

Easter 4 - May 3, 2020

Hymn: "The King of Love My Shepherd Is" *LSB* 709

- 1 The King of love my shepherd is,
 Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am His
 And He is mine forever.
 - 2 Where streams of living water flow,
 My ransomed soul He leadeth
And, where the verdant pastures grow,
 With food celestial feedeth.
 - 3 Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
 But yet in love He sought me
And on His shoulder gently laid
 And home rejoicing brought me.
 - 4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill
 With Thee, dear Lord, beside me,
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
 Thy cross before to guide me.
 - 5 Thou spreadst a table in my sight;
 Thine unction grace bestoweth;
And, oh, what transport of delight
 From Thy pure chalice floweth!
 - 6 And so through all the length of days
 Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
 Within Thy house forever!
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Opening Address

The Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Confession: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us then confess our sins to God our Father. Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew

us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

The Absolution: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake, God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ, He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer of the Day: Let us pray: Almighty God and Father, You call Your people by Your Spirit through Your Word, grant us grace to live in our vocations, to serve in them faithfully, and to follow you all our days, just as You did Your Apostles; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever, Amen.

The First Reading is written in the book of Acts, chapter 2, verses 42 to 47.

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe^[a] came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

The Epistle Reading is from St. Peter's first letter, chapter 2, verses 19 to 25.

¹⁹ For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

The Holy Gospel is according to St. John, chapter 21.

After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and

threw himself into the sea. ⁸ The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

⁹ When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread.

¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me." ²⁰ Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" ²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" ²² Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" ²³ So the saying spread abroad among the brothers^[b] that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"

²⁴ This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Apostles' Creed: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Hymn: "Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us" *LSB* 711

- 1 Savior, like a shepherd lead us;
Much we need Your tender care.
In Your pleasant pastures feed us,
For our use Your fold prepare.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,
You have bought us; we are Yours.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,
You have bought us; we are Yours.
- 2 We are Yours; in love befriend us,
Be the guardian of our way;
Keep Your flock, from sin defend us,
Seek us when we go astray.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,
Hear us children when we pray.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,
Hear us children when we pray.
- 3 You have promised to receive us,
Poor and sinful though we be;
You have mercy to relieve us,
Grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,
Early let us turn to You.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,
Early let us turn to You.
- 4 Early let us seek Your favor,
Early let us do Your will;
Blessèd Lord and only Savior,
With Your love our spirits fill.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,
You have loved us, love us still.
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,
You have loved us, love us still.

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The Sermon:

I wish that I could be known for something else. John is known as being the disciple whom Jesus loved. Paul is known for being the persecutor who became the Church's greatest missionary. James is known for being the leader of the Jerusalem church and for being the brother of Jesus. Stephen is known for being the first martyr.

And do you know what I am known for? I am known as the guy who is rash and impulsive. I am known as the guy who acts before he thinks. I am known as the guy who needs to have things told to him three times for him to understand it. But, this reputation and claim to

fame is okay with me. For in a way, I am just like you. I represent all believers and many people have learned from my mistakes and examples. Perhaps the most famous incident of this happened on that one morning by the Sea of Tiberias.

It had been at least two weeks since Jesus had died and had risen from the dead, and I was with some of his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. I believe the disciples were Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and I can't remember the two others, but that doesn't matter. I decided to go fishing and they said that they would go with me. So we went in the boat and caught nothing that whole night.

At about the crack of dawn, we see some man on the shore who yells out, "Children, do you have any fish?" and we responded, "No." He then told us to "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." We figured, why not? What we were doing was not working anyways. How could this crazy suggestion hurt, we figured. So we threw the net on the right side of the boat and our net immediately becomes full of fish.

As this is going on, John realizes who the man is and tells me, "It is the Lord!" When I heard this, I grabbed my outer garment since I was just in my undergarments, and I impulsively jumped in the water and swam to shore. What a surprise knowing me, right?

So the others bring the net full of fish to shore and we find a fire with a meal prepared for us by Jesus. Jesus told us, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." We did and found out that we caught 153 fish. I was amazed that the net didn't break. Normally it does with a catch that size. And then Jesus began to serve us breakfast. This was the third time that Jesus had appeared to us from the dead. Christ is Risen!

