

Lay Preachers' Bulletin

Lectionary Notes - April 2026

April's lectionary notes have been provided by The Rev. Norbert Haukenfrers, Incumbent - St. Peter's, Okotoks .

April 5, 2026 – Easter Sunday

Propers - BAS page 335

Gospel: [John 20:1-18](#)

Background:

Jesus was mocked, beaten, crucified and buried in a tomb on Friday, Sabbath was observed, and it is early Sunday morning with two parallel scenes centred on Mary Magdalene and her responses to what she at and within Jesus' tomb. Like much of John's Gospel the passage moves from confusion to recognition, from darkness to understanding.

Historical Background & Context:

The Disciples' Investigation (vv. 1–10)

Mary arrives at the tomb while darkness still covers the ground and, seeing the stone removed, concludes that Jesus' body has been stolen. This darkness functions both literally and symbolically, standing for her grief and lack of comprehension. She alerts Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple, and they race to the tomb, the beloved wins the race but hesitates at the entrance, Peter enters and sees the burial cloths and head covering arranged in an orderly fashion, details that suggest no hasty grave robbery. The Beloved Disciple enters the tomb and 'believed,' though his faith still seeks understanding, as the shock of resurrection will require time for the disciples to integrate with Scripture and Jesus' prior teaching. After these two examine the tomb, neither comforts Mary M., in fact they depart in silence, leaving her weeping beside the empty tomb!

Mary's Encounter with the Risen Jesus (vv. 11–18)

Mary looks into the tomb and see's what Peter and the Beloved had not! There are two angels seated within, followed by Jesus himself speaking to her. While weeping and unclear as to what to do or think, she leaves the empty tomb for a second time. On her way back to Jerusalem, she meets someone she assumes is a gardener. The gardener

addresses her by name - a surprising address of startling intimacy where she recognizes her teacher and recently crucified friend, Jesus. Mary is the first to see the resurrected Jesus; he comforts her and commissions her, a woman, to announce the good news. And Jesus sends her to encourage the disciples who had abandoned her in silence!

Narrative & Inter-textual Considerations

Mary Magdalene is the central figure of this passage, Mary Magdalene is mentioned more frequently than many male disciples across all four Gospels. She alone receives this profound and intimate resurrection encounter.

Questions For Reflection:

This passage invites you to consider moments when transforms into hope – especially when things seem irretrievably lost until God reveals unexpected joy.

1. Why do you think Jesus chose to appear to Mary before any of the male disciples?
2. Mary sees a gardener but does not recognize Jesus until he speaks her name. Personal address versus logical deduction awakens her faith: How do you recognize God's presence?

Liturgical Context

It is the Sunday of the Resurrection, a principal feast day with an 8-day octave observance.

April 12, 2026 - The Second Sunday of Easter

Propers - BAS page 336

Gospel: [John 20:19-31](#)

Background:

Four days earlier, in the Upper Room, Jesus said to his disciples, preparing them for what was about to occur: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” (John 14:27, ESV) This passage occurs on the evening of the resurrection after Jesus’ appearance to Mary that morning. Jesus appears to his disciples passing through locked doors to stand among them and greet them with Peace. After this the disciples recognize Jesus and rejoice.

Historical Background & Context:

The disciples’ confinement behind locked doors contrasts sharply with the open tomb that a few of them had freely entered that morning. The disciples’ fear of Jewish opposition has driven them into seclusion and self-imposed imprisonment that reflects a spiritual condition requiring resurrection. Jesus addresses their anxiety directly through repeated words of peace, a greeting carrying significantly more weight than it did on the night of the Passover.

The Peace offered comes from the resurrected one who has endured the world’s violence and stands alive despite it.

