

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY
11th May Fourth Sunday of Easter

HYMNS: 387 709 [LSB] 602 618 [LSB] 290 771 v. 1

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 I may rest.

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 the shadow of death, 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 ddaelc@gmail.com.

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

READINGS:

Acts 20:17-35 Paul speaks to the Ephesian elders.

Revelation 7:9-17 The Lamb will be their Shepherd.

John 10:22-30 My sheep listen to My voice.

Acts 20:17-35

¹⁷ From Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus and asked the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ When they came to him, he said to them: “You know how I lived with you all the time, from the first day when I came into the province of Asia, ¹⁹ how I have served the Lord with all humility, with tears and in the trials that I endured because the Jews plotted against me, ²⁰ how I have kept back nothing that was helpful but have proclaimed it to you and have taught you publicly and in your homes. ²¹ You know how I have earnestly warned both Jews and Greeks to turn to God in repentance and to believe in our Lord Jesus. ²² So now, you see, the Spirit has constrained me to go to Jerusalem. I do not know what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit keeps testifying in every city, telling me that chains and troubles are waiting for me. ²⁴ However, I do not account my life as worth anything to me. I want only to finish running my race and to finish the ministry that I have received from the Lord Jesus, testifying to the Good News of the grace of God.

²⁵ “Now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom, will see my face any longer. ²⁶ Therefore, I testify to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all people, ²⁷ because I have not shrunk from proclaiming to you the whole plan of God. ²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and the whole flock among whom the Holy Spirit has made you bishops! You are to shepherd **the church of God, which He has purchased** for Himself with His own blood! ²⁹ I know that, after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from among yourselves men will stand up and say perverse things, to draw the disciples away after themselves. ³¹ Therefore, stay awake! Remember that for three years I did not cease day and night to warn every single one with tears! ³² Now I entrust you to God and to the Word of His grace, which can build you up and **give you the inheritance among all those who have been made holy**. ³³ I have not coveted anyone’s silver, gold or clothes. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands have worked for my own needs and for those who were with me. ³⁵ In every way I have shown you that, by this kind of hard work, we must help the weak and that we should remember the Words that the Lord Jesus Himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Revelation 7:9-17

⁹ After this, I looked and saw a large crowd that no one could count, from every **nation and all tribes, peoples and languages**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and carrying palm-branches in their hands. ¹⁰ They called out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our **God, who sits on the throne** and to the Lamb!”

¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne, around the elders and around the four living creatures. They **fell** on their faces before the throne and **worshipped God**, ¹² saying: “Amen! Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power and strength be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.”

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me: “Who are these people who have been clothed in the white robes and where have they come from?”

¹⁴ I replied to him, “My master, you know.”

He told me: “These are the people who have come out of the great tribulation. They have **washed their robes** and have made them white in **the blood of the Lamb**. ¹⁵ Therefore, they are before the throne of God and keep serving Him day and night in His Temple, and **He who is sitting on the throne** will shelter them with His tent. ¹⁶ **They will not be hungry any longer or thirsty any longer. The sun will certainly not beat on them or any scorching heat,** ¹⁷ because the Lamb, who is in the middle of the throne, **will be their Shepherd and lead them to springs of the water of life. God will wipe every tear from their eyes.**”

John 10:22-30

²² Then the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem came. It was winter. ²³ Jesus was walking in the Temple, in Solomon’s Colonnade. ²⁴ The Jews gathered around Him and began to ask Him, “How long are You keeping us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly!”

²⁵ Jesus answered them, “I have told you, but you do not believe. The works that I am doing in the name of My Father give evidence about Me. ²⁶ However, you do not believe, because you do not belong to My sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, ²⁸ and I give them eternal life, and they will certainly not be lost, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”

THE SHEEP GET SHORN

Sermon for the 4th Sunday of Easter (Good Shepherd Sunday)

Psalm 23

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 the Introit from before, Psalm 23.

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

Dear friends in Christ,

We all believe that Jesus is the Good Shepherd—plenty of Scripture texts attest to that truth. We remember those words of Jesus who says, “*I AM the Good Shepherd*” (John 10:11). The shepherd imagery in the Gospel is unsurpassed for comfort in the midst of the challenges life throws at us, and quite a few hymns of the church also bear witness to this fact.

