DAILY BREAD
LECTIONARY DEVOTIONS
EASTER 4 —YEAR A

INVOCATION

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

G: Amen

PSALM OF THE DAY: PSALM 23

**A: The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.**

L: The LORD is my shepherd,

G: I shall not be in want.

L: He makes me lie down in green pastures;

G: he leads me beside quiet waters.

L: He restores my soul;

**G: he guides me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.**

L: Even though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,

**G: for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

L: You prepare a table before me in the presence of
my enemies.

**G: You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.**

L: Surely goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,

**G: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.**

**A: The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

L: O Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Good Shepherd who laid down your life for the sheep. Lead us now to the still waters of your life-giving Word that we may abide in your Father's house forevermore; for you live and reign with him and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

READING & MEDITATION *see next page*

PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

**A: 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;
and 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.**

VERSE OF THE DAY

A: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. (John 10:14)

BENEDICTION

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.

A: Amen

Devotional material taken from Jonathan E. Schroeder, *Year A*. Jonathan E. Schroeder, ed., *Planning Christian Worship* (WELS Commission on Worship, 2010). *Visit www.BreadForBeggars.com for more resources.*

READING AND MEDITATION:

Fourth Sunday of Easter: Good Shepherd Sunday. The image of shepherd and sheep are certainly familiar to modern Christians, but do those concepts resonate as deeply for us as they did for the people of God 2000 years ago? "In such a landscape as Judea, where a day's pasture is thinly scattered over an unfenced tract of country, covered with delusive paths, frequented by wild beasts, and rolling off into the desert, the shepherd and his character are indispensable. On some high moor, across which at night the hyenas howl, when you meet him, sleepless, far-sighted, weather-beaten, armed, leaning on his staff, and looking out over his scattered sheep, every one of them on his heart, you understand why the shepherd of Judea sprang to the front in his people's history; why they gave his name to their kings; why Christ took him as the type of self-sacrifice." (George Smith) On Good Shepherd Sunday we see how sharp the contrast is between true shepherds and false shepherds. All is determined by their relationship to Christ, the only gate for the sheep.

As you study this week, seek to find the *connecting theme* in all the lessons by using Luther's Four Big Barber Questions to ponder and discuss each individual reading:

1. *What is God saying to me in this lesson?*
2. *For what does this lesson lead me to give thanks?*
3. *What sins does this lesson lead me to confess?*
4. *For what does this lesson lead me to pray?*

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 10:1-10

In the three-year cycle of readings, Good Shepherd Sunday draws its Gospel lessons from successive readings of John 10. In this lesson, Christ only infers that he is the Good Shepherd. Rather, the great "I am" statement that sets the direction for this Sunday is "I am the gate for the sheep." The preceding context of this lesson is crucial. After Jesus healed the man born blind, the Pharisees interrogated the man and his family about the healing. The Pharisees had already rejected Jesus as the Christ and were expelling from the synagogue anyone who confessed Christ. After throwing the man out of the synagogue, they verbally accost Jesus. This lesson is his answer to them. Jesus' "I am" statements highlight the exclusivity of the Christian message. Christ is Savior, and there is no other! Jesus is the only gate for the sheep, and there is no other! When a man approaches the sheep, one only needs to see how he enters the pen. Does he use the gate, i.e., does he confess Christ as Savior? True shepherds use the gate, preach Christ, and love the sheep. False shepherds refuse the gate, reject Christ, and destroy the flock.

My takeaways:

FIRST LESSON: ACTS 6:1-9; 7:2A, 51-60

Note the sharp contrast between true shepherds and false shepherds. The apostles' care for Christ and his Church leads them to raise up more leaders to serve. See how these new leaders enter by the gate! Stephen holds to Christ no matter what the consequences! But how true were Jesus' words about false shepherds: they come only to kill and destroy. With their words and teeth and rocks they testified to whom they belonged. Stephen was a μάρτυς until the end, a witness of the Savior who waited to bring him to eternal pasture. Psalm 23 graces many funerals. How fitting that on this day when we hear of the Church's first martyr, we sing Psalm 23 and remember Stephen, a true shepherd who now dwells in the house of the Lord forever.

My takeaways:

SECOND LESSON: 1 PETER 2:19-25

Undoubtedly, the Church was rocked by the martyrdom of Stephen—Peter included. Yet Peter reminds us that not even suffering and tragedy can remove us from the care of our Good Shepherd. To be the gate for straying sheep meant that Jesus had to suffer for us. So Jesus did—willingly, silently—bearing the sins of straying sheep. Now Peter calls us to follow our Shepherd and Overseer, even if it means that we suffer for doing good.

My takeaways:

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON:
1 SAMUEL 17:34-37

Long before he was the royal shepherd of the kingdom of Israel, David shepherded his father's flock in the wild country. He let no danger stop him from caring for his sheep. No law required a shepherd to fight lion and bear for the sake of the sheep. In fact, David's words here and Christ's in John 10 are all the more striking because Rabbinic law made it clear that a shepherd was not called upon to expose his own life for the safety of his flock. David, a good shepherd, knew what he spoke of when he extoled the comfort of the Shepherd's rod and staff in Psalm 23. See his words fulfilled in great David's greater Son!

My takeaways:

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON:
HEBREWS 13:20-21

Only one gate leads to life eternal, because only Christ provided the blood of the eternal covenant. As we sheep stand looking back at the Easter miracle, we are empowered and equipped to follow our Shepherd wherever he may lead.

My takeaways:

What major theme(s) connect(s) all the lessons?