.

A pastor must know that Word. So he must study that Word. He must proclaim that Word publicly and privately. He must call to repentance and to faith, and he must unmask wolves in sheep’s clothing, that is, false prophets, of whom Christ tells us to beware (Matthew 7:15).

The keynote of a pastor’s work must be the same as the keynote of Christ’s preaching. That is Law and Gospel. That is summed up in the words of the prophet Isaiah: “*We have all gone astray, like sheep. Each one of us has turned to his own way, and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all*” (Isaiah 53:6).

Through His Word, Jesus preserves His people in the one true faith. Through His Word, Jesus again and again calls us and brings us to repent of our sins, for we remain sinners in this life. Through His Word, Jesus again and again assures us of full and free forgiveness of all our sins because of His death on the cross in our place. Jesus gives that assurance through His Word by itself or with the water in baptism, or with His body and blood in the Lord’s Supper.

Through His Word, Jesus keeps His people together in local communions of believers. Through His Word, Jesus calls and brings yet more people to repent of their sins and to believe the good news of forgiveness, life, and salvation for Jesus’ sake, and so to be members of His body and of a local communion of believers in Christ. Having finished the work of redemption for which He walked on earth, Jesus still works in human hearts through His Word.

Children's Message:

Can you see in our picture what that man is holding? Yes, he's holding a staff. Do you know why? Because he is a shepherd, and in Jesus' day, shepherds would use the staff to protect his sheep. If a wolf or a bear came close to his sheep, the shepherd would use his staff to chase it away and bring the sheep back to him for protection.



Again, if one of the sheep wandered away and headed for a cliff, the shepherd would reach out and catch the sheep and bring it back to him before it went over the edge of the cliff – that's why his staff has a bend at one end. He could reach out and hook the sheep back.

Whenever there was danger, the shepherd would use his staff for protection. Nothing could snatch one of the sheep away from the protecting shepherd. In fact, the shepherd loved his sheep so much that, if necessary, he would die to save his sheep.

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday. Jesus calls Himself a shepherd. He says, “*I am the Good Shepherd*” (John 10:11). He also tells us, “*I know My own, and My own know Me*” (10:14). We are the sheep He loves and protects. In fact, He loved us so much that He died for us so we could live forever in heaven. He gave us eternal life, and now He watches over us to protect us.

Jesus loves us just like the shepherd loved his sheep. He tells us that nothing can snatch us away from Him. If sin tries to snatch us away, Jesus will reach out and bring us back to Him where He forgives us and helps us do those things that are right. If fear tries to snatch us away, Jesus will reach out and bring us back to Him and reassure us that He is with us always. If we start to forget about our shepherd and wander away, He will reach out and catch us and bring us back to Him. In fact, Jesus loves us so much that if something tries to snatch us, Jesus always will reach out and catch us.

Prayer: Thank You, Jesus, for being our shepherd. Thank You for loving us and protecting us. Most of all, thank You for dying for us so that You could give us eternal life. Amen.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

7 May 5 Easter	14 May 6 Easter	18 May (Thursday) Ascension Day
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC (Ascension Day Service)	7.30pm GRN HC Hymns: 771, 169, 111, 372, 291, 113
Sunday, 7 May		
READINGS: Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60; 1 Peter 2:2-10;		John 14:1-14
HYMNS: 90 181 260 (333 289) 511		
Sunday, 14 May		
READINGS: Acts 17:16-31; 1 Peter 3:13-22;		John 14:15-21
LOWOOD: Acts 1:1-11; Ephesians 1:15-23;		Luke 24:44-53
HYMNS: 767 322 197 643		LOWOOD: 771 169 111 372 294 113

Today the Parish AGM will be held.

Wednesday, 3 May, 10.00am. Women's Guild at Lowood. Opening devotion: Julie. Choose a Bible verse from Leviticus 13-16. Item of Interest: Since we missed April's meeting, you have two options: A favourite spice for cooking, or A piece of artwork done by an adult or child.

Tuesday, 9 May, 7.30pm. Men's Fellowship at Oakey. Opening devotion: Barry.

BIBLE STUDIES:

Friday, 19 May, Greenwood. 7.30pm.

Thursday, 25 May, Lowood. 10.00am.

Friday, 26 May, Oak/Aub at Aubigny. 7.30pm.

Sunday, 28 May, Toowoomba, 8.00am.