Some pictures that hang on the wall show Jesus as a shepherd tending His flock of sheep—maybe you have a picture like that hanging on your wall, or you may have a picture that shows Jesus carrying a lamb in His arms, or across His shoulders. It’s interesting to note though, that you hardly, if ever, see pictures of Jesus with the full weight of a dirty, heavy, unshorn, full grown sheep across His shoulders, and you certainly do not see Him carrying a sheep that has just been shorn, battered, dazed, and with spots of bleeding where the clippers cut the skin. That’s unfortunate, because *that would be a better picture of how we really are.*

Psalm 23 is surely the most familiar and best-loved of the Psalms, and it may give the impression that being a Christian is all soft, warm, and fuzzy business. After all, if the “**The LORD is my shepherd. I shall not lack anything.**”

Make no mistake—we certainly take comfort in the fact that the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ Himself, watches over us, but the language of this Psalm brings most comfort in the face of real difficulty and evil. Think about it. When is this text most upon our lips? When we, or someone close to us, is facing death. Not many funerals go by without using Psalm 23. True, it is comforting to know that “**He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me to water where there is quiet,**” but this is right smack in the *midst* of “**the valley of deep darkness,**” “**evil,**” and “**enemies.**”

We know that the life of a child of God is often difficult, and throughout our lives, we make enemies—people who will mock our faith or snicker when they know what we believe, especially when we speak up against the evil of this world. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus asked His Father that He would keep us from the evil one,

that is, Satan himself, and also reminded us that we are not of the world.¹ We are on a journey to eternal life, heaven itself, which is our proper home, but along the way, we shall suffer. In his First Letter, the Apostle Peter urges us to bear “*pain patiently when suffering unjustly, or even suffering for doing good*” (1 Peter 2:19-20). When we speak up against the evil world by saying “*It is written...*,” when we would “*rather obey God than men*” (Acts 5:29), then we get heckled by our enemies, and the result is that we end up like a shorn sheep, that is, we are cut, left dazed, bleeding and naked by the way people *react* against our message. But this is nothing new. Look at God’s prophets. When they spoke up against the world, they were subject to vicious and cruel jeering. Second Chronicles 36:16 tells us that the people “*mocked God’s messengers, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against His people and there was no remedy.*” Jeremiah 20:2 records how that great prophet felt the sting of a flogging. Joseph, the son of Jacob, knew about chains and prisons (Genesis 39:20). Some, like the prophet Zechariah, met death by stoning at the hands of their countrymen (2 Chronicles 24:20-21). Others were stoned, gruesomely sawed in two, and killed by the sword. Those who escaped barely eked out an existence. Scantily dressed in sheepskins and goatskins, lacking even many of the essentials of life, constantly mistreated and persecuted by those they had come to serve, they wandered all about in the land (Hebrews 11:37). Like wild animals always on the move, they roamed through desert and mountain, hiding and sleeping in dank caves and dark holes in the ground. Years later, in His parable of the vineyard in Matthew 21:35-36, Jesus sadly reminded Israel, “*The tenants seized [God’s] servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way.*” The Apostle Paul was beheaded, and tradition says that Peter was crucified upside down. Many prophets suffered a martyr’s death. So, what can we expect from our fellow men if this is how it goes with the “most faithful” or “greatest” Christians?

But evil also comes from our greatest enemy, *Satan himself*. We can expect him to attack in many ways, such as encouraging us to let the Word of God take a back seat so that we don’t have time to learn more about the grace of Christ by reading God’s Word for ourselves, or if we are more than able, we don’t attend worship services or Bible studies, or other churchly things. Yet we shall religiously keep any other days or nights out for entertainment or other events, and we shall go along with all the changes the world makes without even lifting an eyebrow. We become smug in our ways. If something is suggested that will mean we have to get out of

¹ John 17:15-16

our comfort zone, then we don't like it. Tempers flare, and threats are made! All the while, Satan rubs his hands with glee and says, "I've got them!"

And of course, Satan keeps reminding us of how sinful we are. He keeps whispering in our ears, "*Did God really say...?*" trying to make us doubt our faith. In our everyday lives, he wants us to listen to his voice, to give in to temptation, and even to think that we really are too evil to be saved. There is nothing more frightening than a conscience that begins to think, "*I am too wicked for God to save me.*" We know that Satan is a liar and that what he says is utter rubbish.

Therefore, listen to what God says, who cannot lie. Speaking through John, He reminds us: "*The blood of Jesus [God's] Son cleanses us from **all** sin*" (1 John 1:7). Listen to that again: "*The blood of Jesus [God's] Son cleanses us from **all** sin.*" Even in life's most frightening situations, we can be confident that "**the LORD is (our) shepherd**" because He has delivered us from Satan, sin, and eternal death, because there is not one sin that hasn't been accounted for by Him.

Thanks be to God that His Son, Jesus Christ, even though He is the Good Shepherd, knows what it is like to be shorn - to be cut, left dazed, bleeding and naked from the attacks of men and Satan. He knows, because He too "*was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*" (Isaiah 53:3), and "*who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin,*" (Hebrews 4:15). The world rejected Him when He walked this earth, and the world today continues to reject Him. Satan tempted Jesus, as he tempts us today. But here's the paradox: Jesus, the naked, bleeding, shorn sheep, is also "*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" (John 1:29).

