

Lessons for Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 14, 2016

Psalm 23 (*Antiphon: Psalm 23:1*) ~ *David's beloved psalm expresses trust in God, our good Shepherd.*

Acts 20:17–35 ~ *Paul charged the elders of the church in Ephesus to remain faithful shepherds to the flock.*

Revelation 7:9–17 ~ *The Lamb of God, whose blood cleanses the redeemed, is the Shepherd of His people.*

John 10:22–30 ~ *Jesus identified Himself as the Shepherd who watches over the sheep and is the Messiah.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Gathered from Every Nation and Tribe

Good Shepherd Sunday reminds us of Jesus' promise: "I have other sheep; ...there shall be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16). St. John gave us a picture of the multitude in heaven who are gathered from every nation and tribe, "redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God, who has become their Shepherd." Jesus explained that He is the Shepherd who gives the good gift of eternal life to His sheep; no one can snatch them out of His hand.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord Jesus, my loving Shepherd, You have gathered me into Your one flock through the working of the Spirit and the power of the Gospel. Help me show Your loving kindness in the way I live, and keep me safe in the strength of Your hand so that I may join the multitude before Your throne who are singing Your praises forever. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: St. Paul knew his help for the weak and aid to those in need would show he was one of Jesus' flock, redeemed by the One who gave even His life to rescue us from the power of sin and death. Just as Jesus' works identified Him as the Christ, so our works identify us as belonging to Him.

OFFERING PRAYER: No more hunger; no more thirst!
All the power of sin is burst!
Shepherd, from Your heav'nly throne,
Give us love for all Your own. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: We think belonging to Christ's flock is as simple as learning the right answer: "Tell us plainly!" It isn't just having the facts right; it is a matter of relationship. Those who do not hear the voice of the Shepherd and follow Him are not part of His flock. Those who belong to Him can be identified by the things they do, just as the works of the Shepherd show who He is. Sheep of the Shepherd work to preserve the flock in the peace and redemption won by Him who gave His blood to wash them clean. Even the little shepherds who work for Him are intent on feeding and leading the sheep.