

# *Walking Together in the Word*

Devotions on the Weekly Scripture Readings for April 2024

The purpose of the Chapel Devotion Project is to encourage individuals and families to make prayer and devotional time in God's Word a regular part of their daily lives. We believe many good things will come from your intentional study and reflection of God's Word:

- Your relationship with God and with others will grow and be strengthened.
- Study of the Scripture and hymns for the upcoming weekend will enhance your worship.
- You will come to the Lord daily in prayer, bringing your praise, thanks, and requests to Him.

## *How to Use These Devotions*

Each week contains five pages of devotional material. How you choose to use the material is up to you. You could study one reading or one page a day. You might read several portions every other day. You may use the short order of worship provided below. Use the material in the way that best fits you and your family.

### **ORDER OF WORSHIP**

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
All: Amen.

### **SCRIPTURE READING**

### **DEVOTION and REFLECTION**

### **PRAYERS and THE LORD'S PRAYER**

#### **LUTHER'S MORNING PRAYER**

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me.  
Amen.

or

#### **LUTHER'S EVENING PRAYER**

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Leader: The almighty and merciful God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless us  
and keep us.  
All: Amen.

All Scripture from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Hymns used by permission. OneLicense.net #A-725523 LSB Hymn License.net, Lutheran Service Builder.

Devotions and supporting material written by Pastor Ted Laesch and Mary Laesch.



# Walking Together in the Word

April 1–April 6, 2024

*This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, April 7.*

## Easter 2

### The Gospel: John 20:19–31

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. 21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." 24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." 30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

### Devotion on the Gospel

Oh, it was not a comfortable or a comforting scene in that upper room. It's Easter Sunday evening and the doors were shut and locked tight. And there the disciples sat filled with despair. Jesus is gone. Dead. Executed. Their dreams are shattered and they sit there in despair.

But despair wasn't the only emotion they were feeling. They were also filled with shame. Every single one of them had lost their nerve. Not one of them had been faithful. The disciples were deserters, and they knew it. And they sat around that upper room in shame.

And as if despair and shame weren't enough, those disciples were also filled with fear. Jesus had been arrested, tried, mocked, beaten, and then killed. And the disciples had it all figured out. They would be next! They were marked men. And so they huddle in the upper room. They barricade the door. And there the disciples sat - in despair, in shame, and in fear.

But then Jesus shows up! At just that moment amidst all their despair and shame and fear, Jesus stepped into that upper room. And what a beautiful word He shares: "Peace be with you!" Don't despair! Don't be ashamed! Don't be afraid! God's not dead! I'm alive - risen from the dead! Peace be with you! And suddenly the despair, the shame, the fear is gone. Jesus has come! Peace be with you!

Isn't that how it is with us too? We face despair and shame and fear. It paralyzes us. It breaks us. It locks us up in our "upper rooms." But then Jesus shows up. He shows up through His Word and Sacraments and He says to us: Peace be with you! Don't despair! Don't be ashamed! Don't be afraid! I lived and died and rose for you. Jesus is alive. He lives to live for you. He lives to bless you with His love. He lives to give you that wonderful Easter greeting: Peace be with you!

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*According to John 20:21, what does Jesus commission His church to do? (see also John 17:18; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8)*

*What great privilege and authority did Jesus give to His disciples? (see John 20:23)*

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

From what did these early Christian followers' love flow?

What continually refreshed their desire to serve Jesus Christ and His people?

What is the result of living "in the darkness?" On the other hand, what blessing is ours as we walk "in the light?"

Read again 1 John 1:8-10. When do we often hear this text? (see Lutheran Service Book, p. 151)

Verse to Remember:  
1 John 1:7

## The Second Reading: Acts 4:32-35

32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

## The Epistle: 1 John 1:1-2:2

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We write this to make our joy complete.

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

## The Psalm: Psalm 148

Praise the Lord.

