

***ctkAlive!* Scripture Study**  
**Easter Season 2020—A Cycle Readings**  
**Session 4—“*The Lord is my shepherd . . .*”**



*The Good Shepherd*  
[Our Lady of Sorrows Basilica](#)  
Sao Paulo, Brazil

*Note: For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, we have added links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.*

*Caution: Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter's path. Instinct says, "Leave the reflection and chase after that link!" Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links.*

**Opening Prayer**

*Faithful Shepherd,*  
You are not a hireling who runs away at the sight of danger,  
but Your fidelity was tested and proven on the wood of the Cross.  
Accept the gift of our gratitude for Your marvelous care.  
Help us to hear and follow Your voice.

*Watchful Shepherd,*  
who protects the flock and searches tirelessly  
for those who wander from the fold,  
retrieve the lost and bring them home.  
Tend to and heal their wounds.

*Good Shepherd,*  
who lays down His Life for His sheep,  
nourish Your people with the Bread of Life,  
that we may reflect Your likeness  
and enjoy the spring of Living Water that never ends.  
Amen.

Source: [Catholic Doors Ministry](#), Saskatoon, Canada

## Overview of the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter Theme

The Scriptures we are blessed with on this 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter are foundational to Christianity. They go to the very heart of what it means to be a person of faith, a “believer” in Our Lord Jesus the Christ.

Modern Christianity still holds tight to the biblical Good Shepherd metaphor, even though many urban/suburban believers may find it a stretch to think of being “shepherded.” Especially since the [Second Vatican Council](#) (1962-1965) revitalized the laity’s important role in (almost) every aspect of ministry and daily life.

The opening prayer at the top of this session and the closing prayer are Good Shepherd prayers.

Psalms 23 (Antiphon) and John 10:1-10 (Gospel) focus on the image of shepherding and our call to be “good shepherds” of our families, our clients and friends, our fellow parishioners, anyone we see in need. At the end of this reflection, we offer two YouTube videos of lovely Good Shepherd songs.

The gospel reading reminds us there is only *one* gate at the end of the road to paradise. “I am the gate,” says the Good Shepherd. “Whoever enters through me will be saved; he will go in and out freely and find food.”

In Psalm 23, the poet sings, without reserve, “The Lord is *my* shepherd.” This proclamation of personal faith, challenges Jewish and Christian communities three thousand years removed from the composition of the psalm to ask themselves: “Do I *allow* the Lord to be my *daily* shepherd? Or, do I act on my own, only calling on Jesus for help when I’m desperate? Am I *my own* gatekeeper?”

Peter, the leader and primary spokesperson during the post-Ascension period, takes center stage in today’s readings from the Acts of the Apostles (2: 14, 36-41) and his Second Letter (2: 20-25). Peter calls us to repentance and faith in the Risen Lord. These two readings challenge us to follow his example by believing and sharing our faith with anyone who will listen. As for those who reject the Message, we must leave them in the hands of their loving God, who knows only one all-encompassing way of being: forgiveness.

This reading from Second Peter reminds us of last week’s theme of reconciliation. The Apostle says: “Remember Christ, who suffered for you, leaving you an example, *so that you may follow in his way*. He did no wrong and there was no deceit in his mouth. He did not return insult for insult, and, when suffering, he did not curse, but put himself in the hands of God [*his Father*], who judges justly.”

This echoes last week’s citation from Fr. Brian Joyce’s homily on our limits of forgiveness. Looking back over two millennia of Christian and world history we see so much bloodshed and evil—some perpetrated by “friends of Jesus” and “in the name of God.” What would it take for each of us to utter with Jesus, “Father, *forgive* them. They know not what they do” (Luke 23: 24).

Did the Father of the dying Jesus’ listen and forgive them? Or, did the answer come back, “I’m sorry, Son. What they are doing to you is *beyond* forgiveness.”

## **First Reading: From the Acts of the Apostles (2: 14, 36-41)**

“Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and, with a loud voice, addressed them, ‘Let Israel, then, know for sure, that God has made Lord and Christ this Jesus, whom you crucified.’

