

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2026
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER YEAR A
JOHN 10:1-10 "BY THE GATE"



The Good Shepherd by Del Parson

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(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.
Respond with words in bold print.

SUMMARY OF TODAY'S SCRIPTURES

From "Preaching Through the Christian Year" Fred Craddock
Acts 2:42-47 Today's first lesson is the first of several summaries of the work done by Luke (the author) to typify life in the earliest Christian community. It reflects the exuberant mood of a new movement pulsating with the life of the Spirit. The other lessons all reflect the common theme of shepherd and shepherding.

Psalm 23 depicts Yahweh as the Shepherd of Israel.

1 Peter 2:19-25 further extends the shepherd imagery to Christ, drawing on Isaiah 53:5-12, and reminds us of our former status as straying sheep who have been rescued by the "shepherd and guardian" of our souls (1Peter 2:25.)

John 10:1-10 applies the shepherd image to Jesus, the "good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE: "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need"

Edward Broughton

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Uni Pres Kindercottage

***CALL TO WORSHIP (INSPIRED BY PSALM 23)**

One: The Good Shepherd is the gate. Let us enter with thanksgiving and praise!

Many: The Shepherd restores our souls, satisfies our needs, and leads us on the right path.

One: The Good Shepherd is the gate. Let us live with courage and conviction not fear and timidity.

Many: Through valleys and storms, chaos and

confusion, threats and concerns, the Shepherd comforts us with power and strength, love and compassion, hope and peace.

One: The Good Shepherd is the gate. Let us worship in the presence of the Holy One!

Many: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all our days of my life. Let us dwell in God's presence forever!

***INVOCATION:**

God who is Shepherd, Gate, and Way, we join together as a community in your presence and in your protection. Shield us from apathy and isolation. Fortify us against resignation and despair. Nudge us toward justice and righteousness in your name. As we gather to worship you, may we be transformed by your love, strengthened in grace, and rooted in faith for your glory and your kingdom come. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: "He Leadeth Me: O Blessed Thought"** Insert

***PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**
Shepherd of our lives, like sheep, we wander and stray. We come to you for sustenance yet distance ourselves from your realm when you require more from us. We bite one another with words that cut and attitudes that

reflect more apathy than care. We lie down and become stuck when you would expand our territory and sphere of belonging. We give you thanks for not giving up on us and continuing to lead us by your Spirit. Give us courage and confidence to do your will and to love with our lives. We devote ourselves anew to your teaching, to community, to the sacramental life, and to prayer. Lead us in the ever full and renewed life in Christ. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Beloved, the Shepherd cares for you and rejoices whenever you turn back to follow God's holy way. Life in the promise of glorious, flourishing life and the kingdom of God manifested on earth. There is no detour you may take where the Shepherd cannot find you and urge you back into their loving embrace. You are redeemed and restored in Christ. Receive the goodness of God whose grace is sufficient and available for you to begin anew.

***GLORIA:**

Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat)
(end) One God always here. One God always here.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS:

SECOND TESTAMENT: Acts 2:42-47

Community of believers

⁴² The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. ⁴³ A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were united and shared everything. ⁴⁵ They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. ⁴⁶ Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. ⁴⁷ They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 23

SECOND TESTAMENT: 1 Peter 2:19-25

¹⁹ Now, it is commendable if, because of one's understanding of God, someone should endure pain through suffering unjustly. ²⁰ But what praise comes from enduring patiently when you have sinned and are beaten for it? But if you endure steadfastly when you've done good and suffer for it, this is commendable before God.

²¹ You were called to this kind of endurance, because Christ suffered on your behalf. He left you an example so that you might follow in his footsteps. ²² He committed no sin, nor did he ever speak in ways meant to deceive. ²³ When he was insulted, he did not reply with insults. When he suffered, he did not threaten revenge. Instead, he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. ²⁴ He carried in his own body on the cross the sins we committed. He did this so that we might live in righteousness, having nothing to do with sin. By his wounds you were healed. ²⁵ Though you were like straying sheep, you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your lives.

*GOSPEL LESSON: John 10:1-10

¹⁰ ¹ I assure you that whoever doesn't enter into the sheep pen through the gate but climbs over the wall is a thief and an outlaw. ² The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The guard at the gate opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ Whenever he has gathered all of his sheep, he goes before them and they follow him, because they know his voice. ⁵ They won't follow a stranger but will run away because they don't know the stranger's voice." ⁶ Those who heard Jesus use this analogy didn't understand what he was saying.

I am the gate

⁷ So Jesus spoke again, “I assure you that I am the gate of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me were thieves and outlaws, but the sheep didn’t listen to them. ⁹ I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief enters only to steal, kill, and destroy. I came so that they could have life—indeed, so that they could live life to the fullest.

MESSAGE: “But what does it mean?”

I could also call this “lost in translation!”

