

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Good Shepherd Sunday

April 25th, 2021, 10:00 am



# CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue  
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1  
Church: 905-685-8294 Fax 905-685-7661

[www.christlutheransc.ca](http://www.christlutheransc.ca)

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon  
**Bulletin Announcements:** Please send to [secretary@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:secretary@christlutheransc.ca).  
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

**Pastor:** Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) [pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com](mailto:pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com)  
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**Bulletin by email:** Judy Mason [chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca)

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**FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER + Good Shepherd Sunday**

**Prayer:** Almighty God, merciful Father, since You have wakened from death the Shepherd of Your sheep, grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may know the voice of our Shepherd and follow Him that sin and death may never pluck us out of Your hand; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Musician:** Susanne Anderson  
**Reader:** Paul Mason

**Sunday School:** Our Good Shepherd – <https://youtu.be/ygUnnsk5jkw>  
**Precious Moments:** Holy Spirit — <https://youtu.be/0KpQowcCB1Y>  
**Children’s Message:** *Jesus, Our Good Shepherd* – <https://youtu.be/QTzNUAx1LIM>

**WORSHIP NOTE:** Until May 20, Worship Service will be:  
• **live-streamed at 10 AM** on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC>).  
• Following the service, a recording will be uploaded to YouTube – “Gathering the Scattered” at: (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3a4p6prdJGEyP5S-q-cNSq>).  
• A PDF version of the order of service for each Sunday will also be posted on our church website: [christlutheransc.ca](http://christlutheransc.ca).

Any questions or concerns, please contact Judy Slingerland or Pastor Todd or phone the church office. May the peace of the risen Lord be with you all.

**DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:**

Monday: Eph.4: 17-24                      Wed.: 1 John 4: 7-14                      Friday: 11 Cor. 5: 16-21  
Tuesday: Eph. 4: 25-32                      Thurs: Acts 17: 22-23                      Saturday: Rom. 1: 18-25

The **ANNUAL MEETING OF LUTHER MANOR ST. CATHARINES INC.** will be held on Wednesday, **April 28, 2021**, at 7:00 p.m. via ZOOM. Please contact Karen McCumber ([luther.manor.inc@gmail.com](mailto:luther.manor.inc@gmail.com)) if you would like to become a member of the Corporation.

<b><u>Last Sunday Attendance:</u> April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021 9 a.m. – 22 ; 11 a.m. - 21 ; Total: 43</b>					
	<b><u>Budget</u></b>	<b><u>Weekly Need</u></b>	<b><u>Last Sunday</u></b>	<b><u>Year To Date</u></b>	<b><u>+ or - (--)</u></b>
Current:	271,175.00	5,214.90	4,439.00	55,280.69	(22,618.90)
Missions	20,000.00	384.62	587.00	4,935.00	(449.62)
Property Improvement:			407.00	1, 786.50	

**FLOWERS** have been placed on the altar this morning to the glory of God by Andy & Bette Vasko and family in loving memory of Mary Vasko.

**FLOWERS FOR ALTAR:** If you would like to place flowers on the altar, please sign your name at the back of the church or email: [secretary@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:secretary@christlutheransc.ca). Cost is \$25/bouquet

**COLLECTION NOTE:** At this point we are not collecting any materials for the church. This means no milk bags for making mats; no SOUL bingo prizes; no Christmas cards for Sunday School or SOUL; no puzzles for exchange, etc. Thank you!

**SUPPORTING YOUR CHURCH DURING THE PANDEMIC:** It's important for members to keep in mind that expenses for payroll, utilities, maintenance, etc. continue to accumulate even when you are not comfortable attending service.