“When (*his Jewish listeners*) heard this, they were deeply troubled. And they asked Peter and the other apostles, ‘What shall we do, brothers?’

Peter answered: ‘Each of you must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins may be forgiven. Then, you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise of God was made to you and your children, and to all those from afar, whom our God may call.’

“With many other words Peter gave the message and appealed to them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’

“So, those who accepted his word were baptized; some three thousand persons were added to their number that day.”

### **Personal Reflection**

St. Luke, author of Acts, tells the story as it had come down to him from eyewitnesses. After listening to Peter’s long instruction, his mostly Jewish listeners asked the perfect question. “What shall we do, brothers?” Why was this question perfect? Because it held the key to life on this earth . . . and life hereafter.

We are told that out of that large crowd, *three thousand* persons came forward to be baptized.

— *What might Peter have been thinking at the end of that long day of preaching and baptizing?*

*Was it, “Thank you, Jesus! Three thousand people accepted baptism today!!!”*

Or, at the end of that day, Peter might have wondered if he had failed the Risen Christ and worried, “Just three thousand? What did I do wrong? What could I have said better or done differently that might have convinced even more of those listening?”

— *What do I think the Lord might have said to him late that night, as Peter knelt in private prayer?*

### **Antiphonal Psalm 23**

*God, shepherd and host: a psalm of confidence.*

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside the still waters;  
he restores my soul.  
He guides me through the right paths for his name's sake.

Although I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I fear no evil, for you are beside me:  
your rod and your staff comfort me.

You spread a table before me in the presence of my foes.  
You anoint my head with oil; my cup is overflowing.  
Goodness and kindness will follow me all the days of my life,  
I shall dwell in the house of the Lord as long as I live.

### Personal Reflection

Take a moment (right now) to read the above verses again, slowly and aloud to hear the spoken words of the psalmist, as if you have never heard those words before.

— *Which phrase or image rises easily from my heart and rolls off my tongue?*

— *Which part calls me to further deepen my daily awareness of God's guiding prompts within me and/or hidden within my daily environment?*

### **Second Reading: From the First Letter of St. Peter (2: 20-25)**

“What merit would there be in taking a beating when you have done wrong? But, if you endure punishment when you have done well, that is a grace before God. This is your calling: remember Christ, who suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you may follow in his way.

“He did no wrong and there was no deceit in his mouth.

“He did not return insult for insult, and, when suffering, he did not curse, but put himself in the hands of God, who judges justly.

“He went to the cross, bearing our sins on his own body . . . so that we might die to sin, and live an upright life.

“For, by his wounds, you have been healed. You were *like stray sheep*, but you have come back to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”

## Personal Reflection

We just heard from Peter for a second time during this 4<sup>th</sup> weekend of Easter Season. Let's zero in on these words: "He went to the cross, bearing *our* sins on his own body . . . so that *we* might die to sin, and *live* an upright life. For, by his wounds, you have been healed."

*Imagine this very possible but fictional "what if?" scenario:*

*Peter, who ran away from trouble in the Garden of Gethsemane, still wanted at least a "back-row" seat in a dark corner at his trial. What if, after the maidservant exposed Peter as a Jesus follower and his vehement "I DO NOT KNOW this man . . ." (Luke 22: 54-62), she had alerted the authorities who grabbed Peter, threw him into jail where—in despair—he killed himself, as Judas had?*

— *Would Peter now be in heaven? Or lost in hell or, at best, in Purgatory for all eternity?*

*The healing Peter spoke of here is quite clear and emphatic. Not, your sins "will be" . . . but "have (already) been" healed.*

— *Did this include only those who intended to come forward for Baptism? Or did he announce this even to those who, in the end, walked away shaking their heads.*

— *For me personally, what are the broader implications of Peter's emphatic statement, "By his wounds, you have been healed"?*

*(This might be a good topic for reflection during my journaling time.)*

## **Gospel Proclamation from the Gospel of St. John (10: 1-10)**

"Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. But the shepherd of the sheep enters by the gate. The keeper opens the gate to him and the sheep hear his voice; he calls each of his sheep by name and leads them out.