Thomas’s story parallels Mary’s earlier encounter, as he experiences his own dramatic moment of recognition and revelation. Absent during the first appearance, Thomas demands tangible proof, he will not believe without touching the nail marks and spear wound himself. Eight days later, when Jesus appears again and invites Thomas to examine his wounds directly, Thomas responds with the Gospel’s highest Christological declaration: “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:26-28) Yet Jesus pronounces blessing not upon those who see and believe, but upon those who believe without such visual confirmation, (John 20:29) a statement that bridges the gap between the disciples’ visions and the Gospel audience who must trust without seeing.

John concludes admitting that Jesus performed many other signs that are not recorded, but the ones recalled are so that we might believe that Jesus is the Messiah and God’s Son, receiving life through that faith.

Narrative & Inter-textual Considerations

Jesus' breathing upon the disciples as he grants them the Holy Spirit echoes both God's creative breath animating humanity, in Genesis 2:7, and the Spirit's life-giving power, enabling their mission through the continuing presence of the risen Christ.

Theological and/or Sacramental application

The disciples receive authority to forgive and retain sins; a commission extending Jesus' own reconciling work into the world.

Questions For Reflection:

Thomas remained with the disciples even though he didn't believe in Jesus resurrection, by staying in their company he eventually came to faith.

1. When you struggle with belief how does staying in the company of believing community sustain you?
2. How can your faith community embody the welcoming of Thomas?
3. How does receiving God's peace equip you to take part in Jesus' mission of reconciliation in your relationships and community?

Liturgical Context:

The Sunday after Easter is a low Sunday and concludes the festival of the Resurrection.

April 19, 2026 – The Third Sunday of Easter

Propers - BAS page 337

Gospel: [Luke 24:13-35](#)

Background:

This journey is on Resurrection Sunday, after the appearance to Mary Magdalene but before the appearance of Jesus to the disciples in the Upper Room.

Historical Background & Context:

Cleopas and an unnamed disciple travel from Jerusalem toward Emmaus, discussing recent events when an unidentified man joins them as a travel companion. This man, Jesus, asks them what they are discussing, Cleopas responds with surprise, how could anyone coming from Jerusalem not know about Jesus of Nazareth, describing him as “a prophet mighty in deed and word” who was handed over to the religious leaders and crucified by the Romans at their request three days ago. They are sad and disappointed, as they had expected Jesus to be Israel’s redeemer. They had been part of the group gathered in the upper room who had heard Mary Magdalenes and the other women’s report of finding the tomb empty and seeing angels who declared Jesus was alive.

Jesus listens to their heartbreak and disbelief and then schools them for their slowness to believe the prophets, explaining how the Messiah necessarily had to suffer before entering glory, interpreting messianic passages throughout Scripture. Following Palestinian custom, the disenchanted disciples invite their traveling companion to stay as evening approaches. Oddly, Jesus assumes the role of host rather than guest at the meal, which breaks convention, blessing and breaking bread, and with that they see and recognize Jesus. And then He vanishes.

Narrative & Inter-textual Considerations

Luke shapes this narrative in characteristically Lukan fashion, echoing the Old Testament account of God’s appearance to Abraham and Sarah, and framing the story around a journey.

Explanation of key language, grammar and translation points

Clearing up an historical confusion of whether Cleopas was related to Jesus. Some scholars have identified Cleopas with Clopas, the husband of Mary who stood at Jesus’s cross, which would suggest a family connection. However, this identification is rejected by most modern commentators, who distinguish Cleopas (a diminutive of the Greek name Cleopatros) from Clopas (a Greek form of a Hebrew name). There is no evidence

that Cleopas held any familial relationship to Jesus. He is simply identified as one of the disciples, and there is no other mention of Cleopas in the Bible beyond this Emmaus Road account. Cleopas significance stems entirely from his encounter with the risen Jesus and his role as a witness to the Resurrection.

Theological and/or Sacramental Application

A central theological theme involves revelation: the disciples' inability to recognize Jesus stems not from mere shock but from divine action, and recognition comes only after scriptural instruction and participation in the Lord's Supper. Cleopas's account summarizes the gospel from Jesus's ministry through his death but remains incomplete until Jesus supplies the resurrection word and reveals himself.

