

HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT IS SAYING

In Scripture and Prayer and The Great Cloud of Witnesses

Week of April 21, 2024

Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Easter

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people: Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.** BCP 225

Acts 4:5-12 NRSVue, 2021

In this story from the Acts of the Apostles Peter and John, having cured a crippled man, are called to account before the high Jewish council. Peter testifies that the source of their healing power is the same Jesus whom the leaders rejected. Referring to scripture, Peter speaks of the stone rejected by the builders, which is nevertheless meant to be the cornerstone of the new faith. Evidently there were a number of encounters like this in the life of the early church, but the disciples continued to heal and to preach in Jesus' name.

[Acts 4:1-4 While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them, much annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead. So they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who heard the word believed, and they numbered about five thousand.]

- 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.
7 When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?”
8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders,
9 if we are being questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are being asked how this man has been healed,
10 let 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.
11 This Jesus is ‘the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.’
12 “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.”

Exploring Acts 4:5-12

Acts. This book is the sequel to the gospel according to Luke. Beginning with Jesus' ascension, Luke tells the story of the beginnings of the church. By no means a comprehensive history, it does however describe the spread of the church from Jerusalem to all of Palestine, and as far as Greece. The episodes he reports show how Christianity arose out of Judaism. He shows us something of the struggles the church underwent in accepting Gentiles as members. The Holy Spirit guides and strengthens the church as it spreads through much of the Roman Empire.

2

In defense of the hired hand (John 10:11-18; Acts 4:5-12)

By Nadia Stefko

[[John 10:11-18](#)] There is something that doesn't sit well with me right from the start of this Gospel passage: the characterization of the hired hand [[John 10:12-13](#)]. He is fearful and careless. This doesn't sit well for selfish reasons—because a hired hand is all I've ever been, professionally speaking. My titles have included farmhand, fry cook, server, assistant, caregiver, and now associate rector. I've never owned my own business or flock, never been an Executive Anything. And yet I'd like to think I've done good, faithful, strong, even excellent work.

John's Jesus does not speak highly of the hired hand. And so I'm left wondering: Is there a better version of the hireling we might envision, or aspire to be? After all, we're not the shepherd—Jesus is. And though we try to pattern our life and our faithfulness after his, it's not our place to become the shepherd.

[[Acts 4](#)] Peter and the other apostles in Acts embody this better sense of the more careful, committed hired hand that I'm looking for. They go around healing and preaching boldly, but always in the name of the Good Shepherd who commissioned them. Aren't they, in some sense, hired hands for Jesus? Aren't we?

I suspect the key distinction here lies in the sense of the “hiring.” God doesn't just hire us; God calls us by name. God claims us and makes a covenant with us in baptism (and with some of us again, through ordination). God's devotion to us remains steadfast, even when we, hired hands that we are, would scatter at the sight of the wolf, fleeing for a time to some seemingly greener pastures. Even when our behavior would justify our firing, God keeps showing up, with an endless supply of second chances. Always ready to make all things new.

Ideally we're not just in it for the money the way John's hired hand is. But we also don't have the same burdens of ownership that the shepherd does. In fact, it's precisely when we start to think that we do—when we try to function as the owner of the mission rather than as God's missionaries—that we tend to get into trouble.

So perhaps the goal of discipleship is to chart something of a path between the Good Shepherd himself on the one hand and the fearful, careless hireling on the other. We can try to be like the apostles, leaning into the claim God has placed on us. Speaking truth, working for healing, taking risks in the world. But always pointing back to the one we are working for—the one who calls us by name and sets us on the path.

["Sunday's Coming" essay](#) in [The Christian Century](#) posted April 19, 2018

Psalm 23 NRSVue, 2021

The Lord is shepherd and guide. God is present in the time of danger and is generous and merciful.

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;
- 3 he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
- 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil,
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

Exploring Psalm 23

Psalms is a collection of collections. The psalms were written over many centuries, stretching from the days of Solomon's temple (about 950 BC) to after the Exile (about 350 BC.) Psalms are of five types: hymns of praise, laments, thanksgiving psalms, royal psalms, and wisdom psalms. Within the book, there are five "books"; there is a doxology ("Blessed be ... Amen and Amen") at the end of each book.

