



BREAKING OPEN

Scripture Study

FOURTH SUNDAY OF
EASTER
2026



Hearing the Shepherd

Dennis Webster

A weekly reflection based on the teachings at St Peter's by the Lake, Painesville, together with a study guide based on the readings, some liturgical resources, the GL Lectionary, and a weekly devotion

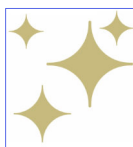
The Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 2.42-end

Psalm 23

1 Peter 2.19-end

John 10.1-10



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Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

Almighty God,
who shewest to them that be
in error the light of thy truth,
to the intent that they may return
into the way of righteousness;
Grant unto all them that are
admitted into the fellowship of
Christ's religion, that they may
eschew those things that are
contrary to their profession, and
follow all such things as are
agreeable to the same;
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Before anything else was spoken... there was a Word.
Not a distant word. Not an abstract idea.
But a living voice—breathing life into creation, calling light out of darkness,
shaping water and land, and naming all that is.

And into that creation, humanity was not left unnamed.
We were called. Known. Given identity not by what we achieve, but by the
One who speaks us into being.

And even when we wandered—
even when we turned away from that voice—
God did not fall silent.

Again and again, through the story of Scripture, the voice returns.

Calling Noah into the unknown.
Calling Moses from the fire.
Calling Samuel in the night.
Calling a young girl to bear hope into the world.

And then, in the fullness of time, that voice takes flesh.
And still... it calls. by the lakeside. at the well.
In the quiet of a garden.

“Mary.”
One word. A name.

And in that moment, grief turns to recognition, and death gives way to life.
Today, as we gather near the water—
as we remember creation, and baptism, and the life that flows from God—
we are invited to listen again.

Because the Good Shepherd does not simply lead from a distance.
He calls. He calls each one of us by name, out of fear, out of what confines
us and into the life of resurrection.

Water, in Scripture, is never still for long.
It flows, cleanses, carries and sends.

And so too, the voice of God.
It does not leave us where we are.
It draws us forward—into light, into life, into community.

So before we go any further... before we reflect, or respond, or even begin to
understand—we begin here:

Listening.

Listening for the voice that knows us.
Listening for the voice that names us.
Listening for the voice that calls us into life.

And perhaps the simplest prayer we can offer today is this:
Call us by name, O Lord,
and give us grace to hear your voice.

As we walk lightly on sacred ground,
teach us Lord to make known your kingdom,
and let this reflect in all that we do and say.

Hearing the Shepherd

It often begins with a name.

A word spoken that gives identity, meaning, and belonging.
“In the beginning was the Word...”—and from the very beginning, our lives are grounded not in silence, but in voice. In naming. In being known. Humanity, of course, steps away from that voice. We reach for autonomy. We name the world, we shape it, we claim it—and in doing so, we find ourselves on a road that leads through pain, and loss, and death.

But God does not fall silent.
Again and again, God speaks.

Noah hears a call and builds for a storm he cannot yet see.
Abraham and Sarah hear a promise that sounds almost absurd.
Moses hears his name from a burning bush—and would rather be anywhere else.

The voice comes... and it unsettles.
And then, it must be learned.

Samuel hears his name in the night, but does not yet recognise who is speaking.

Elijah waits through wind and earthquake and fire, only to discover that the voice of God comes not in the noise, but in the stillness.

Sometimes the voice disrupts.
Sometimes it must be discerned.
Sometimes it is heard only in the quiet.
And sometimes... it is resisted.

Jonah hears the word of the Lord—and runs the other way.
And yet even there, God does not withdraw the call.
The voice continues. The Word continues. The naming continues.

A young girl hears a greeting that will turn her life—and the world—inside out.

Fishermen by the lakes leave their nets at a word.

A woman at a well discovers she is known more deeply than she imagined.

A man born blind begins to see—not just with his eyes, but with his life.
And then—

after grief,
after silence,
after death—
one word:

“Mary.”

And everything changes.
She does not recognise him by sight.
She recognises him when he speaks her name.

All of this is where we have journeyed through Lent.

With Psalm 23 as our companion, we walked through the valley of the shadow of death. We learned that the Shepherd is with us—guiding, restoring, holding us even when the path is uncertain.
But now, in Easter, something shifts.

We come to John 10:1–10, and the Shepherd is no longer only walking beside us.

He is calling.
Calling his sheep by name.
Calling them out.

In Lent, the Shepherd walks with us through the valley.
In Easter, the Shepherd stands beyond it—and calls us out.

Out of fear.
Out of death.
Out of all that would confine us.

And the sheep follow—not because they have been forced, not because they have proven themselves—but because they know his voice.

And what does that life look like?

We catch a glimpse in Acts 2:42–47.
A community shaped by the voice of the Shepherd:
gathering,
praying,
breaking bread,
sharing what they have with glad and generous hearts.

This is Psalm 23... lived.

Green pastures become shared tables.
Still waters become lives of prayer.
Dwelling in the house of the Lord becomes a community that lives

together in the presence of God.

And Peter, in 1 Peter 2:1–10, names this reality:
A chosen people.
A royal priesthood.
But not a people defined by who is kept out.
A people defined by the One whose voice calls them in.

And here is the surprising turn in the Gospel.
The Shepherd does not simply gather the sheep into safety.

