

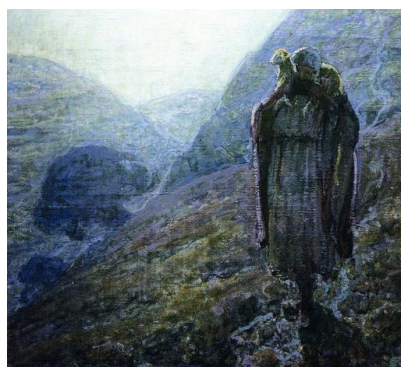


God's Word for this Week

SUNDAY 25TH APRIL
2021

COLLECT OF THE WORD

Jesus, good shepherd of the sheep,
by whom the lost are sought
and guided into the fold:
feed us and we shall be satisfied,
heal us and we shall be whole,
and lead us that we may be with you,
where you live and reign
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.



Henry Ossawa
Tanner

Our Wednesday Fellowship Group is also focusing on the Good Shepherd Theme. Note some of the representations of this theme in the pictures we have reviewed this week, also included in God's Word.

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

If the Easter season is about anything, it's about restoration, life, and God's compassionate care for God's people. These are the themes that come through the readings for this week. In Acts the disciples, who are put on trial for healing the lame man outside of the Temple, proudly proclaim Jesus as the name by which the healing has happened, and by which humanity is to be saved. In David's famous Psalm, God's care as shepherd is celebrated, and in John's letter the love of God that is revealed in Christ's sacrifice is to be passed on through those who are Christ's disciples as they choose to love one another and lay down their lives for one another. Finally, in [John 10](#) Jesus proclaims himself as the Good Shepherd who cares for the sheep with

commitment and courage, and who lays down his life for the sheep. But, in this loving sacrifice lies the hope of resurrection – Jesus confidently asserts that he will take up his life again. The message is an important one as we reflect on the resurrection over the next few weeks. Resurrection can easily be seen as an individual experience of life beyond the grave, but the Gospel reveals that it is so much more than that. As much as it does offer personal renewal through God's life, and the promise of eternity, resurrection also calls us to be life-carriers – shepherds who, like Jesus, lay our lives down for others. It is the hope of resurrection that makes sacrifice possible, and that gives us the strength and courage to risk loving and serving others even when it hurts.



Sieger
Koder

THE FIRST READING

Acts 4: 5-12

5 The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem,⁶ with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John,* and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷When they had made the prisoners* stand in their midst, they inquired, ‘By what power or by what name did you do this?’ ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, ¹⁰let 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. ¹¹This Jesus* is “the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.”*

¹²There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.’

THE EPISTLE READING

1 John 3: 16-24

¹⁶We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷How 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?



¹⁸ Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. ¹⁹And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him ²⁰whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have

boldness before God; ²²and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

²³ 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. ²⁴All 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.

THE GOSPEL READING



The Good Shepherd

John 10: 11-18

¹¹ 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The 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. ¹³The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 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. ¹⁶I 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. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸No 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.'

LOCAL APPLICATION

God's compassion for us and God's desire to restore and enliven us shine through every moment of the Easter season. The mystery and challenge of this divine quest lies in that it operates on personal, local, and global levels. As we begin to live as resurrected individuals, we cannot help but connect with resurrection communities, and that in turn brings the life of resurrection to the world. For most of us, though, the beginning point is personal and local. This means that, first of all, in our families and friendships, and in how we order our lives, God calls us to embody the compassion and sacrificial care of resurrection. Any time our words and actions bring life, joy and peace to others, we share resurrection. Any time we lay down our lives for one another, we manifest resurrection life. Then, as we connect with one another in resurrection communities, we are able to bring life to our neighbourhoods, impacting others with God's care and grace. This means that much of how we have "structured" and lived our faith as Christ followers may need to change. From exclusive communities, we will need to learn acceptance and welcome. From being people of judgment and criticism, we will need to become people of love and forgiveness. From being those who focus only on a few issues that directly affect us, we will need to contribute to causes that bring life to people we may never meet. The life that resurrection brings cannot be contained. It breaks out wherever it can, and those who seek to live resurrection can only follow where it leads. When we try to contain it or control it, we only end up falling out of step with Christ. This means that every action, word and thought can be either the reflection of resurrection, or an obstacle to making it visible. The choice is ours – we can be Good Shepherds who care for and lay our lives down for those around us, or not.