Theological Perspective

By Michael Lodahl

It should never be forgotten, nor taken for granted, that to read the Psalms in the church is to read from the songbook of the Jewish people, our all-too-often estranged siblings, God's people of the synagogue. We shall, of necessity, read those incredibly moving songs differently. We read them because of Jesus—and thus we read them through Jesus. Or to employ an image of which the late Episcopal theologian [Paul van Buren](#) was fond, *we Christians read Israel's Scriptures over Jesus' shoulder*. He, after all, did himself read and sing these wonderful poems as a faithful, if radical, first-century Jew of Galilee. ***Emphasis added***

Psalm 4, "Theological Perspective" by Michael Lodahl in David L. Bartlett, and Barbara Brown Taylor, eds. *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Year B. Vol. 2*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.

What is it like to read the Twenty-third Psalm over Jesus' shoulder? We all are aware of just how deeply this marvelous psalm has engrained itself into the corporate prayer and devotion of the church. Let us take the opportunity, once more, to remind ourselves that it has functioned similarly in the synagogue. In that light, perhaps we should ask ourselves how this prayer of David may have shaped the prayer life of Jesus himself, faithful yet radical son of Israel that he was and is.

In the Easter season it may be all the more natural for us to think of the living Christ as our Shepherd, and so he is. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" ([John 10:11](#)). But if we consider the fact that this prayer undoubtedly was on Jesus' own lips and heart many times before it ever occurred to his followers to laud him as the shepherd in question, we may read this beloved psalm in an intriguingly new way. That is, we may first hear Jesus pray this prayer as one who trusts the God of Israel as his shepherd, his leader and guide. After all, in the further words of John's Gospel, "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father" ([10:14–15](#)). Jesus is our good shepherd because he has enjoyed the good shepherding of the Shepherd of Israel ([Ps. 80:1](#)).

Thus, like every other prayer we Christians pray, we pray this psalm through Jesus and in Jesus' name. Because this psalm is true for him, and true in him, it has become true for us. We sing it in the key of his life and ministry, his death and resurrection.

Because we pray this through Jesus, we are constantly reminded that Psalm 23 does not guarantee perpetual serenity. Despite the church's tendency historically to romanticize this image of the shepherd with the sheep in the verdant pasture, we need only recall Jesus in

4

Gethsemane to be jarred back to a harsher assessment of life as the people of God. Jesus did indeed “lie down”—but more precisely, in Matthew’s words, “he threw himself on the ground, . . . grieved and agitated” ([Matt. 26:39, 37](#)). Is it not significant that Jesus prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me” ([Matt. 26:39](#))? Shall we not consider deeply the implications of Gethsemane’s forlorn and seemingly forsaken Lamb, desperately seeking the comfort of the divine Shepherd’s rod and staff? If it is possible on the lips of Jesus suggests not a settled outcome, no foregone conclusion. Here is the one who has become our shepherd only because “he learned obedience through what he suffered” ([Heb. 5:8](#)), which means learning the hard way. It is only when we truly hear his desperate cry that we can appreciate his humble concession to the divine will; only then, indeed, can we truly say, and pray, that God “leads me in right paths for his name’s sake” (Ps. 23:3). We pray it because, in fact, God has so led the one we call Savior.

Likewise, we understand that Jesus, as he bore the cross to Golgotha, may well have breathed the psalmist’s prayer, “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me” (Ps. 23:4). Jesus walked that lonesome valley. It is always striking to note the heartrending insistence of the Apostles’ Creed regarding Jesus’ sojourn into that valley: he “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.” No matter how dark it might seem to us in that valley, we are assured that we cannot descend so deeply as to plumb the depths to which Christ has already gone.

In the light of what we confess about Jesus Christ in the Apostles’ Creed, [Psalm 23:5–6](#) becomes especially emblematic of his resurrection and glorification that we celebrate during this Eastertide. Precisely as the Christ, it is his head above all others that is anointed with oil (cf. [Heb. 1:9](#)). It is his cup that is overflowing into ours. Thus in the Eucharist we recall Jesus’ pledge to his disciples that “from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” ([Luke 22:18](#)). We partake gratefully, “proclaim[ing] the LORD’s death until he comes” ([1 Cor. 11:26](#)), anticipating that great messianic table that the Creator is spreading for the Messiah and his millions of table guests. “On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, . . . And [God] will swallow up death forever” ([Isa. 25:6–7](#)).

