



**Midweek Service of Word and Prayer
Grace Lutheran Church
Lincoln, Nebraska**

Opening Dialog

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. **Alleluia!**

We are enlightened by the brightness of his rising. **Alleluia!**

Death's darkness has no power over us. **Alleluia!**

Introduction to Sunday

This Sunday is commonly known as Good Shepherd Sunday. The image of the good shepherd shows us how the risen Christ creates life among us. So, this week you might want to reflect on how a shepherd brings life to his or her sheep.

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.**

Readings

Psalm 23

¹The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.

How does your faith shape what you need as opposed to what you want?

1 John 3

²³And 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.

How come we struggle to believe in Jesus and love one another? What keeps us from fulfilling this commandment from God?

John 10

¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

How has Jesus laid down his life for you?

Reflection

Life Laid Down

How does faith in the risen Christ call one to live? What shape does one's life take?

The readings for this fourth Sunday of Easter are rich in their imagery, and at the center is the image of the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. Five times in eight short verses Jesus mentions laying down his life for the sake of the sheep.

The First Letter of John picks up the same theme: “We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.” (1 John 3:16). Laying down one’s life for another might take many forms, but it at least means this: extending help, as much as you are able, when another is in need.

A friend tells the story of her grandfather, a faithful man who earned a modest income. Each year when tax time rolled around, he was audited. According to tax records he earned so little and gave away so much. The astounded auditors questioned him, wondering why he gave so much of his income to the church. He responded, “You can’t out give God.”

The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, and joined to the risen life of Christ, the lives of the baptized are shaped by generosity and service. Giving one’s life, resources, gifts, or whatever one holds most dear for the sake of another is both a witness to the love we have first been shown and an act of faith.

Hearing Jesus’ words in this Easter season reminds us that laying down one’s life is not an act to be feared; rather, it is an act that defies death and brings life into the world, as we trust that, in the waters of baptism, we already live in the resurrected life of Christ. The promise of new and abundant life. This is the promise that surrounds us every day.

Lord’s Prayer (together)

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.

Apostle’s Creed (together)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s 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 to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended to the living, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Responsive Prayer

Show us your mercy, O God,

and grant us your salvation.

Give us the joy of your saving help again,

and sustain us with your bountiful Spirit.

Give peace in all the world;

for only in you can we live in safety.

Keep the nations under your care,

and guide us in the way of justice and truth.

Let your way be known upon earth;

your saving health among all nations.

Let not the needy be forgotten,

nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Create in us a clean heart, O God,

and sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

Lord, hear my prayer,

and let my cry come before you.

Closing Prayer

O God, in you we live and move and have our being. Guide and govern us every day by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but remember that always we are walking in your promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Blessing

Almighty God (+) bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.