- Praise the Lord from the heavens;  
praise him in the heights above.
- 2 Praise him, all his angels;  
praise him, all his heavenly hosts.
- 3 Praise him, sun and moon;  
praise him, all you shining stars.
- 4 Praise him, you highest heavens  
and you waters above the skies.
- 5 Let them praise the name of the Lord,  
for at his command they were created,
- 6 and he established them for ever and ever—  
he issued a decree that will never pass away.
- 7 Praise the Lord from the earth,  
you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,
- 8 lightning and hail, snow and clouds,  
stormy winds that do his bidding,
- 9 you mountains and all hills,  
fruit trees and all cedars,
- 10 wild animals and all cattle,  
small creatures and flying birds,
- 11 kings of the earth and all nations,  
you princes and all rulers on earth,
- 12 young men and women,  
old men and children.
- 13 Let them praise the name of the Lord,  
for his name alone is exalted;  
his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.
- 14 And he has raised up for his people a horn,[b]  
the praise of all his faithful servants,  
of Israel, the people close to his heart.

Praise the Lord.

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*Note how the psalmist calls all things in creation to praise the Lord - both creatures in the heavens (vv. 1-6) and creatures beneath the heavens (vv. 7-12). Make a list of all who are called to praise our God.*

*The last two verses of the psalm give the motivation of our praise. What does he say? What reasons could you add as to why we give praise to God?*

Notes,  
Thoughts,  
Questions

*This hymn is a poetic retelling of the Gospel reading for the day. Read once again John 20:19-31 and then meditate on the words of this hymn.*

The Hymn: O Sons and Daughters of the King LSB 470

O sons and daughters of the King,  
Whom heav'nly hosts in glory sing,  
Today the grave has lost its sting!  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

That Easter morn, at break of day,  
The faithful women went their way  
To seek the tomb where Jesus lay.  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

An angel clad in white they see,  
Who sits and speaks unto the three,  
"Your Lord will go to Galilee."  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

That night the apostles met in fear;  
Among them came their master dear  
And said, "My peace be with you here."  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

When Thomas first the tidings heard  
That they had seen the risen Lord,  
He doubted the disciples' word.  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

"My piercèd side, O Thomas, see,  
And look upon My hands, My feet;  
Not faithless but believing be."  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

No longer Thomas then denied;  
He saw the feet, the hands, the side;  
"You are my Lord and God!" he cried.  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

How blest are they who have not seen  
And yet whose faith has constant been,  
For they eternal life shall win.  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

On this most holy day of days  
Be laud and jubilee and praise:  
To God your hearts and voices raise.  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Public Domai

# Faith + Life Connections

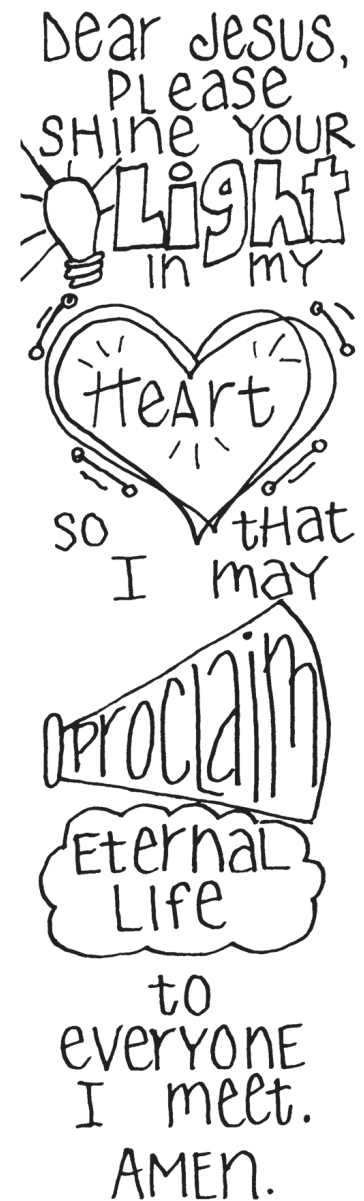
Have you ever felt really afraid? Who comforted you? Jesus' disciples were afraid. They thought Jesus was dead, and the soldiers would come for them next. But then . . . Jesus appeared! He was alive! He is alive! Jesus comes to comfort you too. He will calm all your fears with His love. He promises to be with you always. *John 20:19-31*

Do you like to share? After Jesus went to heaven, the believers were so happy and thankful for Jesus that they told everybody about Him and shared everything so no one was in need. We can show our love and thankfulness for Jesus by sharing too. What will you share this week? *Acts 4:32-35*

Would you rather take a walk in the dark or in the light? Jesus is the light that shines in our dark world. He forgives our sins and helps us "walk in the light" and do what is right. *1 John 1:1-2:2*

## Memorize:

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. **1 John 1:7**



ag '21

Coloring pages from [visualfaithmin.org](http://visualfaithmin.org)

Devote Yourselves to Prayer *Colossians 4:2*  
Throughout the week, write prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and requests on slips of paper and place them in your prayer bowl. Take turns praying when you gather for devotions.