If we are to read this beloved psalm Christianly, then, we must read it first of all as Jesus’ own prayer. From the perspective of the church, the intimacy of this psalm ought first to be ascribed to the relation between Jesus and the one he called “Abba” in Gethsemane ([Mark 14:36](#)). It is not ours to claim, except in and through Jesus, and insofar as Jesus has made it his own prayer. We confess and believe he has made it so for our sakes. Thus, it is as we exist “in Christ” (to utilize Paul’s phrase) that we can pray, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long” ([Ps. 23:6](#)). In the light of our Easter faith, however, we are bold to press our anticipated dwelling in God’s presence beyond “my whole life long,” for more than “length of days.” On this point we boldly confess with the old King James language, “I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever”—not because it is a better translation of the Hebrew, but because God’s raising of Jesus our Lord from the dead signifies a like promise for those who

believe: “the life he lives, he lives to God” ([Rom. 6:10](#)).

1 John 3:16-24 NRSVue, 2021

In our epistle lesson we learn that the followers of Jesus are to emulate his love by laying down their lives for one another. Such love is demanding and practical, requiring believers to share what they have with those who lack. By acting in ways consistent with the kindness of God, disciples will know that they do indeed believe in Jesus the Son of God. They will know that he abides within them and they in him, and that the Spirit has been given them.

- 16 We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers and sisters.
- 17 How 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 deed and truth.
- 19 And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him
- 20 whenever our hearts condemn us, for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.
- 21 Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God,
- 22 and 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.
- 24 All 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.

Exploring 1 John 3:16-24

1 John. This epistle was addressed to a general audience, unlike those written by Paul. It shares a style, phrases and expressions with the Gospel according to John, so it is very likely that both were written by the same person. It appears to have been circulated to various churches. The author seeks to combat heresy, specifically that the spirit is entirely good but matter is entirely evil. John tells his readers that morality and ethical behaviour are important for Christians.

Theological Perspective

By Robert Cole-Turner

Love is known in action. How do we know God’s love? It is through God’s action in sending Jesus Christ into the world, and through Christ’s action of laying down his life for us. The actions of God show us what God is like.

The same test applies to our love. How do others know what is in our heart? It is by our actions. Just as God’s love is known to us through the visible action of Christ, so our love is known to others through concrete actions that mirror Christ’s own. Christ lays down his life, and we are to lay down our lives.

“Lay down our lives.” We speak these words with tones of awe, and well we should. In the public arena, the only time we hear these words is to praise the sacrifice of a soldier who dies to save others, or perhaps to speak of rescuers who die while attempting to save others from a burning building or from rising waters. It is action—specifically this often surprising action of extraordinary self-sacrifice—that is the test of love.

6 For Christians, self-sacrifice should be ordinary, not extraordinary. We ought to lay down our lives, John writes, not intending to give a grand challenge for heroic Christian but an everyday commandment for ordinary Christians. The Christian life is a life laid down for others, a life built on self-sacrifice.

Sometimes self-sacrifice can mean physical death. We know that when we stand beside victims of injustice or hate or racism, we might become the next victim. If we go in love to those who are under daily threat of violence or war and share with them a witness for healing and peace, we have to expect that the next bomb or bullet will find us. In every age, Christians have acted with such Christlike love, going where they do not have to go and suffering what they could easily avoid.

More often, the stakes are lower. But the principle is the same. Laying down our lives, at its core, can mean any number of ways in which we lay aside our claim to own our lives. We lay down our lives when we put others first. We lay down our lives when we live for the good of others. We lay down our lives when we make time for others. To love others is to lay down our life for them. When we lay down the completely normal human desire to live for ourselves, and when instead we allow the love of God to reorient us toward the needs of others, we are laying down our lives.

John is pretty hard on Christians who say they have the love of Jesus in their hearts but do not share their material goods with those in need. We can only imagine what he would say of us today in a world in which almost half the people live on less than two dollars a day. The challenge of global poverty can overwhelm us. Perhaps that is why John does not speak of the poor in a collective or generic sense, but speaks of a brother or a sister, the one in need who is before us at that moment. If we close our hearts to that sister or brother, we close our hearts to God.

How can you claim to receive the love of God in your life, John asks us, if you do not show love in your actions? Many Christians today claim they believe in Jesus Christ. By that, they mean they assent to the truth of the gospel. But what is the truth of the gospel, if not believing that living a life of sacrificial love is the starting point of our new life in Christ? Believing in Christ means believing that Christ saves us by making us like himself.

Faith and love come bound together as a single package. Faith alone, the Reformers said, is all that is required for salvation. But faith is never alone. When God creates saving faith in our hearts, God creates active love. Faith in Jesus Christ is faith that transforms the believing heart, making it a self-sacrificed heart.