Jesus is the Lamb of God who has come to give Himself as the sacrifice to win forgiveness for a sinful world. He is the Passover Lamb whose blood saves us from death.² He is the lamb of the daily offering.³ He is the burnt offering—"without defect"⁴ and the fellowship offering.⁵ He is the sin offering through which we receive forgiveness.⁶

The closer sheep get to being shorn (or slaughtered!), the less noise they make. By the time the shearer has them in hand, relieving them of wool, they are dead silent. Christ was silent in the face of His accusers, "*He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth*" (Isaiah 53:7). Again, Peter says, "*Christ also has suffered for you and has left you an*

² Exodus 12:1-13

³ Exodus 29:38-41

⁴ Leviticus 1:10

⁵ Leviticus 3:6-7

⁶ Leviticus 4:32-35

example in order 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”* (1 Peter 2:21-23).

Jesus silently has borne your sin to death. He is the great Passover Lamb by whose blood you stand forgiven in the presence of a holy God. The writer of Hebrews reminds us, “[Christ] entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12b). Christ entered heaven to present His sacrificed blood to the Father. With His sacrifice, He has freed us from our imprisonment. Christ, the unblemished Lamb of God, suffered for a definite purpose, to save us from our sins that lead to eternal death.

Those sheep are an awful sight when the shearing is done! They are scrawny, motley, bleating, and bleeding. It’s really quite hard to believe that they are the same animal before and after! Why are they shorn? Well, it’s a harvest, a livelihood for the shepherd to be sure. But we may also note that if those little animals aren’t shorn, the wool will continue to grow. Weighted down with more than a year’s growth, sheep are susceptible to disease. They can’t move well; the fleece is filled with dirt and burrs, and infection is a danger. The sheep are incredibly vulnerable in this state. The shearing is quite painful, but necessary. And the shepherd wants that sheep back out in the paddock, growing a nice, valuable coat for the next season! It’s a good thing, then, that the shepherd is overseeing the shearing!

This life *is* one great “**valley of deep darkness,**” but note that the Lord Himself is the one who “**prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies.**” One cannot help but think of the table of the Lord’s Supper, because it is here where we receive not only the forgiveness of our sins, but it is also given for the *strengthening of our faith.* Luther once said, “*If you knew how many fiery darts the devil was shooting at you, you’d run to the Sacrament of the Altar every chance you got!*”

There was nothing accidental about Christ’s suffering, and it wasn’t finally any man who brought it about. Jesus said to Pilate: “*You have no authority, but that given you from above. . . . I lay down my life, and take it up again*” (John 19:11; 10:17). Neither is there anything accidental about your suffering. “*Though He kills me, yet shall I hope in Him*” Job says (13:15).

Our Lutheran Confessions state: “*Afflictions are not always punishments or signs of wrath. When in the midst of troubles terrified consciences see only God’s punishment and wrath, they should not feel that God has rejected them but they should be taught that troubles have other and more important purposes. They should look at these other and more important purposes, that God is doing His alien work in order to do His proper work*” (Ap XII 158).

When you are facing the shears in life, know that the Shepherd is the one in control. And though God's purposes be hidden (like they were in Christ dying on a cross), He is working His will in your life for your good. And what good is that? He's allowing, causing, and bringing afflictions to drive you to hold all the more tightly to "His **rod** and **staff**." Luther called that God's precious Word.

As His dear blessed sheep, find in His precious Word of the Gospel, "**water where there is quiet**" in your Baptism, the "restoration of your souls" in his forgiving Word of absolution; a table prepared "**in the presence of my enemies**"—namely sin, death, and the devil—in His blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and remember, "**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.**" 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. We pray that our recently elected government may govern in all truth and righteousness.

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.

WEEKLY ARTICLE – **True Contentment**

Webster’s Dictionary defines contentment as the state or quality of being content or satisfied with what one has or what one is.

I recently read a story (this is only a story) about a king who suffered a very painful ailment. His counsellors told him there was only one cure. What was it? It was to find a contented man, get his shirt, and wear it 24/7. After searching the kingdom for months, the king’s messengers returned empty-handed. The king was astounded! “What?” he asked. “You couldn’t find even ONE contented man in my entire realm?” His messengers replied: “Yes, O king, we found only one in all your realm.” When the king asked for this man’s shirt, his messengers told him: “Master, the man had NO shirt!” The point of this story is that true contentment is a rarity, BUT not impossible!

St. Paul reminds us that true contentment needs to be “learned.” He writes, “*I am not saying that I need anything. For I have learned to be content in whatever situation I am in*” (Phil. 4:11). Why does contentment need to be learned? It is because all of us, including me, are born into this world as sinners. All of us, from birth, are never truly content. Think, for example, of that little infant who is not content until he is held in the arms of a loving parent or has the dummy that he wants. Think of that little child who grabs for something a sibling has and is not content until he has it in his hands. Even we Christians, including me, are often discontent until we are able to achieve or obtain something that we presently do not have.