I'll never forget what happened next. After breakfast, Jesus asks me, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Jesus had a right and reason to ask me this question. On the night on which He was betrayed, I had boasted of my devotion and love to Jesus before the others. I said that I would lay down my life for Him, and do you know what He said? He said that I would deny Him three times before the rooster crows. He was unfortunately correct.

My denial of Jesus showed a lack of love towards Him. I had denied Him to the small and insignificant of this world. I had denied being one of His disciples to a young servant girl. But it wasn't only to the small and insignificant that I denied knowing Him before.

I denied knowing Him before the normal people of this world, to fellow believers, and even to Pagans! I said that I did not know Jesus. I lied and said that I wasn't a disciple in front of the servants, Jews, and Romans gathered around the fire.

I even outrageously denied being in the garden with Jesus and even being from Galilee although I have a Galilean accent. I went as far as to invoke a curse upon myself saying "I do not know the man!" All of this showed a greater love for myself than for my Lord with my actions. I feared what being associated with Jesus might mean or do to me. Have you ever done something similar?

So I answered Jesus' question. I had learned my lesson about boasting. I humbly answered, "Yes, Lord; you know that I *phileo* you." I said that I loved Jesus like a brother, or a like a family member, which is what the word *phileo* means. I was not willing or able to say *agape*, the word for love that Jesus had used. That word means a deep, sacrificial and unconditional love. I appealed to the Lord's omniscience with my answer. If He searches me, He will know that I love Him. My outer actions cannot currently prove it, but my inner intentions do.

Then Jesus strangely answers, "Feed my lambs." Jesus was using figurative language to say, "Be a pastor. Do what I have called you to be and trained you to do. Take care of my

people. Feed and nourish them with my Word. Tell them they are forgiven because of my death for them. Put my name on them through baptism to mark them as my own. Give them my body and blood for the forgiveness of sins, and for life and salvation. Feed my lambs.”

Jesus then asks me a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you *agape* me?” I answered the same way. “Yes, Lord; you know that I *phileo* you.” I was remaining humble and was not going to prove a greater love or devotion. I thought before I spoke. Jesus then said, “Tend my sheep.” He essentially said the same thing as before. He wants me to take care of His people and to love them. He wants me to watch over them like a shepherd. He wants me to guide, protect, and watch over them.

His questioning was not done yet however. Jesus asked me a third time. “Simon, son of John, do you *phileo* me?” I thought why does He keep asking this? Why is He doing this? What is the point? He knows the answer. He knows that I love Him like a brother. He brought the question to my level but I will stay with my answer. It is the truth. I do not love Him like He loves me.

Now, I would be lying if I said that I didn’t feel hurt about this whole exchange. In fact, I felt grieved. This threefold repetition of affirming my love for Jesus echoed for my threefold denial of Him. I am sorry that I had denied him before the insignificant and normal people of this world. I am sorry that I abandoned Him when He needed me most. I am sincerely sorry that I left Him to die and was not on the cross next to Him where I promised to be. It was for me that He died, and I left Him guilty, condemned, and hung on a cross. I was a horrible friend and do not deserve to be called “Peter,” or the rock.

But He came to forgive me and reinstate me for service. That was the point of those questions. He again said, “Feed my sheep. Be a pastor” and then proceeded to say how I will glorify Him with my death. He finished it all by saying, “Follow me.” All of those things showed my forgiveness. He is not mad or resentful towards me. He has not given up on me but quite the opposite! His sayings show that He can and will use me for His service, and for His Church. They show that He still wants me after I had horribly failed Him. No one would blame Jesus for giving up on me, and for picking someone else.

Instead, the Lord shows His great faithfulness, and commitment towards me. He shows His unconditional and sacrificial love towards me. He shows His forgiveness. He could and did forgive me because of His death on the cross. The very place I had left Him to die at shows my forgiveness when I think of my denial, and in fact, any sin that I have done. What He did for me on the cross allows me to follow Him and confess my love towards Him, and it shows my forgiveness when I *will* fail.