Let’s start with what we can all agree on. I think we can agree that this book was written a long time ago. At least the original version. And we can all agree that the people in this book lived in a place far away from here. I think we can all agree that things were very different for those people who lived a long time ago in a place few of us have ever been to. They dressed differently than we do. Their culture was completely different. Their meals consisted of a different menu than we do. Their means of transportation was different; mostly on foot or may a donkey or wagon. They didn’t have gas stations or places to charge up their electric cars.

With all these differences, how are we supposed to understand what Jesus is still trying to teach us? Today’s story is a good example of that.

Before we get to far, I want to explain that last week’s lesson came from the Gospel of Luke and this week the lesson is from the Gospel of John. Last week’s story happened the same day that the women found Jesus’ tomb empty. This week our story happened right after Jesus (who is very much alive) restored the sight of the man born blind. You know how I dislike stories that are not in chronological order. So many challenges we have today.

John 10:1-6 The first paragraph. Jesus speaks, “ ¹ I assure you that whoever doesn’t enter into the sheep pen through the gate but climbs over the wall is a thief and an outlaw. ² The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The guard at the gate opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ Whenever he has gathered all of his sheep, he goes before them and they follow him, because they know his voice. ⁵ They won’t follow a stranger but will run away because they don’t know the stranger’s voice.” ⁶ Those who heard Jesus use this analogy didn’t understand what he was saying. **SO SEE, WE’RE NOT THE ONLY ONES WHO ARE CONFUSES.**

The first paragraph of this section is a parable, as John tells us in verse 6. It’s perhaps not surprising that Jesus’ hearers didn’t understand it. In fact, Jesus adds three layers of explanation; one in the preset passage (verses

7-10), another in the next verses 11-18 and the last in verses 25-30. Guess what? We didn't read verses 10-30 and its also not in the lectionary for next week. Dear God, give us a break. If we can't look forward, let's look behind. The question that dominated chapter 9 was; is Jess from God or not? Is he a prophet or not? Is he the Messiah of not, the son of an whom God will set as judge over the world? Now here in chapter 10 we have a parable about shepherds and sheep. What's the connection?

The answer is that in the Bible the picture of the shepherd with his sheep is frequently used to refer to the king and his people. In the Bible the ideal king is pictured as a shepherd (Ezekiel 34), perhaps modelled on the shepherd-boy David, who became the king after God's own heart. In a world where they knew about the intimate contact and trust between shepherd and sheep, this was their preferred way of talking about kingship.

This is the image that Jesus chooses to explain his own claim to be the true king of Israel. Many readers rush through chapter 10 to get to chapter 11 where Jesus calls himself "the good shepherd", we should notice that in these first five verses he doesn't mention himself directly. Jesus is talking, as it were in the abstract about the difference between true shepherds and false ones.

(Before I go on. I want to point out that the conclusion of this discussion was written by Rev. N. T. Wright in 2002, 24 years ago. It may sound familiar right now. God is still speaking.)

Jesus is posing the question; how will you tell God's true, appointed king when he comes? The answer is that you can tell the true king the same way you can tell the true shepherd. Anybody can turn up in Jerusalem and give himself airs as a leader. But only the one who comes by the way God has appointed has the right to do so. Anyone can call followers. But the sign of the real king is the response that comes from the heart, when people hear his voice and, in love and trust, follow him.

The parable of these first five verses, it seems, is designed to say; this is what I'm doing; (heal the blind for example), this is what gives substance to my claim to be sent by God as Israel's true king. The fact that people are hearing me and following me – notably the man born blind – is the sign that God has sent me.

We've heard how the shepherd takes care of his sheep. He keeps them safe. He watches over their going out and coming in. His priority is on the sheep. The emphasis is on the safety, and the fulfilled life of the sheep. The shepherd has no business looking after his own interests. His priorities are the sheep. Find a king like that and you've found the Lord's anointed.: The words of Rev. N.T. Wright. Amen

CHANCEL CHOIR ANTHEM: "The Greatest Gift"
Phil Perkins

PASTORAL PRAYER:

OUR LORD'S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: 774 "Shepherd Lead"
Shepherd lead, lead me in your righteousness,
Make your way plain before my face.
For it is you, God, you, God only,
Who makes me to lie down in safety.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

Community of faith, let us hold true to the ethos of the early church and hold "all things in common" (Acts 2:4). Let us share our abundance to enjoy shared life, to meet the needs among us, and to demonstrate our commitment to the kingdom of God.

OFFERTORY: "The Lord Is My Shepherd"
Thomas Koschat

DOXOLOGY: Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING:**

Generous God, may these gifts bless our life together, fortify our ministry, and transform our community. Receive them as we give them—with gladness and thanksgiving. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 423 "Great is Thy Faithfulness"**

***BENEDICTION:**

Beloved, as you go, note the encouragement of the Shepherd: The Gate is open and with you. In your coming and going, the Shepherd leads you. Go, have life and have it abundantly.

BENEDICTION RESPONSE: 571

"O God of Love, O God of Peace" First verse only
O God of love, O God of peace,
Make wars throughout the world to cease.
The wrath of human wrong restrain;
Give peace, O God, give peace again!

THE BELL IS RUNG:

POSTLUDE: "Joyous Postlude" Chester Nordman