Questions For Reflection

1. How does Luke use "recognize" as a synonym for faith, connecting it to his larger purpose of helping readers grasp the reliability of Christian teaching?
2. Luke indicates that their inability to recognize Jesus was divinely ordained rather than their own failure: Their ability to recognize seems to depend on revelation, beyond human ability. What does this reveal about the nature of faith?
3. How does Jesus transform their despair by reinterpreting suffering itself?
4. Their change of mood creates an urgent need to share their joy with others, making them heralds of the risen Christ. How does our emotional transformation—from sadness to joy—equip us to become witnesses?
5. How do Jesus's scriptural interpretation and the breaking of bread complement each other as complementary acts?
6. Teaching and eating, Word and Sacrament, form the foundation of Christian worship, with catechesis preparing for and leading to Eucharistic fellowship. What does the connection between increasing knowledge of Jesus and worship suggest about how we meet God today?

April 26 The Fourth Sunday of Easter

Propers - BAS page 339

Gospel: [John 10:1-10](#)

Background:

Continues the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees introduced in chapter 9. The healed blind man from chapter 9 becomes a sheep without a shepherd, cast out by the religious community, until Jesus uses this image to help people understand what it means to belong to God's flock and know him as their Shepherd. Where Jesus healed a blind man, the religious leaders rejected him, but now the confrontation unfolds through shepherd and gate imagery rather than direct accusation.

Historical Background & Context:

Offers a contrast between a legitimate shepherd and thieves or bandits who harm sheep. (1–6) The opening “amen” saying develops the theme of Pharisaic blindness by contrasting the true shepherd, one who enters the sheepfold by the proper gate with criminals who climb in illicitly. This imagery draws on concrete Palestinian reality. Sheepfolds were stone enclosures with a single locked gate, protecting valuable animals from theft. The theft of sheep was a devastating loss in ancient agrarian societies where sheep provided food, clothing, and trade goods. The sheep recognize their shepherd through his voice, reflecting actual practice where shepherds know each animal by name and the animals respond to the shepherd's distinctive call. Western shepherds who follow their flocks herding with border collies, Middle Eastern shepherds lead from the front, calling repeatedly to keep the herd together.

Shifts the dominant metaphor to Jesus as the gate itself. (7–10) Jesus identifies himself as the “door,” the protector of sheep from thieves and robbers, using the solemn affirmation “truly, truly, I say to you.” The “thieves and robbers” who came “before” Jesus denote Jewish rulers trying to steal the faith of his flock. Entry through Jesus as the gate brings salvation, freedom to move in and out, and pasture, while the thief exists only to steal, kill, and destroy. A sharp contrast to Jesus, who came so people might have life abundantly.

Explanation of key language, grammar and translation points

The thieves came “before” in an organizational or structural sense not a chronological or timeline sense.

Theological and/or Sacramental application

Verses 7-10 reinterprets the scene Christologically for us, helping us understand that a life committed to Christ is the way of salvation that leads to a life of abundance, hope, and peace.

Questions For Reflection:

1. Jesus calls his own sheep by name and leads them out; the sheep follow him because they know his voice. We can learn how God's voice sounds in Scripture, and as we recognize the voice of our Good Shepherd in Scripture, we can compare what we "hear" to what has already been spoken there, knowing God will never contradict himself. Whose voices do you follow without question?
2. How do you distinguish between competing voices claiming your attention?
3. Jesus is the only way—the only gate to become part of God's eternal flock; anyone promoting another way, according to Jesus, is a thief and a robber. What does it mean that Jesus names himself not just as shepherd but as the gate itself?
4. Does this shift your understanding of access to God?
5. Just as sheep leave their pen daily to wander among hills, we must live in our world and engage our culture, yet God wants us to have life in its fullness; the choice we have is to go through the gate and check in with the gatekeeper, a good conscience kept alert by God's grace, enabling us to come and go in confidence. Where do you sense danger in your daily life?