**1. THROUGH EFT DONATIONS:** Lutheran Church - Canada, East District Corporation continues to facilitate this service for us. To assist you in continuing your financial support to your church, we encourage you to fill out the form that is available for printing at:

[http://christlutheransc.ca/?page\\_id=96](http://christlutheransc.ca/?page_id=96) and then mail the form along with a voided cheque to:

Lutheran Church-Canada, East District Corporation  
275 Lawrence Ave., Kitchener, ON N2M 1Y3  
Attn: Darryll Holland

**2. BY MAIL:** cheques can still be mailed to:

Christ Lutheran Church  
140 Russell Ave. St. Catharines, ON L2R 1W1

or dropped in the Church mailbox at the East entrance.

**3. ONLINE VIA LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA:** Lutheran Church-Canada has opened a web portal that allows parishioners to donate directly to their home church:

<https://lutheranchurch-canada.tnq-secure.com/?pageId=donation-edit&categoryId=10972>

select "St. Catharines-Christ Lutheran-30950" from the drop down menu, enter the amount of your donations and LCC will transfer your donation to Christ. Donation is via VISA or Mastercard. Tax receipts will be issued by LCC (not Christ).

This opportunity will be in effect until the COVID-19 emergency is over.

The Canadian Lutheran: The March/April 2021 copy of The Canadian Lutheran is now available at online, visit: [WWW.CANADIANLUTHERAN.CA](http://WWW.CANADIANLUTHERAN.CA)

# SERVICE OF THE WORD AND PRAYER

The 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter + Good Shepherd Sunday

April 25, 2021 + 10 AM blended lockdown

GATHERING SONG

*"The King of Love"*

**1 The King of love my Shepherd is, Whose goodness faileth never;  
I nothing lack if I am His, And He is mine forever.**

**2 Where streams of living water flow -- My ransomed soul He leadeth,  
And, where the verdant pastures grow, With food celestial feedeth.**

**3 Perverse and foolish oft I strayed, But yet in love He sought me,  
And on His shoulder gently laid, And home rejoicing brought me.**

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

Your Word is made flesh among us:

**with Mary in the garden, you call us by name.**

With Thomas beholding your wounds, you call us to believe.

**With sheep of others folds, we are gathered by your voice.**

Your Word names our death and our life:

**a seed that falls into the earth and dies,**

rain and snow that come down from heaven to water the earth,

**a vine in which we abide.**

Through your Word, you appoint us to bear fruit, fruit that will last.

**We bless you, O God, for your Word.**

PSALM 23

**The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.**

*King James' Version*

## SCRIPTURE SONG

*"Lord I Lift"*

**Lord I lift Your name on high  
Lord I love to sing Your praises  
I'm so glad You're in my life  
I'm so glad You came to save us**

**You came from heaven to earth to show the way  
From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay  
From the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky  
Lord I lift Your name on high**

© 1989 Maranatha Publishing house *MercyMe - Lord I Lift Your Name On High Lyrics | AZLyrics.com*

## GREETING & PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you:

**And also with you.**

Let us pray. Almighty and eternal God, You have brought back from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, to call us into His flock by His Word. Send us Your Holy Spirit, so that we may hear the voice of the good Shepherd and faithfully follow Him. We ask this through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord and Shepherd, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## WORD

**The First Reading:** *The Acts of the Apostles 4: 1-12*

While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them, much annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead. So they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who heard the word believed; and they numbered about five thousand. The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is "the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone." There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.' This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**The Epistle:** *1 John 3: 16-24*

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us. This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL VERSE

*“The King Of Love”*

**And so through all the length of days  
Thy goodness faileth never;  
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise  
Within Thy house forever.**

**The Holy Gospel:** *St. John 10:11-18*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. John, the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter:

**Glory to You, O Lord.**

[Jesus says:] ‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. 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. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to You, O Christ.**



