

The Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes... (Revelation 7:17)

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

As you are reading this, we are firmly in the Easter season. Easter isn't simply a historical event that we remember from long ago. In other words, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead means something for us today and forever. As Paul wrote, *Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep* (1 Corinthians 15:20). Because Jesus has been raised, we too will be raised at his appearing. On a day-to-day basis, though, we remember always that his resurrection means that our lives look differently than they would have otherwise. *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life* (Romans 6:4). This everyday reality – one that is firmly founded in the present with an eye always to the future – is reflected in this seven-week Easter season.

One peculiar (if I can say it that way) part of this season comes on the fourth Sunday of Easter (May 8). Traditionally, this Sunday has been known as 'Good Shepherd' Sunday. The name reflects the fact that the readings on the fourth Sunday of Easter always portray Jesus as our Shepherd. This year, we also hear from Revelation 7, the final verse of which you read above. The Psalm of the day is always Psalm 23, known very well by most of us. We always hear from a portion of John 10, though, where Jesus calls himself the *Good Shepherd*.

It's striking for Jesus to call himself the Good Shepherd. It may, perhaps, have even been scandalous for his disciples to hear. Why? In the Old Testament, the Shepherd of God's people is *Yahweh*. The Lord calls himself a shepherd of his people in any number of places: Psalm 23, Isaiah 40, and others. Ezekiel 34 is the starkest, where the Lord says, *Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a Shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness* (Ezekiel 34:11–12). For Jesus to call himself the Good Shepherd is for Jesus to identify with the God of Israel!

We're familiar, of course, with what it means for God, in Christ, to be our shepherd. He leads us. He feeds us. He guides us. He protects us. But, what does this have to do with Easter? Well, it's precisely what the Lord says in Ezekiel 34, and what we're so familiar with in Psalm 23. The *day of clouds and thick darkness* was certainly the day of Jesus' death on the cross, when dark clouds blocked out light for several hours. His disciples scattered, for fear that the same would happen to them. But, as our Shepherd, Jesus led us *through the valley of the shadow of death* (Psalm 23:4). How? He took up his life again on the third day. He is alive, never to die again. And, if Jesus has overcome even the power of death, what, then, could ever harm us? The answer, of course, is *nothing!*

-Pastor Squire

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“'Tis the spring of souls today: Christ has burst His prison and from three days' sleep in death as a sun has risen; All the winter of our sins, long and dark is flying from his light, to whom is given laud and praise undying.”

(“Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain” *LSB* 487, v. 2)