Faith and love together are the gifts of single grace—they are God’s doing. We cannot receive one without the other. And because God creates faith and love in our hearts, God commands them, and by grace we are ready to obey. God gives us what God commands. John points us to God’s commandment (note the singular): “that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another” ([v. 23](#)).

Believing and loving come from a single grace and result in a single act of obedience. The commandment cannot be split apart, because Jesus Christ is the concrete embodiment of God’s love. We cannot believe in Jesus without believing in love, and we cannot have love without action. John gives us no room to negotiate.

The good news here is that when we act lovingly, we can be assured that nothing less than the love of God in Jesus Christ is pulsing through our hearts and hands. Jesus Christ, who is the very love of God incarnate, is always present in our acts of love. The self-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ is the ground and motivation and meaning of our own self-sacrificing love. When we keep the love commandment, we are one with Christ. We abide in Christ, John tells us, and Christ abides in us.

Here we find language that reminds us of [John 17](#), language that the church has often seen as expressing the mystery of the unity of the persons of the Trinity. God, Christ, and Spirit are distinct, yet abiding or indwelling in each other in perfect unity. And by the Spirit, believers are joined with Christ in that same unity of abiding and indwelling. We know all these things, John tells us, because the Spirit is in us, making us one with Christ in the act of self-sacrificing love.

John 10:11-18 NRSVue, 2021

In our gospel reading we are taught that Jesus is the good shepherd who is willing to die for his sheep. He is not like one who has been hired to tend the sheep, and who runs away in time of danger. Rather, he knows the sheep with the same intimacy that he has with the Father. Jesus has shared fully in their circumstances. Together with those who are yet to be called, there will be one flock under the one true shepherd.

- 11 [Jesus said], "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
- 12 The 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.
- 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.
- 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me,
- 15 just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.
- 16 I 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.
- 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.
- 18 No 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."

Exploring John 10:11-18

John is the fourth gospel. Its author makes no attempt to give a chronological account of the life of Jesus (which the other gospels do, to a degree), but rather "...these things are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." John includes what he calls signs, stories of miracles, to help in this process.

The only sheep and shepherds to be seen in my urban neighborhood are either the subjects of cheerful pastel murals in church school classrooms or the children themselves, decked out as the inhabitants of Bethlehem for the Christmas pageant. So far removed are we from teeming, bleating sheepfolds that both the creatures and those who care for them seem little more than quaint artifacts. But we should not let ourselves be deceived by the seemingly mild metaphor of the Son of God in shepherd's clothing.

Set dead center in John's Gospel, Jesus' claim to be "the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep" is a bold rejoinder to those who challenged his authority in the previous chapter. The claim focuses our attention on the one whose word will wake the dead and unbind an entombed Lazarus in the Gospel's very next act. Evoking the figure of the shepherd in the hearing of first-century believers was more than pleasant peasant imagery: Moses was a shepherd, and so was King David. Ezekiel identified God's action toward broken and scattered people as the work of a shepherd: "I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed."

Cloaked in simple shepherd's garb, Jesus is proclaiming nothing less than the reign of God in our midst with every word and movement. Such boldness ought to trouble us, because these claims about Jesus' identity and his relationship to the flock are also claims about us—about who we are, what we're about and to whom we belong. They are also claims on us, and we are people who've been born and raised to resist ownership by others. That's what's going on, I suspect, when we paint this Good Shepherd bathed in soft light and keep him in a frame in the church hallway, or when we make this passage the occasion for reflection on the challenges of pastoral leadership. Either way, we try to manage our anxiety by seeking some self-fashioned shelter from the force of Jesus' meaning, by domesticating the impact of the incarnation and denying its irresistible pull on our hearts and lives.

That this Shepherd is good should not lead us to assume that he is meek, tame or unobjectionable in the way that so much Christian art imagines, so much Christian preaching recommends and so much Christian living suggests. Rather, the Good Shepherd must be strong, resourceful and canny, enduring long days and nights in the wilderness as he accompanies the wandering flock and stays attuned to the well-being of his investment with tenacity and singleness of purpose.

In describing himself as a good shepherd, not a hireling or a thief, Jesus is not engaging in politics or polemics but is proclaiming the truth at the heart of the gospel: Christ's very being enacts God's relationship with the beloved creation, and is instigated not by us but by God. This is no voluntary association, no fair-weather friendship, no transactional contract. The sheep do not earn the Shepherd or elect him; nothing that we are or do can abrogate the relationship. We cannot stray or fall or fail in such a way as to be lost to God—ever—because we belong to God, "body and soul, in life and in death," as the Heidelberg Catechism would remind us.