Paul teaches us in Philippians 4:11 that he “learned” to be content. He “learned” contentment in the Lord regardless of his condition in life. In his

lifetime, Paul was beaten, whipped, stoned, shipwrecked, harassed by enemies, betrayed by false believers, hungry, thirsty and even naked like the man without a shirt (2 Corinthians 11:24-28).

What was Paul's secret of true contentment? His "contentment" was not present from his birth. Neither did it spring up automatically from some hidden, inner strength that he had. No! Paul found true contentment from outside himself. He says that he had "learned" to be content by the indwelling power of Christ Jesus, who lived in him by the Spirit's gift of faith. Whenever Paul hit a roadblock or faced a storm, He drew on the deep well of resources springing from his faith in the Lord and his life that was hidden and rooted in Christ Jesus his Saviour (Philippians 1:21 and 3:10; John 15:5).

The writer of Hebrews underscores what Paul has told us when he writes in Hebrews 13:5, "*Be content with what you have! For God has said: "I shall never leave you or forsake you."*"

True "contentment" is to be found alone in the Lord God, who has promised never to leave or forsake those who trust in Him! This is none other than the True and Living Lord who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it (Isaiah 42:5); who made man in His own image; who created male and female (Genesis 1:27); who formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7); who, after Adam and Eve had fallen into sin which brought upon them the curse of temporal, spiritual and eternal death (Genesis 3:1 ff.), gave to them the first Gospel promise of the coming Saviour (Genesis 3:15) Who reconciled us sin cursed, death-destined and hell-bound sinners unto Himself through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18-19); who gave us the Holy Scriptures to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:15) and who assures us that He who has done all this for us is able to and will supply our every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

When we keep in mind that all Scripture is eternally true and can never be broken (John 10:35), please know for a certainty that whatever you are facing in life today, tomorrow or whenever, whether it is upcoming delicate surgery, financial problems, difficulties at work, broken relationships and the like, that all those who trust in the Lord and the power of His might have His unbreakable promise that He is present with you 24/7! He will never leave you! He will never forsake you!

Children's Message:

Today, we're going to talk about someone who is so good to us. Our picture shows Jesus taking care of a sheep by carrying it on His shoulders.



Sometimes we call Jesus the Good Shepherd. Just as a Good Shepherd takes care of his sheep, Jesus takes care of you and me and every single one of us!

In the Bible, we learn about how one of Jesus' friends, a man named Paul, showed how Jesus is our Good Shepherd. Paul loved Jesus very much. He travelled to many places to tell people about Jesus and how much He loves them. One day, Paul went to a place called Ephesus. While he was there, he talked to some special friends called elders, who were the pastors of the church. Paul told the elders that he needed to go away, but before he left, he wanted to share some important things with them. He said, "Always remember to take care of the people of God's church, just like a shepherd takes care of his sheep. Watch out for enemies who might want to teach you and God's people wrong things. But don't worry! Jesus is always with you, and He will help you."

Here's how Paul said we know Jesus will help: Paul says that Jesus made us His with His own blood. What does that mean? When Jesus was nailed to the cross, His own blood was shed, and Jesus' blood paid for our sins. Jesus is so good, loves us so much, that He died on the cross to make us His own. That's how good He is! And then, three days later, He rose from the dead!

Just like a shepherd carries a lost sheep back to safety when it wanders off, Jesus carries us when we're sad or lost. When we sin, Jesus is always there to forgive us and bring us back to Him. That's how good He is!

Thank You, Jesus, for being my Good Shepherd. When I wander away from You, gently bring me back into Your flock. Amen.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

18 May 5 Easter	25 May 6 Easter	29 May Thursday, Ascension Day 7.30pm GRN HC
	AELC Mission Day Festival	1 June 7 Easter
8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am MARBURG LR Matthew S	9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC AELC Service (Chloe Steinhardt confirmation)	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.30am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR (Ascension Day Service)
Sunday, 18 May		
READINGS: Acts 11:1-18; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; John 13:31-35		
HYMNS: 105 413 700 (LSB) (171 847) 4		
Sunday, 25 May		
READINGS: Isaiah 62:1-7; Romans 10:11-17; Lule 24:44-53		
HYMNS: 45 829 (LSB) 830 (LSB) [163 285] 839 (LSB)		

Tuesday, 13 May, 7.30pm. Men's Fellowship at Oakey. Opening devotion: Don.

BIBLE STUDIES:

Thursday, 15 May, 10.00am, Lowood.

Wednesday, 21 May, 7.30pm, Greenwood.

Friday, 23 May, 7.30pm, Oak/Aub at Oakey.