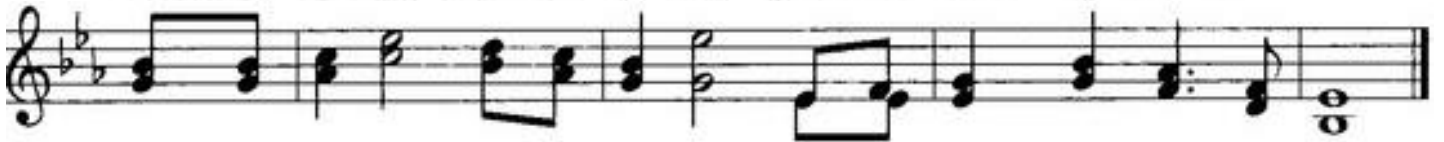
1 Sav-ior like a shep-herd lead us; much we need your ten-der care.  
 2 We are yours; in love be-friend us, be the guard-ian of our way;  
 3 You have prom-ised to re-ceive us, poor and sin-ful though we be;  
 4 Ear-ly let us seek your fa-vor, ear-ly let us do your will;



In your pleas-ant pas-tures feed us, for our use your fold pre-pare.  
 keep your flock, from sin de-fend us, seek us when we go a-stray.  
 you have mer-cy to re-lieve us, grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free.  
 bless-ed Lord and on-ly Sav-ior, with your love our spir-its fill.



Bless-ed Je-sus, bless-ed Je-sus, you have bought us; we are yours.  
 Bless-ed Je-sus, bless-ed Je-sus, hear us chil-dren when we pray.  
 Bless-ed Je-sus, bless-ed Je-sus, ear-ly let us turn to you.  
 Bless-ed Je-sus, bless-ed Je-sus, you have loved us, love us still.



Bless-ed Je-sus, bless-ed Je-sus, you have bought us; we are yours.  
 Bless-ed Je-sus, bless-ed Je-sus, hear us chil-dren when we pray.  
 Bless-ed Je-sus, bless-ed Je-sus, ear-ly let us turn to you.  
 Bless-ed Je-sus, bless-ed Je-sus, you have loved us, love us still.

Text: attr. Dorothy A. Thrupp, 1779-1847

Music: BRADBURY, William B. Bradbury, 1816-1868

MESSAGE *St John 10 – "There are others..."* (print-out below)

## THE APOSTLES' CREED

God has made us His people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess the faith.

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the + life everlasting. Amen.**

## CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS

But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith -

**praying in the Holy Spirit.**

*(Jude 20)*

Keep yourselves in the love of God,

**waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, that leads to eternal life.**

*(Jude 21)*

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation.

**The old has passed away; behold, the new has come!**

*(2 Cor. 5:17)*

Let us confess our sins in the presence of God and of one another:

*(Brief silence for reflection and self-examination)*

**Most Gracious Father, we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in our thoughts, words and deeds. We have committed sins against our neighbour and against You, O Father. Have mercy upon us. In Your compassion forgive us our sins. Those sins which are known to us, and those which are unknown. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that by faith we may be sorry for our sins, repent of them and serve You in newness of life to the honour and glory of Your Holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you always:

**And also with you.**

## PRAISE RESPONSE

*"Come and Praise The Lord Our King"*

*(Michael Rowed tune)*

**Come and praise the Lord our King, Alleluia—  
Raise your voice, in worship sing, Alleluia!**

**Jesus died on Calvary, Alleluia—  
Rose again triumphantly, Alleluia!**

**We will live with Him one day, Alleluia—  
And forever with Him stay, Alleluia!**



# THE PRAYERS

## THANKSGIVING

Praise be to You, O God the Father,

**Who created all things by Your power and wisdom and did so love the world as to give Your Son as our Saviour.**

Praise be to You, O God the Son,

**For You were made a human, like us in all things but without sin, and were put to death for our sin and raised for our justification.**

Praise be to You, O God the Holy Spirit,

**That You have led us into all truth and do pour into our hearts the love of God.**

All praise and glory be to You, O God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

**Amen.**

## SUPPLICATION & INTERCESSIONS

As sheep trust their shepherd for guidance and protection, let us turn to our God in prayer, certain that he hears our voice for the sake of Jesus Christ his Son. O Gracious Lord, be with your whole church on earth, and the church in this land. Keep her faithful, and let your message of forgiveness through Christ be heard and believed.

