

The Order of Service for Home Worship

THE FOURTH SUNDAY of EASTER



Hymn: The LORD's my Shepherd

- 1 The LORD's my Shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me down to lie
in pastures green; He leadeth me
the quiet waters by.
- 2 My soul He doth restore again;
and me to walk doth make
within the paths of righteousness,
e'en for his own name's sake.
- 3 Yea, though I walk thro' death's dark vale,
yet will I fear no ill;
for Thou art with me, and Thy rod
and staff me comfort still.
- 4 My table Thou hast furnishéd
in presence of my foes;
my head Thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.
- 5 Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me:
and in God's house forevermore
my dwelling place shall be.'

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**
Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father of glory, holy and eternal, look upon us now in power and mercy. May your strength overcome our weakness, your radiance transform our blindness, and your Spirit draw us to that love shown and offered to us by your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

As we come into the presence of our heavenly Father let us seek his forgiveness of our sins that we may know his peace is our hearts.

Lord Jesus, you raise the dead to life in the Spirit. **Lord, have mercy.**
Lord Jesus, you bring pardon and peace to the sinner. **Christ, have mercy.**
Lord Jesus, you give light to those who live in darkness. **Lord, have mercy.**

May almighty God have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.
Amen.

**Alleluia, alleluia, glory be to God on high;
Alleluia, to the Saviour who has gained the victory;
Alleluia to the Spirit, fount of love and sanctity;
Alleluia, Alleluia, to the Triune Majesty.**

Collect:

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life: raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above, where he reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.. **Amen.**

A reading from the book of Acts.

4. 5-12

The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is "the stone that was

rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.” There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.’

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 23

**Response: The lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.
The lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.**

The lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake. (R)

Even though I walk through the darkest valley
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff – they comfort me. (R)

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows. (R)

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long. (R)

A reading from the first letter of John.

3. 16-24

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us - and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his

commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Listen to the Gospel according to Saint John

10. 11-18

Glory to you, O Lord.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away - and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Meditation:

Today, the Fourth Sunday of Easter is also referred to or known as Good Shepherd Sunday. In this morning’s gospel we hear how Jesus speaks of a shepherd laying down his life for his sheep—just what Jesus did for us. Through these words, Jesus is contrasting those who enter through the gate with those who chose not to. The shepherd is recognised by the person guarding the fold and so his entrance is natural, without force. Hearing about sheep who only follow their shepherd’s voice, creates a beautiful picture of both divine sovereignty in the shepherd’s call and the human response in the hearing, knowing and following by the sheep. We also find the theme of discernment as there is more than one voice calling to the sheep. For us, as the sheep of Jesus, following Jesus means refusing to follow others who claim to be shepherds. Jesus is our Gate and Shepherd and we are his sheep. Also, the church

of God may be seen as a sheepfold and Jesus the Shepherd knows all who are his, guards them with his providence, guides them by his Spirit and word and goes before them to set them in the way of his steps. Augustine writes: "He has accomplished what he taught us. He has shown us what He commanded us to do. He laid down his own life for his sheep, that within our mystery he might change his body and blood into food and nourish the sheep he had redeemed with the food of his own flesh. He has shown us the way we must follow, despite our fear of death. He has laid down the pattern to which we must conform ourselves. The first duty laid on us is to use our worldly goods in mercy for the needs of his sheep and then, if necessary, given even our lives for them. He that will not give of his substance for his sheep, how shall he lay down his life for them?" But it isn't only John who we hear of today referring to Jesus being the Good Shepherd. We have also read Psalm Twenty Three where David, who appears to write with great joy, says how he sees the Lord as his Shepherd leading him through the various stages of life. David recognises wholly what Jesus means to him -he is his guide, provider, comforter, motivator, strength, not just on the odd occasion but for his whole life. David obviously had total trust and faith in Jesus and we need to be like David and place our trust and faith in Jesus. When we think of the words of today's Psalm, they must be said with conviction, we must mean what we say. Faith is not a wishy washy issue so we should give reverence to not only the words we say but the words we sing. If we compare today's readings, we see that in the Psalm, David is saying how he sees Jesus - it is a really personal view, whereas in the reading from John, Jesus is guiding us by telling us how he can be our Shepherd and what we need to do to allow him into our lives.

There are two questions we can ask ourselves:

Do we know the peace and security of a life fully submitted to God? And

Do we look to Jesus the Good Shepherd to receive the strength and courage we need to live and serve as his disciple?

Amen.

Intercessions:

In the power of the Holy Spirit and in union with Christ let us bring our prayers for the Church and for the world to our heavenly Father.

We pray for the Church throughout the world, for the leaders of the Church among them Mary our Bishop. We pray for the clergy and people of our diocese and for our own ministry area; may the Church faithfully proclaim the risen Christ, the sure ground for hope in the world.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the people of the world, for the victims of violence and oppression among them the people of the Gaza and Israel, Ukraine and the Yemen, for all suffering the effects of natural disaster and for those suffering from famine or drought; may the power of the risen Christ bring peace where there is conflict and reconciliation where there is division.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our own community, for our families, friends and neighbours. We give thanks for all who serve the needs of the vulnerable; may we witness to the risen Christ in our daily lives, bringing your love and peace to all with whom we share our lives.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are in need, for those who are sick, for those who are bereaved, for the lonely and isolated and for all in any kind of need. We hold in our hearts before God those known to us who are in need at this time and all whose names are recorded in our intercession books; relieve them according to their need, strengthen them with your Holy Spirit and console them with the love of Christ.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who have died. We remember before God our own departed loved ones and we pray for the recently departed and those whose anniversary of death falls at this time; welcome them and all the departed into the eternal joy and peace of your heavenly kingdom.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We bring all our prayers to our heavenly Father as we pray together:

**Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy Kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Kingdom,
The power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen**

The Peace:

Jesus said, "Peace, I bequeath to you; my own peace I give you; a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. The peace of the Lord be with you and with all those whom you love. **And also with you.**

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters we do also for you: give us the will to be the servant of others as you were the servant of all, and gave up your life and died for us, but are alive and reign, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Blessing:

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

The peace of God which is beyond all understanding guard your hearts in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. **Amen**

Hymn: Loving Shepherd of thy sheep.

- 1 Loving Shepherd of thy sheep, keep me, Lord in safety keep;
nothing can thy pow'r withstand, none can pluck me from thy hand.**
- 2 Loving Shepherd, thou didst give thine own life that I might live;
may I love thee day by day, gladly thy sweet will obey.**
- 3 Loving Shepherd, ever near, teach me still thy voice to hear;
suffer not my steps to stray from the straight and narrow way.**
- 4 Where thou leadest may I go, walking in thy steps below;
then, before thy Father's throne, Jesu, claim me for thine own.**

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