Lest we think that our belonging makes easy work of life or faith, that the Shepherd is in charge and so the flock can enjoy an extended field day, consider Jesus' words: "I am

the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.” To be Christ’s own, to move through the moments of our days, to craft our speech or care for our families or make choices about our economic lives as those who know and are known by God is neither comfortable nor without controversy, if Jesus’ own biography is any indication.

To complicate things further, we who understand ourselves to be in this relationship with the Good Shepherd must subject our self-importance and vested interests to the life and flourishing of the community from which our identity derives. Karl Barth said that there is no such thing as an individual Christian; in the English language, there is no separate singular form of the word sheep. In our essential belongingness, our being is bound up with the entire flock: with believers who break bread and recite prayers with us, and with those sheep whom Jesus knows and God sees, but whom we can scarcely bring ourselves to acknowledge and welcome, let alone live alongside or die to protect. This paradox illuminates the abundance in the life Jesus offers earlier in this tenth chapter of John: that as we recognize our belonging to God, the minutes of our lives are nothing less than a cup overflowing with goodness and mercy, and that as we live out our belonging, these lives which are not our own can set the table richly for others.

["In the Lectionary" essay](#) in [The Christian Century](#) posted.

Bibliographical and Contributor Information

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[Book Outlines](#) are from [Commentaries on the Revised Common Lectionary](#) website maintained by the Anglican Diocese of Montreal.

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Odds & Ends

Psalm 23 in conversation

by Austin Shelley

[Acts 4:5-12](#); [Psalm 23](#); [1 John 3:16-24](#); [John 10:11-18](#)

If familiarity breeds complacency, the lectionary's inclusion of the beloved but familiar 23rd Psalm risks drawing a collective yawn from occupants of pulpit and pew.

The psalm appears six times in the Revised Common Lectionary's three-year cycle. This includes the Fourth Sunday of Easter all three years..

The lectionary's favor, of course, does not account for the psalm's broad appeal; almost every funeral over which I have presided has included Psalm 23 (yea, even in the King James Version of the Bible), its lines of comfort and assurance testifying to the goodness and mercy of the One who shepherds us in life and in death. The prolific psalm is the subject of many an essay, including one I wrote for the *Century* in 2016.

Yet long before I began presiding over funerals or writing magazine essays, Psalm 23 had already woven its way into the sinews of my being. I expect the same is true for many practitioners of Judaism or Christianity. Having memorized "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want" as children, we encounter again this week a psalm we know by heart.

But in the same way that green pastures look different in morning and evening light, Psalm 23 takes on new dimensions when read in tandem with this week's epistle and gospel texts. Unless we are willing to re-examine and challenge our assumptions about what we think we see and hear in this familiar psalm, we will miss some of the playful ways light cascades through Psalm 23 onto its lectionary neighbors and reflects back again, like stained glass painting a new, colorful image onto a sanctuary floor.

In this week's reading from the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd." No one in Jesus' hearing would have missed the obvious allusion to Hebrew scripture. This proclamation serves as one of Jesus' seven "I am" statements that collectively declare his oneness with the God of Israel. Psalm 23 opens, "The Lord is my shepherd"; Jesus draws upon that image to reveal his shared identity with the Lord who is both the good shepherd and the great "I Am."

The reading from 1 John continues the collaborative conversation among this week's lectionary texts: Jesus is who he claims to be, for not only has he self-identified as the good shepherd, but also he has done what he foretold the good shepherd would do. Jesus says, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." The epistle writer witnesses to the fulfillment of Jesus' words, adding a charge for Jesus' disciples to follow suit: "We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another."

Perhaps a less obvious connection exists between Psalm 23 and this week's reading from the Acts of the Apostles. When earthly "rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family" put Peter and his fellow prisoners on trial, they inquire, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"

Peter's Spirit-led response is one that witnesses to the power of the crucified and risen Jesus, who rules not as a tyrant but as one who supports (i.e. a cornerstone) and saves. In contrast to the condemning actions of the leaders doing the questioning, Jesus' acts of salvation are like those of a shepherd who comforts, anoints, and pursues with goodness and mercy the flock entrusted to his care.

["Sunday's Coming" email](#) from *The Christian Century* dated April 15, 2024