

**SUNDAY April 26, 2026      “Good Shepherd”**  
**Acts 2: 42-47 and I Peter 2:19-25    John 10: 1-10**

How many of you use GPS and Google Maps which helps as a voice of reason to get you where you want to go? Our family calls this voice “Shirley” after all, she ‘surely’ cannot be wrong in her directions, right? And just how calming is her voice? When you’ve missed the turn onto one street, she calmly states, ‘recalculating’ while you are in an area of wilderness, or urban sprawl and unsure which way to go. But soon Shirley comes back with “turn right and leave the parking lot.’

This GPS Google map voice is calming when the stress of not knowing where you are going increases with each street you pass or each light you go through only to find out that you should be heading north instead of south. Yet this voice is helping you as it recalculates what you need to do.

This is one of the many voices and sounds we hear in our immediate vicinity. With spring now upon us, we have the windows open and hear more sounds than before. The sounds of police, fire and ambulance sirens, general traffic, large trucks and even dogs barking seem to be right on the lawn. But there are also the sounds of people’s voices as they walk their infants in strollers or their dogs, kids walking and talking as they go to and from school and even the birds singing their songs seem loud and strong. These sounds may or may not be comforting depending upon the time of day or night when you first hear them. But the sounds do remind us that we do not live alone. We live in creation- with people, animals and birds and each has a voice.

Mary used her voice very clearly and loudly when she left the tomb that resurrection morning and ran to tell the disciples. She said, “I have seen the Lord.” And in these last weeks we have heard the stories about how the disciples responded to what Mary had said. They ran to the tomb to see that it was indeed empty and then they ran back to tell others. We continue to share in the stories of people seeing Jesus alive, we also learn that they stayed together in fear of being accused of stealing the body. While they were together Jesus appeared and was amongst them. Thomas was not there in that moment. But later on when he was told about Jesus’ appearance, he said, “I don’t believe this unless I see Jesus for myself.” A week later Jesus appeared again to Thomas and the first disciples. Thomas sees Jesus and believes. The story of the two disciples who were not of the original 12 saw Jesus but did not know him until he broke the bread to share. They then ran to tell the others their story that is, their experience of Jesus as the Risen Christ. All using the voices and sounds of sharing the Good News.

On this fourth Sunday of Easter our focus is not on Jesus' resurrection moments; but on passages from the Old and New Testament to help us make sense of what occurred during Holy Week and Easter. Because it really does not make sense to millions of people that the One deemed as the Son of God was put to death for treason and buried. Nor does it make sense that he rose from the tomb and is alive and continues to live. But the question we need to ask is this: Why is the Resurrection of Jesus important to us as Christ's followers? And what does it mean when he says, "I am the Good Shepherd" or when we say "The Lord is my shepherd"?

Jesus spent hours in prayer, teaching crowds and bringing to life the messages of the Hebrew texts (the Old Testament) he had learned as a boy and youth. And in these times of teaching he shared what the prophets had written about the promised messiah and the one who would take away the sins of the world. This was so that the people would be reconciled with God and live as God intended.

He had been raised with shepherds who looked after flocks of sheep. He knew the commitment that these people had to each sheep and what it meant to truly lead them to maturity. The sheep not only served as sources for making clothing, they were also food. In the Jewish tradition, it was young lambs which were slaughtered, prepared and cooked during Passover celebrations. And it is when Jesus speaks of the shepherd as God and then himself we place ourselves in the sheepfold, or beyond the gate. That is depending upon whether we believe in Jesus, whether we have faith and put our trust in him, and whether we believe the disciples when they said "we have seen the Risen Christ".

One of the most beloved, quoted and shared passages is Psalm 23 and for many the best translation is one of the oldest-- King James-- with thees and thous. Our hymns today all reflect this image that the Lord- God is our Shepherd. Well before Jesus was living on earth, David wrote most of the psalms. He was a shepherd boy before his call to the army and defeat the Philistine giant. David knew what it took to keep sheep safe, fed, watered and living. So this Psalm reflects on what he was doing out in the pastures with sheep. His psalm is a song which gives us the image that God is the Shepherd. God who cares in places of calm and quiet of everyday life. God who calms hearts, and comforts those facing death or difficult times. God anoints and names them as His own and is with each person no matter what they face. God who promises a place forever with him in his heaven.

This is what David wrote as he watched sheep in pastures. So when Jesus is teaching the crowds about life and death he uses examples of what those listening would know and

understand. He begins by stating that the shepherd acts as a gate to the sheepfold. It was the job of the shepherd to bring each lamb home and keep them safe from predators and thieves. The shepherd acted as the gate--the only way in and out of the pen and anyone trying to get to the sheep had to jump over them. It is also the means by which the sheep knew where they were and that they would be safe. Their shepherd was present and they knew his voice and followed.

The sheep would know the sound of his voice-- from the time of birth, and each morning and night the shepherd would call to them and they would follow him out to the pastures and back. He would lead them to green grass and calm waters. Sheep are docile creatures and want peace and tranquility when they eat and drink. That is one reason why even today, we are asked to count sheep in order to go to sleep!

But sheep need one to lead them. David knew this as he wrote the Psalm of the shepherd referring to God as His Shepherd. And Jesus knew this and referred to himself as the Good Shepherd. He is the guarding gate of the sheepfold and he is the one who is/was willing to defend and uphold the sheep. Jesus teaches that a hired hand would run away from the job if he encounters a wolf looking for food. But Jesus does not run away but he knows his sheep and they listen to him.

So what does this passage mean for us? Who are living lives away from sheep? It means to listen for the relationship that Jesus wants for us. He is the Good Shepherd and wants to lead, protect and take us to be with him. Jesus is the one guards and protects us and loves us for he knows us. Not just as sheep #567 or 568, but by name. Just as he knew Mary by name. And just as he calls you to him- by name.

The Good Shepherd is Jesus who lays down his life for the sheep. When he said this, it was well before the time of his death. Yet, he tells those listening that there are other sheep who do not belong to His fold/ flock and he needs to bring them home to him. But they must listen to His voice.

Today there are many sheep who are not listening to anything but scrolling on phones, listening to inaccurate news stories or texting about their suppers. Many people do not realize that Jesus died in order to rise again, that is he laid down his life in order to take it up again. This is what Jesus talks about and what will happen. And this is Jesus who as the Good Shepherd which chose to do this for the sake of his sheep-- then and now.

The question then is simply this: are you a sheep in Jesus' sheepfold? Does he guard you at the gate? Is he protecting you like a shepherd would? Or are you searching for this shepherd who will make a difference in your life here on earth? And do you desire to spend eternity with Him?

What is needed in order that this may occur is to listen to His voice saying your name. That is, being able to feel the Spirit moving around you and reflecting upon this movement within and saying yes to Jesus as your Shepherd. You are a sheep called by Jesus- now it is up to you to answer His call. He knows you by name. Are you willing to follow?

Prayer--- God of grace we pray that your Spirit will move amongst these people here gathered- in person and online. Speak to each one and call them by name-- they are your sheep and a ready to follow anew. SILENCE. Amen.

SONG "HIS SHEEP am I!".