# Walking Together in the Word

April 8–April 13, 2024

*This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, April 14.*

## Easter 3

### The Gospel: Luke 24:36–49

36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence. 44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

### Devotion on the Gospel

Now what? The disciples had been through the most tumultuous week of their lives. On Palm Sunday they had watched Jesus entering into Jerusalem to songs of praise and shouts of "Hosanna!" But then they watched in horror at the terrible chain of events that took place throughout the rest of the week.

Judas betrays Jesus into the hands of the religious leaders. The Sanhedrin condemns Jesus and Pilate sentences Him to die. Jesus carries His cross to Calvary and there He dies. His lifeless body is taken down from the cross and placed in a borrowed tomb and a huge stone is rolled over the entrance.

Then reports of an empty tomb and disciples who have seen Jesus risen from the dead. And then Jesus appears among His disciples! "Peace be with you!" He says. He calms their fears. He shows them His hands and feet. This is no ghost or spirit. It's Jesus Christ Himself—and He's alive!

Now what? After all that the disciples have seen and heard. After all that they've experienced. After this incredible week of death and now, resurrection. Now what?

And Jesus, ever the teacher, gives them the answer. He tells His disciples what He wants them to do. And it is the same things that He wants His church of all time to be doing. Jesus says that forgiveness of sins and repentance shall be proclaimed in My name to all nations. Now what? Jesus says, now you will proclaim My love. Now you will proclaim My grace. Now you will proclaim My forgiveness.

Jesus is risen from the dead. Now what? Rejoice in the blessing of Jesus' death and resurrection for you. Now what? Know that Jesus lives so we might live. Now what? Proclaim Him and His love and His forgiveness in word and deed so that more and more may come to know the Savior, so they may say with you and me: Alleluia! Christ is risen!

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*Why did Jesus invite His disciples to examine His hands and feet? Why did He eat in their presence?*

*How did Jesus describe the work that He was commissioning them to do? How are you part of this commissioning?*

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*In his message, Peter calls Jesus “the Holy and Righteous One” and “the Author of life.” What claim is Peter making about Jesus by using these titles?*

*What blessings does Peter promise would be theirs if the people would repent and turn to the Lord?*

## The Second Reading: Acts 3:11–21

11 While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon’s Colonnade. 12 When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. 14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

17 “Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. 19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. 21 Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.



## The Epistle: 1 John 3:1-7

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. 4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. 5 But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. 6 No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. 7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

*See what great love the Father  
has lavished on us, that we should  
be called children of God! And  
that is what we are!*

## The Psalm: Psalm 4

Answer me when I call to you,  
my righteous God.  
Give me relief from my distress;  
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.  
2 How long will you people turn my glory into shame?  
How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?  
3 Know that the Lord has set apart his faithful servant for himself;  
the Lord hears when I call to him.  
4 Tremble and do not sin;  
when you are on your beds,  
search your hearts and be silent.  
5 Offer the sacrifices of the righteous  
and trust in the Lord.  
6 Many, Lord, are asking, "Who will bring us prosperity?"  
Let the light of your face shine on us.  
7 Fill my heart with joy  
when their grain and new wine abound.  
8 In peace I will lie down and sleep,  
for you alone, Lord,  
make me dwell in safety.

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*Verse to Remember:*  
1 John 3:1

*What comfort and assurance do John's words "when He appears we shall be like Him" give to you?*

*What does John point to as the motivating factors in our purifying ourselves to become more like Jesus in our daily living?*

*What is David's response to those who turn away from God during difficult times? (see vv. 2-4) What is his exhortation to them? (see verse 5)*

*Note the confidence that David has in God to take care of him in any and every situation (see vv. 7-8). How can these verses give us peace, comfort, and confidence in our God?*

Notes,  
Thoughts,  
Questions

*Each stanza of this hymn is an encouragement to share the Gospel of Jesus with this world. What words of this hymn inspire you in this important call from our God?*

The Hymn: Spread the Reign of God the Lord *LSB 830*

Spread the reign of God the Lord,  
Spoken, written, mighty Word;  
Ev'rywhere His creatures call  
To His heav'nly banquet hall.

Tell how God the Father's will  
Made the world, upholds it still,  
How His own dear Son He gave  
Us from sin and death to save.

Tell of our Redeemer's grace,  
Who, to save our human race  
And to pay rebellion's price,  
Gave Himself as sacrifice.

Tell of God the Spirit giv'n  
Now to guide us on to heav'n,  
Strong and holy, just and true,  
Working both to will and do.

Enter, mighty Word, the field;  
Ripe the promise of its yield.  
But the reapers, oh, how few  
For the work there is to do!

Lord of harvest, great and kind,  
Rouse to action heart and mind;  
Let the gath'ring nations all  
See Your light and heed Your call.

Public domain

# Faith + Life Connections

A trip to Disney World. A new X-box. No school today! Some things seem too good to be true. That's how the disciples felt when Jesus appeared—it's too good to be true! But it was true, and it is true! Jesus is alive! He rose from the dead just as He said would. Now our sins are forgiven. Now we will have eternal life. Share the Good News! Jesus is alive!

*Luke 24:36-49*

“Why are you staring at us, like we did this?” Peter asked the crowd after a man's legs were healed. “Faith in Jesus made this man well.” The name of Jesus is powerful. That's because *Jesus* is powerful! He defeated death and the devil. He gives us forgiveness and new life. Believe in Him! *Acts 3:11-21*

To *lavish* means “to give a very large amount.” God has lavished us with love—so very much love! He has made you His beloved child.

*1 John 3:1-7*

**Memorize:**

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! *1 John 3:1*



Coloring pages from [visualfaithmin.org](http://visualfaithmin.org)

**Devote Yourself to Prayer** *Colossians 4:2*

Throughout the week, write prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and requests on slips of paper and place them in your prayer bowl. Take turns praying when you gather for devotions.



# Walking Together in the Word

April 15–April 20, 2024

*This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, April 21.*

**Easter 4**

## The Gospel: John 10:11–18

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep 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 are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. 17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

## Devotion on the Gospel

What a beautiful picture that Jesus paints for us here. I am the Good Shepherd, He says. And we are His sheep. He promises to lead, guide, guard, and protect us—because He loves us and we are His sheep.

Do you know what sheep are like? Sheep are vulnerable. They are vulnerable to disease. They are vulnerable to injury. They are vulnerable to death. Life is very fragile for a sheep.

Do you know what sheep are like? Sheep are kind of dumb. They have an incredible herd instinct and that can cause them to do some things that aren't very smart.

Do you know what sheep are like? Sheep have the tendency to wander. They wander from the flock and from their shepherd.

Actually, if you want to know what sheep are like, all you need to do is look in the mirror. My fellow sheep. We are truly vulnerable, quite often stupid, and we tend to wander away from our Lord and get into trouble.

But then Jesus comes and says: My sheep, I am the Good Shepherd. I will love you. I will forgive you. I will search for you. I will lead you. I will give you life.

And those blessings are ours because the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. What love the Shepherd has for the sheep! Love that causes His sheep to confess with confidence and faith: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*What did Jesus point to as the first evidence of His being the Good Shepherd?*

*What else does the Bible say about Jesus as the Good Shepherd? (See the rest of John 10, Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34) Make a list of Good Shepherd characteristics.*



## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*In this text, we find Peter and John before the Sanhedrin, the same ruling council that had put Jesus on trial and sent Him to Pilate.*

*This was not the first time Peter had stood in the presence of the Sanhedrin. Read Mark 14:66-72.*

*What did Peter do the first time?*

*This time Peter boldly preaches about the death and resurrection of Jesus. What has happened to Peter to make such a big change? (see verse 8)*

*What are the two basic commands John talks about that God gives to those who are His? (see verse 23)*

*How are we sure that we have the Spirit that Jesus gives to those who are His? (see 1 Corinthians 12:3-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 John 4:13-21)*

## The Second Reading: Acts 4:1-12

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. 2 They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. 3 They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. 4 But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

5 The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. 7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone."

12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

## The Epistle: 1 John 3:16-24

16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. 19 This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: 20 If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. 23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 24 The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.



## The Psalm: Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,

3 he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,

I will 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 your goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.



## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*Verse to Remember:*  
Psalm 23:1  
Try to memorize all  
of Psalm 23

*The 23rd Psalm is a  
profession of joyful  
trust in the Lord as  
the Good Shepherd.  
In what ways does a  
shepherd provide a  
good picture of our  
Lord?*

*According to David,  
what does our Good  
Shepherd do for us,  
His sheep?*

Notes,  
Thoughts,  
Questions

*Read Psalm 23, John 10, and Revelation 7:17. Then meditate on this hymn as you sing it, read it, or listen to it.*

The Hymn: The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want *LSB 710*

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green; He leadeth me  
The quiet waters by.

My soul He doth restore again  
And me to walk doth make  
Within the paths of righteousness,  
E'en for His own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,  
Yet will I fear no ill;  
For Thou art with me, and Thy rod  
And staff me comfort still.

My table Thou hast furnishèd  
In presence of my foes;  
My head Thou dost with oil anoint,  
And my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life  
Shall surely follow me;  
And in God's house forevermore  
My dwelling place shall be.

Public domain

# Faith + Life Connections

Did you know that Jesus called you a sheep? But that's ok, He also says that He is your Good Shepherd! Sheep need a shepherd to take care of them, protect them, and rescue them when they are in trouble. That's what Jesus does for you. He even gave His life for you! He's the *best* Shepherd.

*John 10:11-18*

Peter and John were brought before the same Jewish rulers who sentenced Jesus to death. But Peter and John were not afraid. Why not? The Holy Spirit filled them with boldness. Without fear, they told the truth: We are saved only by faith in Jesus!

*Acts 4:1-12*

Jesus showed His love for us by dying for our sins. How do we show love for our brothers and sisters in Christ? We can tell them we love them, but *actions* speak louder than words. What can you do this week to show your love for Jesus and for others?

*1 John 3:16-24*

Memorize:

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. Psalm 23:1  
Try to memorize all of Psalm 23

1 JOHN 3:23 guy  
LOVE ONE ANOTHER

## PRAYER REQUESTS



Coloring pages from [visualfaithmin.org](http://visualfaithmin.org)

Devote Yourselves to Prayer *Colossians 4:2*

Throughout the week, write prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and requests on slips of paper and place them in your prayer bowl. Take turns praying when you gather for devotions.



# Walking Together in the Word

April 22, 2021–April 27, 2024

*This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, April 28.*

**Easter 5**

## The Gospel: John 15:1–8

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

## Devotion on the Gospel

It’s growing season, Jesus says. Did you hear Him in the text? “I am the vine and you are the branches.” It’s growing season. “No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.” It’s growing season. “If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.” It’s growing season.

It’s a beautiful and very simple illustration. Every one of those disciples knew about vines and branches. They knew how they grew. They knew the simple fact that if you cut off a branch from the main vine, it would die. And Jesus says, “I am the true vine. You are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.” So simple. So clear. It’s growing season.

Might you have some fruit growing? What is your spiritual garden producing? Do you have a few of those wonderful fruits that St. Paul talked about in Galatians? Do you have some love, joy, and peace? How about some patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control? Do we have any of those fruits of the Spirit growing on our branches? After all, it’s growing season.

Apart from Jesus, we don’t. That’s for sure. Jesus says, “Apart from me, you can do nothing.” But connected with Jesus, the true vine, He produces in us beautiful spiritual fruit. It’s growing season and He causes that fruit to grow. He produces the fruit of the Spirit. He produces fruit that will last. And He produces fruit in us that we can share with others.

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*What are the characteristics of a “fruitful” life? (see Colossians 1:10-12; Galatians 5:22-23)*

*Jesus says that a person must “remain” in Him in order to be fruitful. What does He mean?*

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*The Acts of the Apostles is sometimes referred to as "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." How was the Holy Spirit instrumental in this entire text?*

*Is Philip unique? Or does the Holy Spirit similarly empower the witness of all His people (including you)?*

### The Second Reading: Acts 8:26-40

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. 29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

31 "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,  
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.

33 In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth."

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" 35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

40 Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

*Then Philip began with that  
very passage of Scripture and  
told him the good news about  
Jesus.*

## The Epistle: 1 John 4:1-11

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 5 They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

## The Psalm: Psalm 150

Praise the Lord.

Praise God in his sanctuary;

praise him in his mighty heavens.

2 Praise him for his acts of power;

praise him for his surpassing greatness.

3 Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,

praise him with the harp and lyre,

4 praise him with timbrel and dancing,

praise him with the strings and pipe,

5 praise him with the clash of cymbals,

praise him with resounding cymbals.