" 'When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but rather they will run away from him, because they don't recognize a stranger's voice.'

"Jesus used this comparison, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So, Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you, I am the gate of the sheep. All who came were thieves and robbers, and the sheep did not hear them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved; he will go in and out freely and find food. The thief comes to steal and kill and destroy, but I have come that they may have life, life in all its fullness.' "

## Personal Reflection

It's a challenge for urban/suburban Christians to get all worm and cuddly about the metaphors of "sheep" and "shepherd." We might prefer dogs and cats. Most of us "city slickers" think of sheep as dumb and dirty (but they make tasty chops on our dinner tables). Jesus' audience had no such problem with this metaphor.

— *How do I relate to Jesus the Good shepherd of my soul? Or is some other image of the Christ—Sacred Heart, for example—more appealing to me, more suitable to my nature and life circumstances? What is my preferred way of addressing the Risen Christ?*

— *The shepherd image in this parable is strong, but what about, "I am the gate"? How is Jesus both "shepherd" and "gatekeeper"? And what does this second term mean in my life?*

## Journaling Prompts

Take some time to write about the insights gained from reflecting on the 4th Sunday of Easter readings.

— *What is the first thought that comes to mind?*

We can't just be "takers" of God's good gifts. We need to be "givers," too.

— *How do I respond to what I've discovered in today's Scriptures? What difference will they make in how I think and live—and give back—during the week ahead?*

## Questions

Feel free to send any questions or comments you might have to [ctkAlive@ctkph.org](mailto:ctkAlive@ctkph.org)

## Preview of Next Session 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter Season

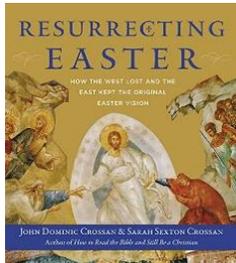
**Acts 6:17ff** "The so-called Hellenists [non-Jewish converts] complained against the so-called Hebrews, because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution."

**Psalms 33** "Lord, let your mercy be upon us, as we put our trust in you."

**1 Peter 2: 4-9** "(The Risen Christ) is the living stone rejected by the people but chosen by God, and precious to him."

**John 14:1-12** “Thomas said to (Jesus), ‘Lord. We don’t know where you are going; how can we know the way.’ Jesus said, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’”

### **Recommended Reading:**



*Resurrecting Easter: How the West Lost and the East Kept the Original Easter Vision*  
by John Dominic Crossan & Sarah Crossan

— From John Dominic [Crossan’s Amazon.com Author’s Page](#): “John D. Crossan is generally acknowledged to be the premier historical Jesus scholar in the world. His books include *The Historical Jesus*, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, and *Who Killed Jesus?* He appeared in the PBS special ‘From Jesus to Christ.’”

Ebook \$1.99 on Amazon—also available in hardcover version

*(I have not read this book, but it has 90% 4-5 ratings on Amazon.--AJG)*

### **For My Viewing/Listening**

[Good Shepherd of My Soul](#) - Keith & Kristyn Getty

[Shepherd](#) (Official Lyric Video) - Amanda Cook | Brave New World

### **Closing Prayer**

#### **Good Shepherd**

Prayer of Intercession

(based on Psalms 23 and 95:6-7, plus John 10)

Good Shepherd, within your embrace I am safe and secure.  
Within your embrace I know that we are precious in your sight.  
Within your embrace I feel the warmth of family and belonging.

Within your embrace I grow and am nurtured within one flock,  
the people of your pasture under your loving care and protection.

Good Shepherd, within your embrace I find comfort and healing.  
I bring to you those who are weak, or struggling with physical,  
mental or spiritual health.

You are the great healer, and I pray for healing of mind and body for myself  
and those I now name in the silence of my heart.

*(Pause)*

Good Shepherd, within your embrace I find justice.

I bring to you the brave voices who cry out for freedom,  
those prepared to stand up and be heard without counting the cost.

I pray for those who have been imprisoned or tortured for their race,  
color, caste or faith.

Source: [re:Worship](#)  
(adapted for use here)

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*Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words*  
(follow the link above)