

Lessons for The Fourth Sunday of Easter**April 21, 2024**

Psalm 23 – King David's beloved Shepherd psalm, anticipating the characteristics of the Good Shepherd.

Acts 4:1-12 – When Peter and John were arrested for healing a cripple, they boldly confessed Jesus' name.

1 John 3:16-24 – We reflect Jesus' love for us when we give our lives in service to those in need.

John 10:11-18 – Jesus is the good Shepherd who laid down His life to protect us from sin and death.

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Frightened Sheep - Faithful Shepherd

What we need is a Shepherd who doesn't run at the first sign of danger, one who won't sacrifice the sheep for his own safety. If we had a Shepherd like that we could stand up to the world. We could trust him and boldly speak up for each other. We could risk our necks for the little lambs who are threatened. We could reach out and bring others into the flock. "-- and Jesus said, 'I am the GOOD Shepherd!'"

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord Jesus, how great is Your love for me! If I wander astray, You search for me; if I am in danger, You stand before me. Help me always trust Your love and protection so that I may be bold to tell others of Your love. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: Because Jesus laid down His life to keep us in His flock, we can take some risks with our investment of time, energy, and possessions to care for those who need our help, and in so doing, boldly confess the name and love of Jesus, by whom alone we are rescued from the destruction of sin and death.

OFFERING PRAYER: Lord, we bring the abundance of our lives:
The time, the goods, and the strength You give us.
Use us to grow Your flock and care for Your sheep
In the green pastures and quiet waters where You lead us. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: How often we find ourselves in the place of Caiaphas, opposing the Shepherd, as at Jesus' trial, or the flock, as in the case of Peter and John (Acts 4:5-12). Too often we scatter rather than gather God's people because we seek to gather goods at the expense of brothers and sisters in need (1 John 3:16-24). Love has been defined in Jesus' self-sacrifice for our sins. We have been gathered and are still protected by His act of love. When we recognize His judgment on our carelessness for those in need (*whenever our hearts condemn us* - 1 John 3:20), the Good Shepherd is there with His comforting voice, assuring us that we are part of His beloved flock.