

4th Sunday of Easter
For Group Meetings from April 14th – April 20th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: O Lord Christ, good shepherd of the sheep, you seek the lost and guide us into your fold. Feed us, and we shall be satisfied; heal us, and we shall be whole. Make us one with you, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER

Share: How did last week's scripture (Luke 24:36b-48) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: John 10:10-18

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What distinguishing trait of the "good shepherd" does Jesus repeat three times in these verses?
2. What are the main differences between the good shepherd and the hired hand?
3. Who are "the other sheep" referenced in verse 16?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What does it mean for you to "live life to the fullest?"
2. Who is a trusted voice in your life?
3. Who are the "other sheep" who have been left outside the gate for our community?

Memorize this verse: Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11) When have you sacrificed something for someone else?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 23. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

What jumped out to me in Jesus’ discourse on being “the good shepherd” was his simple but bold assertion that, “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.” Have you ever noticed that before? Or, more than notice it, have you ever given much thought to what that means?

What strikes me is that Jesus isn’t done yet. Despite his healings, despite his preaching, despite all that he had already done and planned to do, Jesus isn’t done yet. He still has more sheep to reach, sheep that are not in this fold. By extension, I’d suggest that God isn’t done yet, either. And this matters for at least three reasons.

First, God continues to call people from all walks of life, from every nation on the face of the earth, and from each and every generation across the nearly two thousand years since Jesus first uttered those words until today. If that were not true, you and I would not have come to faith.

Second, God is at work in our midst and through all of us and our congregation to extend the invitation to abundant life offered by the Good Shepherd. Do you imagine that God is using your life and words to invite others to faith? Can you imagine that simply by praying for someone or inviting someone to church you might be the vessel by which God continues to reach out and embrace God’s beloved sheep from beyond this fold?

Third, the people who will one day constitute Jesus’ flock are beyond our imagining. There is a tremendous expansiveness to Jesus’ statement here, and we do not know – for neither Jesus nor John tells us – just what are the limits of the fold Jesus describes. All we know is that Jesus isn’t done yet. Jesus is still calling, God is still searching, and in time we will all be, as Jesus says, one flock under one shepherd.

I think this third point is the one that most animates my imagination, because I know more and more people who are worried about friends and family members who no longer go to church or who don’t necessarily identify as Christian anymore. And it’s not just our personal observations and conversations but studies continue to indicate a steady downward trend of those that attend worship regularly and those that identify as religious. This text reminds us that God is not done yet, that God works in ways beyond our imagining to bring together one flock, and that Jesus Christ’s mercy and grace are for all. What makes me bold to proclaim these promises even though I don’t know for sure the fate of the various people you and I are concerned about? Just this: Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the one who laid down his life for the sheep – all the sheep! – and who was raised to life once again, validating his sacrifice and promise. Which means that while we may not know all that God has in mind for those who have followed different paths, I nevertheless trust them all to the mercy and grace of the Good Shepherd.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

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, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen