



34A ONLINE BIBLE STUDY

EASTER 4A

Finding Pasture

Abstract

The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice.

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Finding Pasture

Sunday, May 3, 2020 | Easter | Fourth Sunday of Easter
Year A

<i>First Reading</i>	Acts 2:42–47
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 23
<i>New Testament</i>	1 Peter 2:19–25
<i>Gospel</i>	John 10:1–10

Finding pasture

John 10.1-10

Jesus speaks of a shepherd whose sheep know his voice and follow him away from danger. The Pharisees do not understand that Jesus is referring to himself. He also says that he is the gate of the sheepfold, and whoever enters by him will be saved.

This week's resources explore: what it means to have abundant life.

We Gather

We come because we know we are welcome, O God.
 We come because you call us by name,
 We come together to offer you our worship, O God.
 We come in the name of Jesus.
 We come to you, O God, in penitence for what we have done.
 We come to you in anticipation for what you offer to us.
 We come to you in hope,
 for we know you will give us abundant life.
 We come in the name of Jesus.
 Amen.

Reading

GOSPEL

John 10:1–10 (NIV)

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

The New International Version. (2011). (Jn 10:1–10). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Introduction

Have you come across people who remember names. They make a point of it. They take the time to familiarize themselves with names of people they meet, so when they walk into a room they can say, “Hello, Jessica,” or “Welcome, Trevor.” They do this because they know how meaningful it is when someone knows and calls us by name.

Yet to truly know someone, we need to know more than that person’s name. In John 10, we can sense the warmth and care Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has for us when we read that He “calls his own sheep by name” (v. 3). He knows even more than our name. He knows our thoughts, longings, fears, wrongs, and deepest needs. Because He knows our deepest needs, He has given us our very life—our eternal life—at the cost of His own. As He says in verse 11, He “lays down his life for the sheep.”

You see, our sin separated us from God. So Jesus, the Good Shepherd, became the Lamb and sacrificed Himself, taking our sin on Himself. When He gave His life for us and then was resurrected, He redeemed us. As a result, when we accept His gift of salvation through faith, we are no longer separated from God.

Exegesis and Discussion

Gospel: John 10.1-10

This week’s readings describe a community of faith living together with a clear identity. This identity can be known through their relationships with one another, their shared moral character when under pressure and their willingness to listen for and recognise the voice of Jesus. It does not reside in a dress code or a religious strapline, but in the quality of their common life.

This gospel reading begins with the phrase ‘Jesus said to the Pharisees’. He addresses them because they have been disputing his authority in the previous chapter; they were very suspicious when he healed a man born blind. So we need to hear the opening words of this passage: ‘anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate...’ as both a challenge and a warning to teachers and leaders. When it comes to guiding and caring for people spiritually, Jesus is uncompromising: there are those who approach by the gate and whose voice is recognised by the sheep, and there are those who climb in another way, with the intention of exploiting the sheep by stealing, killing and destroying. The sheep will not follow a stranger, but they recognise the voice of the shepherd. Is this perhaps a reflection on the crowds that follow Jesus, feeling instinctively that his teaching brings them closer to God? Are the people like sheep, allowing the shepherd to guide them to pasture? The Pharisees here will not do anything as simple as listen; they are more fearful of their own authority being usurped than they are thankful that a man has been healed.

In John’s Gospel, the speeches given by Jesus often move in a kind of spiral – they mention an idea, move on to a second idea, and then spiral back to a fuller understanding of the first idea. This speech has that kind of pattern: Jesus moves from the image of entering by the gate to the image that he himself is the gate. He is both the shepherd with a voice that the sheep recognise and the actual gateway in and out between safe pasture and the protection of the sheepfold. When he summarises what he has come to give, he calls it abundant life – a life so full of life that there is some to spare.

We are sent out

Thank you for abundant life;

thank you for your generous love.

Help us to love generously

that others may also experience the abundance of your life.

We go out into the world.

We go where God leads you.

We go that you may serve him.
And wherever we go,
 we know that God is with you.
Amen.

	Pre-Service
	Introit
	<p>Greeting</p> <p>May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all</p> <p>and also with us</p>
	We Gather
	Hymn/song
	Welcome
	<p>Readings</p> <p><i>respond</i> For the word of the Lord Thanks be to God</p>
	Hymn/song/video
	We say Sorry
	Words of Assurance
	Hymn/Song
	Response
	Hymn/song
	Offering
	Notices
	Prayers for all people
	Lord's Prayer
	Hymn/song

	We are sent out May the Lord bless us and keep us May His face shine upon us and be gracious to us May he lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace
	Benediction
	Thank you