We pray to You:

**Good Shepherd, hear us.**

Be with our Synod and her leaders. We commend to you our Synod parishes and church leaders, and all men and women, young and old, who serve You. Uphold all in their daily callings with true faith and a godly life. We pray to You:

**Good Shepherd, hear us.**

Bless Canada, and help those in authority to strive for harmony, honesty and justice. Remember our Queen, Elizabeth, our Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, our Premier, Doug Ford, those in our local government, and all who maintain order and safety with wisdom and care during our time of lockdown. We pray to You:

**Good Shepherd, hear us.**

Guide our industry, our education, our arts, culture and leisure activities, our mass media, our science and technology. Be with the unemployed and the overworked, the sick and the aged, the poor, the needy and the lonely. We especially remember today any who are sick or in need of healing -- *(names added here...)*. We pray to You:

**Good Shepherd, hear us.**

Seek out those who have become lost on the path of life. Bring them back to your fold. Help us all to care for our lost brothers and sisters and to help where we can to remind them of your constant goodness and kindness. We pray for your protection over the families of our congregation. Open their hearts and their minds to hear your voice and to follow you on the right paths. We pray to You:

**Good Shepherd, hear us.**

Help us to care for the land and protect its fragile environment, so that the blessings you give can be passed on to future generations. We pray to You:

**Good Shepherd, hear us.**

Shepherd God, you gather your sheep from all corners of the world, and do not allow even one of your flock to be lost. May we and all people hear your voice, and be gathered into the one flock of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

**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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen**

BLESSING & BENEDICTION

Let us praise the Lord:

**Thanks be to God.**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Communion of the Holy Spirit, + be with you all.

**Amen**



1 I am Je - sus' lit - tle lamb; ev - er glad at  
 2 Day by day, at home, a - way, Je - sus is my  
 3 Who is hap - py as I am, e - ven now the



heart I am; for my Shep - herd gent - ly guides me,  
 staff and stay. When I hun - ger, Je - sus feeds me,  
 Shep - herd's lamb? And when my short life is end - ed,



knows my need and well pro - vides me, loves me ev - 'ry  
 in - to pleas - ant pas - tures leads me; when I thirst, he  
 by his an - gel host at - tend - ed, he shall fold me

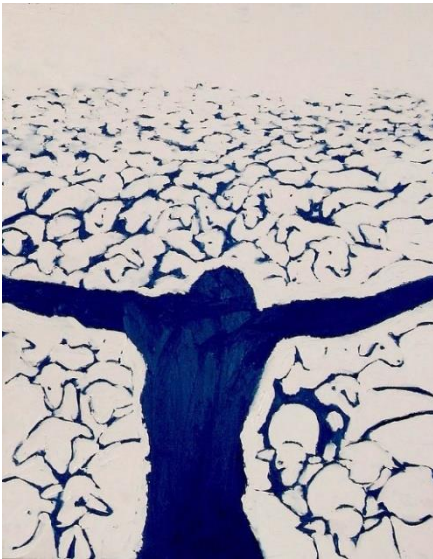


day the same, e - ven calls me by my name.  
 bids me go where the qui - et wa - ters flow.  
 to his breast, there with - in his arms to rest.

TEXT: Henriette Louise von Hayn (1776). Tr. anonymous  
 TUNE: Herrnhut (c. 1740); C. Gregor *Choralbuch* (1784)

7.7.8.8.7.7.  
 WEIL ICH JESU SCHÄFLEIN BIN (82 E)

**THE SERVICE OF THE WORD AND PRAYER** is an adapted version which is contained in the "With One Voice" Hymnal Supplement to the Lutheran Book of Worship. Published by Augsburg Fortress in 1998. All music is reprinted with limited permission from [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org).