Stephen is known as being the first martyr. James is known as being the leader of the Jerusalem Church. Paul is famous for being the greatest missionary. John is known for being the disciple whom Jesus loved but I am known as the one whom He has mercifully forgiven for His service. IN JESUS’ NAME, AMEN.

Prayer of the Church

Let us pray for the people of God’s pasture and the sheep of His hand, and for all people according to their needs.

Brief silence

Almighty God, receive our humble and unending thanks that Christ suffered for us so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. When it is given to us to suffer for Your name's sake, grant that we might follow in the steps of our Savior, act in love and entrust ourselves to You. Strengthen those who endure persecution for the name of Jesus, thwart the plans of those who oppose the Gospel, and grant to them repentance so that they, too, might die and live in Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, our Creator and Redeemer, the culmination of all beauty is found in Your Son. Bless all artists and artisans, that in the midst of a world made ugly by sin, their labors might remind us of the beauty with which You have endowed our creation and our redemption. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, in the wake of Your Son's resurrection, Your people devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Unite Your people in the one true faith, and grant penitent hearts to all who come to receive Christ's body and blood this day. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

King of the nations, with Your favor behold the president and Congress of the United States and all others in authority and so replenish them with Your grace, that they may always incline to Your will and walk in Your way. Prosper all good counsels and just works, that peace and contentment, truth and righteousness, genuine faith and piety may be established among us. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, by the work of Your Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace, You daily add to the number of believers those who were being saved. Grant to Your people courageous hearts and bold tongues to proclaim Your truth, trusting that You will gather more in keeping with Your gracious will. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, You worked many miracles through the hands of the apostles in the name of Jesus. Hear our prayers on behalf of all who cry to You [*including _____*]. Provide them help according to Your will, and within our vocations, grant that we might help those in need with glad and generous hearts. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus Christ, You still gather Your sheep, and we still hear Your voice through Your holy Word. Receive our thanks for all the saints whom You have shepherded through the valley of the shadow of death to eternal life. Grant that we might fear no evil until we are gathered with them before Your throne; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: Let us pray the prayer Jesus has taught us to pray: 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 and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Benediction: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious unto you. The Lord look on You with His favor and give you peace. Amen.

Final Hymn: "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" *LSB 770*

1 What a friend we have in Jesus,
 All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
 Ev'rything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit;
 Oh, what needless pain we bear—
All because we do not carry
 Ev'rything to God in prayer!

2 Have we trials and temptations?
 Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged—
 Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
 Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness—
 Take it to the Lord in prayer.

3 Are we weak and heavy laden,
 Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge—
 Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
 Take it to the Lord in prayer.
In His arms He'll take and shield thee;
 Thou wilt find a solace there.
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Closing Address and Announcements: As always, we thank you for joining us for our virtual service today, and a big thank you to all who helped with it. We also thank you for your prayers and support during this time as the Easter message goes out into all the world. Thank you for partnering with us, and we ask that you would continue to do so as God's Word is needed more now than ever during this time.

Our Postlude will be a hymn for today that was recorded from a prior service at Emmaus. As a way to end our time together, I encourage you to sing along if you have a hymnal or the words in front of you. If not, I encourage you to sit and listen to the voices of saints past and present praising our God along with teaching us the faith with these words wedded to music. This also makes a wonderful foretaste of what we will be having again soon, reunited.

Postlude: "Have No Fear Little Flock" *LSB* 735

1 Have no fear, little flock;
Have no fear, little flock,
 For the Father has chosen
 To give you the Kingdom;
Have no fear, little flock!

2 Have good cheer, little flock;
Have good cheer, little flock,
 For the Father will keep you
 In His love forever;
Have good cheer, little flock!

3 Praise the Lord high above;
Praise the Lord high above,
 For He stoops down to heal you,
 Uplift and restore you;
Praise the Lord high above!

4 Thankful hearts raise to God;
Thankful hearts raise to God,
 For He stays close beside you,
 In all things works with you;
Thankful hearts raise to God!

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