

**Lessons for the Fourth Sunday of Easter**

**May 7, 2017**

Psalm 23 ~ The Lord is my Shepherd.

Acts 2:42-47 ~ The believers lived in unity, sharing their goods and their faith.

1 Peter 2:19-25 ~ Christ, the Shepherd of our souls, has gathered and healed us by his suffering.

John 10:1-10 ~ Jesus is the gate for his sheep; he came to give us abundant life.

**GATHERING THE TEXTS: One Way and Only One**

Jesus' claim to be the only Door to the abundant life, the only gate to heaven, is sometimes ridiculed in our world of democratic diversity and tolerance. In reality His promise turns hearts from despair to hope as it did for the first believers who lived in unity, sharing their faith and their food, praising God in their worship and prayers. Our Shepherd is the One who laid down His life for His sheep and who carried our sins in His body on the cross so that by His wounds our empty lives may be filled with hope and strength and love. The abundant life is one lived in fellowship with the Shepherd.

**PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE:** Lord Jesus, my good Shepherd, you call me to life, and I hear; you lead me through death, and I follow. As you have sought and found me, so help me trust your voice, and know your love, and share your grace with others. Amen.

**STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT:** We teach stewardship more by what we do than by what we say.

**OFFERING PRAYER:** O Lord, You prepare a table before us in the presence of our enemies.

You anoint our heads with oil; our cup overflows.

Surely Your goodness and love will follow us all the days of our lives.

O Lord, bless the use of these gifts to Your glory forevermore. Amen.

**CONVICTION AND COMFORT:** We have been gathered together by the One who shared his gift of life with us, making us sheep in his flock, members of his family. In our independent and diverse world, we not only look for other paths to the abundant life but also isolate ourselves from the flock for whom the Shepherd died. But Jesus has embraced our loneliness and rebellion by his suffering. He holds us close to himself and to his family for our comfort and healing. Our lives, filled with his hope and strength, share his love with all believers and show his love to those who do not yet know the Shepherd.