**REV. TODD HOEFFS**

**EASTER 4**

**Scripture: St. John 10:11-18**

**Good Shepherd Sunday – THERE ARE OTHERS...**

**April 25, 2021**

**F, S + HS. Amen.**

The Good Shepherd.

The oldest Christian image

incorporated into nearly every dining room wall

in the homes where followers of the risen Christ gathered in the early days of the church.

A great consoling, relaxing image to believers persecuted by the Roman authorities.

Think of images or stories that console you?

I still love my paperback picture book of “Curious George Goes to The Hospital”

I received as a 3 year old after getting my tonsils out.

These stories and images put us in a calm place.

The Good Shepherd image for me didn’t do that...

only the part about “spreading a table before me”...must be a food/appetite thing for me! LOL

Beloved John’s depiction of Jesus in this way comes through the lens of

Psalm 23 —“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want . . .

he leads me beside the still waters, he restoreth my soul...”

Since Jesus is also viewed as the Son of David, the shepherd King Messiah,

the provider/protector image has become central in Christian life.

Sheep and shepherds aren’t a direct part of our culture today.

But the consolation early Christians felt has so much to do with His self-sacrificial care. He helps by giving fully of Himself. NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES.

Even dying.

As in

Laying down his life for the sheep.

Just as a shepherd in the Biblical culture would lie down at the doorway of the sheep as a protector. Any predator coming close would be easily seen and prevented from killing the sheep. This is where the saying “over my dead body” originates.

Every Christian in the Roman era suffering life and death persecution found this to have immeasurable peaceful value. Because dying isn’t the end of this protection.

Jesus lays down His life so in order to take it up again.

Laying down his life for the flock (on a cross on Good Friday), and taking it up again (alive on Easter morning).

Notice the image in the bulletin this morning. The image on my message slide.

The figure with outstretched arms, like a crucified form, is just that – Jesus crucified,

as the cross is the shape and way He lays down His life for the sheep – all the sheep – who are pictured before Him huddled together, going in all different directions.

Through His outstretched arms of mercy, as He's dying He's protecting, welcoming, bringing in all sheep from fear and confusion to the perfect harmony of His Father's fold. But Jesus isn't only the protecting shepherd, he's the actual physical gate through which we all enter. He's the way in and out.

He provides the passageway to find the sweet green grasses for grazing.

Church life is similar. We enter in through His Body, as a Baptismal passage.

We don't choose who's in the flock and who's not.

While we trust in Baptism along with God's Word and promises, we don't set the standards of membership. Ours is not the job of judging or rating the value of another.

In this section of our Lord's great flock here – we've been called to embrace and imitate the welcoming gate that is Jesus – as we seek to share his love with all creation.

As we strive to emulate the reach of our Lord's shepherd's hook which is both strong and gentle. And so, living in the fold, once we've entered through the waters of baptism, joined to Christ's death and resurrection, we are made one with all who live and die in Him.

In Christ's nail scarred and glorified body we are gathered in with the other sheep: walking and learning, feeding and watering, resting and serving.

One flock, one shepherd.

One bread, one body, one Lord of all.

One hope, one faith, one birth, that is, this new baptismal birth.

Or at times,

Do our egos and our desires, our determination to have it our way,

cause us to transform from sheep who've entered through the gate of Jesus,

— turning into thieves and bandits who seek to steal what we want of the flock;

or do we even chase others away by our less than Jesus-centered behavior.

When we enter through Jesus the gate, confessing our sinfulness, we are aware and assured of forgiveness and we are called to live doing the same as we work for justice and love mercy.

Once in our Lord's flock, do we trust in His abundance?

Or are we blinded from seeing that God truly provides for all our wants?

We get traumatized by seeking more that can spread through the flock,

misguiding us into thinking that there's not enough for all so we better hoard what we can:

hoard resources, hoard power, hoard control, hoard attention.