6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord.

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.*

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*How does John define love? (see verse 10)*

*Why is it vital that we understand that the source of love is not "that we have loved God" but rather "that He loved us...?"*

*Verse to Remember:  
1 John 4:10*

*The final psalm is a call to praise our God. How does Psalm 150 answer the following questions:*

*Where should God be praised? (verse 1)*

*Why should God be praised? (verse 2)*

*How should God be praised? (verses 3-5)*

*Who should praise God? (verse 6)*

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*How does this hymn capture the celebration of Easter as well as the celebration of the glorious victorious feast we will receive one day in heaven?*

## The Hymn: At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing *LSB 633*

At the Lamb's high feast we sing  
Praise to our victorious King,  
Who has washed us in the tide  
Flowing from His pierced side.  
Alleluia!

Praise we Him, whose love divine  
Gives His sacred blood for wine,  
Gives His body for the feast—  
Christ the victim, Christ the priest.  
Alleluia!

Where the paschal blood is poured,  
Death's dread angel sheathes the sword;  
Israel's hosts triumphant go  
Through the wave that drowns the foe.  
Alleluia!

Praise we Christ, whose blood was shed,  
Paschal victim, paschal bread;  
With sincerity and love  
Eat we manna from above.  
Alleluia!

Mighty Victim from the sky,  
Hell's fierce pow'rs beneath You lie;  
You have conquered in the fight,  
You have brought us life and light.  
Alleluia!

Now no more can death appall,  
Now no more the grave enthrall;  
You have opened paradise,  
And Your saints in You shall rise.  
Alleluia!

Easter triumph, Easter joy!  
This alone can sin destroy;  
From sin's pow'r, Lord, set us free,  
Newborn souls in You to be.  
Alleluia!

Father, who the crown shall give,  
Savior, by whose death we live,  
Spirit, guide through all our days:  
Three in One, Your name we  
praise.  
Alleluia!

Public domain



# Faith + Life Connections

What happens to flowers in a vase after several days? They wilt and die. Flowers need to be connected to a living stem to stay alive. Jesus tells us that He is the vine, and we are the branches. We need to stay connected to Him to stay alive in faith and to do the fruit of good works. How do we stay connected to Him?

*John 15:1-8*

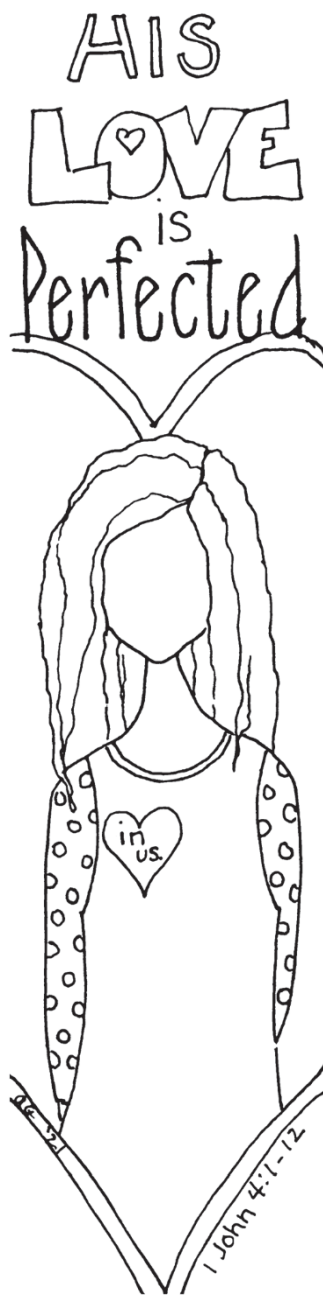
Who teaches you about Jesus? God gives us His Word so we can learn about Him. He gives us people to help us understand His Word. What do you know about Jesus? You can share what you know with others so that they can know the Good News too!

*Acts 8:26-40*

We say we love a lot of things: ice cream, baseball, our family. But what is true love? God showed us real love when He sent His Son to die on the cross to save us. How can we show true love to others? *1 John 4:1-11*

**Memorize:**

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.  
*1 John 4:10*



Coloring pages from [visualfaithmin.org](http://visualfaithmin.org)

**Devote Yourself to Prayer** *Colossians 4:2*  
Throughout the week, write prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and requests on slips of paper and place them in your prayer bowl. Take turns praying when you gather for devotions.

