

Church of the Divine Love
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

APRIL 25, 2021 10:15 A.M.

PROANAPHORA, RITE II

Opening Hymn #343 – Shepherd of souls refresh and bless

Opening Acclamation for Easter page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria page 356

Collect of the Day – lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: Acts 4:5-12

Psalm 23

Second Lesson: 1 John 3:16-24

Gradual Hymn #518 – Christ is made the sure foundation v1-3

Gospel: John 10:11-18

The Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze

Welcome and Announcements

Offertory Hymn #304 – I come with joy

Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form VI page 392

The Lord's Prayer

The Collects page 99

Prayer for Strength and Confidence page 459

For the Aged - #49 page 830

For Young Persons - #47 page 829

Prayer of St. Francis - #62 page 833

The General Thanksgiving page 101

A Prayer of St. Chrysostom page 102

Dismissal page 102

Dismissal Hymn #478 – Jesus, our mighty Lord

Sermon Sunday April 25, 2021

Acts 4: 5-12; Psalm 23; 1 John 3: 16-24; John 10: 11-18

Dear people of God,

Does my life matter? Do I make a difference, and if so, how? I suspect we all struggle with these questions. I am sure that at some level they are always with us. And we do not just want someone else to say yes. We want to be able to say yes for ourselves.

Today's gospel begins with verse 11, but I want to begin with verse 10 in which Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly." That verse is right in the middle of what is often called the Good Shepherd discourse. Jesus' statement about bringing abundant life is the goal. Today his statement about abundant life is the beginning. It is his purpose statement. It underlies everything he will say today. "I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly." That sets the tone for his telling of today's story about the good shepherd, the hired hand, the sheep, and the wolf.

And so, I want to look at those four images in relationship to abundance. Where do you experience abundance in your life and what does that look like? What does abundance mean for you? What does it feel like when you live apart or distant from abundance? And I am not talking about abundance in terms of quantity. It is not a quantity. Abundance is a quality of life. It is a way of being. We can all tell stories of times in our life when there was something we wanted and we worked hard or we waited a long time and we finally got that thing we wanted and once we had it, it did not do what we thought it would. It did not fill us up. It did not fulfill. It did not satisfy. We got what we wanted but we had no abundance. Abundance is that quality of life that lets us touch the deepest part of ourselves. It connects us with the divine, with the holy, and with what is good, true, and beautiful in this world. So that abundance is love that leads to love. It is joy that leads to joy. It is peace that leads to peace. It is kindness that leads to kindness. It is stepping more deeply and more fully into our own life and into the life of another. It never adds to the pain of the world. Abundance is Jesus' way of being in this world. It is the presence of God lived through your life and my life.

So, what if we took those four images in today's gospel, the good shepherd, the sheep, the hired hand, and the wolf, and considered them as lenses through which to see abundance, windows onto the abundant life? When you hear about the good shepherd, who do you think of? Jesus. Yes, that is the usual answer, and it is a correct answer. I am not disputing that it is Jesus, but could it be more than Jesus? Could you be the good shepherd? Could I be the good shepherd? I do not ask those question to take away from Jesus, but to expand, enlarge, and extend his presence. Think about what Psalm 23 says about the shepherd. What does the shepherd do? The shepherd leads and guides. The shepherd revives. The shepherd protects. The shepherd companions. The shepherd nourishes and feeds. The shepherd sets a table of welcome and hospitality in the difficult places of life. When have you experienced that in your life? Have you ever had someone guide you in your life? Has someone ever set a table for and welcomed you? Who has fed and nourished your soul? Have you ever had someone companion and

walk with you through the valley of the shadow of death? Were they not good shepherds to you? Have you ever had someone say or do just the right thing and he or she revived your soul when you just could not do it for yourself? The shepherd, regardless of who it is, is always leading to abundance. The shepherd is always leading to the green pastures, to the still waters, to the table that is set and the cup that is overflowing. It is always about getting to that place of abundance.