Then we run the risk of assisting in the poisoning of the faith and growth of the other sheep.

Then, what are we really communicating about the Good shepherd and we, His sheep,

by our actions? If we tell the world that we follow the Good Shepherd,

that we've entered by faith through him and by his leading we continually find our guidance,

care, protection and identity; how does the world then see this King of Love we call shepherd

in the way that the flock walks together, cares for one another,

carries out the mission of the one we follow, reaches to the ones who appear to be not a part of us? In us and through us others will see the Good Shepherd's flock

as something that they're drawn to, or repelled from...

Because, Jesus Himself says **THERE ARE OTHER SHEEP NOT OF THIS FOLD—**

Notice - outside the fold other sheep hear the voice of Jesus, and are willing to follow.

In context of John's Gospel, it's a direct hit to the religious authorities

and those who thought they knew who's in and who's out of God's Kingdom.

Jesus is saying the outside **GENTILES** are also **HIS SHEEP!**

John wrote this while transitioning from a Jewish dominated church to a Gentile one. Debates had erupted as early as Paul's ministry as to how this was going to work.

No matter the tensions, Jesus the Good Shepherd has come for all people to be of one flock, with one shepherd.

Even though we all know and experience a predominantly Gentile church, we still continue to struggle with the question of who is in and who is out.

The Christian world is rather diverse, with thousands of different versions.

Down through the ages, attempts have been made to determine who has the most "correct faith" and who has not. Martin Luther's advice on worthiness for receiving Holy Communion is still the best "test" for faith in general – he or she is fully prepared who believes in the words "given and shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins." That's far better than trying to see if you like or dislike the same people God likes or dislikes. That can only hurt the fabric of the church, for all belong to Christ, all are loved and wanted by God, all are included in His mercy and grace. Thanks be to God there are OTHER sheep, or else we wouldn't be included!

Could it be that the other sheep include the Samaritan woman whom Jesus meets at a well and engages in a rather interesting theological conversation about worship?

What about the tax collectors he has dinner with and the revolutionaries who appear to have joined his band? Then there's all the women who seem to be following him.

Besides that, there are the lepers and sick and the injured who look to him for help.

Time and again Jesus welcomed into his fold those whom his culture deemed unclean.

We're not so perfect that we don't need shepherding and guiding.

When we follow our own impulses, we consequently find ourselves in shadowy valleys of trouble:

in disagreements with friends;

in trouble with someone;

ostracized by those we'd hoped would be our friends;

caught in the traps of past failures;

pestered by doubts –

frightened at the uncertain and ever darkening future.

Yes, in love for the other sheep who can hear His voice calling, Jesus gathers a scattered humanity back from such a situation, and return all people to God.

Because of Jesus' outstretched embrace while dying on the cross, the world is gathered into His welcoming, forgiving body.

There all our sins and shortcomings and misgivings fade away in the shed blood of our shepherd, Who dies that we all might live. And by laying down His life and taking it up again, we as His sheep bask in the peaceful still waters and vibrant green pastures.

We hear His voice when the Bible is read,

when forgiveness is spoken,

when you hear "take eat, this is My Body"

or "take and drink, this is My Blood, for you it's shed."

Fear not for you've entered the fold in Jesus' Body, all is safe.

The good shepherd is worthy of our trust and confidence.

Because He instills in us the gifts we need to trust.

We have an identity, a community and a fellowship for worship & nourishment.

As members of our Lord's flock, we can fear not for:

Shepherd Jesus is the gate, into Him all enter by faith;

Shepherd Jesus finds us when we've gone astray, returning us home;

Shepherd Jesus sets a table with His Bread and Wine, in the face of our enemies;

Shepherd Jesus is leading as we travel the valley filled with death's dark shadows;  
Shepherd Jesus is life and peace and safety and hope.  
Shepherd Jesus makes sure all OTHER SHEEP, like us, hear His voice and are nourished  
along with us into life everlasting. Amen.