So, what about the sheep? Who are the sheep typically thought to be? Us, yes. Jesus is the good shepherd. He leads, we follow, that is how it is supposed to work. And that is right. I have got nothing against that, but again I want to expand the images, to enlarge them, to make them windows, as I said, windows with which you might see the abundance in your life. So, what if the sheep are the things that really matter, the things that have ultimate value? What if the sheep are the things entrusted to us and that we entrust to another? Think about sheep as your parenting or your grand parenting, your loving, your friendships, your marriage, your teaching, your hopes, your dreams, your losses, your sorrows, your fears. We have all got them. We have all entrusted those things into the hands and the life of another. And we have also been entrusted with those things by another. Someone comes to you and says, "You know, I'm really struggling in my marriage. Can I tell you what's going on?" They are a sheep asking for your shepherd guidance. Or you go to someone and say, "I don't know what to do with my kid," or "I don't know how to get through this tough spot in life. I just need some courage and some hope." You are the sheep looking for a shepherd.

Jesus contrasts the good shepherd with the hired hand. The hired hand, he says, does not own the sheep and does not care for the sheep. For the good shepherd, the sheep are the goal and the reason for everything the shepherd does. The sheep are everything to the good shepherd. For the hired hand, however, they are just the means. The hired hand punches the clock and shows up to receive his or her wages and when the shift is over, she is gone. The hired hand lives by quantity not abundance. Where there is a hired hand there is probably also a wolf. Wolves, Jesus says, snatch and scatter. Wolves devour life. They destroy abundance. They carry it off. Wolves come in all sorts of shapes and sizes in our world today. Sometimes it is the wolf of busyness, the wolf of achievement, the wolf of needing approval, or the wolf of having to be right and in control. And sometimes it is the wolf of fear, or the wolf of anger and resentment. Or maybe it is the wolf of failure, the wolf of despair, the wolf of brokenness. What wolves are you dealing with in your life today? How have they snatched and scattered your abundance or the abundance of another?

In some way Jesus is taking these four images and using them to paint a picture of abundance in our life. If we let them, if we look through these images and not just at them, these images all point to the abundant life Jesus is bringing and offering us. So, what do you see when you look through these windows on your life? Where is the abundance? What matters about you and your life? How might these images help you to make a difference? To live the abundant life. What will you do with what you see through these windows?

"I have come," Jesus says, "that they may have life and have it more abundantly." It is his starting point and it's his goal. Abundant life is Jesus' promise to each of us. **AMEN!**

4 EASTER

10:15 AM PROANAPHORA, RITE II
(also on zoom)

11:15 AM VESTRY MEETING
(also on zoom)

MONDAY

8:00 AM AA MEETING

WEDNESDAY

7:00 PM AL-ANON MEETING

THURSDAY

10AM-2PM THRIFT SHOP

8:00 PM AA MEETING

SATURDAY

10AM-2PM THRIFT SHOP

5 EASTER

10:15 AM PROANAPHORA, RITE II
(also on zoom)

SUPPORT THE FOOD DRIVE DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

Prayer for Grace and Favor:

Dear God, we ask that you provide for our needs, we ask for your grace and favor. We pray for your blessings to cover us; we pray that you would help us to prosper and make every plan that you have birthed in our heart to succeed. We pray that others would take notice of your goodness and could not help but say, "these are the ones that the Lord has blessed." Shine your light in us, through us. May we make a difference in this world, for your glory and purposes. Set your way before us. May all your plans succeed. We may reflect your peace and hope to a world that so desperately needs your presence and healing. In Jesus Name, Amen.

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Barbara Curran	Girard Bishop
Dina Palkowski	Margaret
Frances & Donna Mongelli	Bernie Walther
Nathan Treadwell	Jerry & Family
Tyler Gorman	Kim
Chris Dickson	Rachael "Mo"
Michael Echevarria	Warren
Andy	Bill Conklin
Michael & Family	Anthony Paribello
Martinisi Family	Edward Lent
Lois Kessler	Kate Jones
Kathleen	Del
Irene	Arlene Goodenough

Children who are ill:

Christopher and his family	
Franklin Tenesaca	Ciara
Aidan	Gabriel