He leads them out.
Out of the fold.
Not to abandon them—but because resurrection life cannot be contained.

Not held behind walls.
Not reduced to what is familiar.
Not confined to what feels safe.

The Shepherd is always on the move—guiding, protecting, calling, sending.

And those who hear his voice begin to live differently.

More open.
More generous.
More attentive.

As if, in hearing that voice, they begin again.

A new life.
A new way of being.
A life shaped not by fear—but by the quiet, persistent call of the One who knows their name.

And that voice is not distant.
It is not abstract.
It is as close as breath.

The name of God—spoken, breathed, lived—echoes through creation and through our lives.
“I will be who I will be.”

And in Christ, that voice becomes personal.
Calling.
Naming.
Sending.

So we find ourselves here.
Not just believing in the Shepherd.

But listening.
Listening for the voice that calls us by name.
Listening for the voice that leads us out into the life of resurrection.

Because in Lent, we learn that the Shepherd is with us.
And in Easter, we discover that the Shepherd is calling us—by name—into a life that now bears the shape of resurrection.

So the question is not only what we believe.
But this:
Are we still looking for proof..
or are we beginning to recognise the voice?

And perhaps—just perhaps—
to respond with the same energy as a voice across the oval...
ready, alert, calling back...

“Here I am.”

Psalm 23, A Psalm of David

Common Worship

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd;
therefore can I lack nothing.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.
The Lord leads me.
- 3 He shall refresh my soul
and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
The Lord guides me.
- 4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
The Lord protects me.
- 5 You spread a table before me
in the presence of those who trouble me;
you have anointed my head with oil
and my cup shall be full.
The Lord provides for me.
- 6 Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.
The Lord leads, guides, protects, provides and calls to me.

Discussion Questions.

1. The Lord leads me.
 - The Shepherd does not stand at a distance but goes ahead, leading us—sometimes gently, sometimes into places we would not choose, yet always toward life.
 - Where have you sensed yourself being drawn forward into light recently—even if you were unsure or hesitant to follow?
2. The Lord guides me.
 - Guidance is not always loud or obvious; often it comes as a quiet nudge, a deepening clarity, or a voice that steadies us when other voices compete.
 - What helps you recognise the Shepherd's voice amid the noise—and where might you need to become more attentive to that guidance?
3. The Lord protects me.
 - Protection does not remove us from difficulty, but assures us that even in the valley, we are not alone—the Shepherd has already walked the path before us.
 - Can you recall a time when you became aware—perhaps only in hindsight—that you were held or kept in a difficult moment?
4. The Lord provides for me.
 - Provision often comes in unexpected forms—through others, through community, through daily bread shared—and reveals the Shepherd's care in tangible ways.
 - Where are you being invited not only to receive provision, but also to be part of it for someone else?
5. The Lord leads, guides, protects, provides—and calls to me.
 - The Shepherd not only cares for us—he calls us by name, leading us out into the life of resurrection, where we live not in fear, but in response.
 - What might it look like for you, this week, to respond to that call—to step more fully into the light you are being led toward:
 Call us by name, Good Shepherd,
 and give us grace to hear your voice,
 to follow where you lead,
 and to live as people of the light. Amen.

This five-day devotional will take a deeper dive into this weekend's sermon. As we explore the themes of voice, calling, and belonging, we will journey together toward a deeper understanding of what it means to be known and led by our Shepherd.



Day 1

Scripture: John 10:1–10

Today's reflection focuses on the power of the Shepherd's voice—a voice that calls and leads us beyond the darkness of the valley. In the midst of life's noise and clutter, there is a voice that knows us personally, calling us by name into a life shaped by resurrection. The Shepherd is not merely a passive companion on our journey; He goes before us, calling us to step out of fear and into abundant life.

Acknowledging the Shepherd's voice awakens a new way of living—one that transcends the confines of our fears and limitations. This calling is not about proving ourselves worthy, but about recognising the guiding and loving voice of the Shepherd who knows us intimately. Today invites us to trust and follow Him, stepping into the life He offers.

- Reflect on how you hear the Shepherd's voice in your daily life.
- What areas of your life still remain in the shadow of fear and need His call to step out?
- How does knowing that the Shepherd calls you personally change your understanding of worthiness?
- Pray for clarity in recognising the Shepherd's voice above the many other voices in your life.
- Ask for courage to answer His call and step into new life with confidence.

Day 2

Scripture: Acts 2:42–47

The early church stands as a testament to a community transformed by the Shepherd's call. Gathering in prayer, sharing meals, and living with generous hearts reflect the kind of communal life envisioned in Psalm 23. Their common bond was shaped not by exclusion, but by the voice that called them into a new family of believers.

This day invites you to see your life as part of a community, living out the themes of restoration, guidance, and abundance. As God's chosen people, we are invited

to embody this sacred calling through our relationships and shared experiences, revealing the presence and influence of God's voice in our life together.

- Consider how your community reflects the values of the early church.
- Are there ways you can contribute to your community's shared life and generosity?
- How does the Shepherd's voice shape your role within your community?

- Pray for a heart that is open to living in genuine community with others.
- Ask God to reveal the ways you can contribute to the life of your spiritual community.

Day 3

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1–10

Peter speaks of a new identity: a chosen people and a royal priesthood. This identity is not based on exclusion, but on inclusion through the continual call of the Shepherd. We are a people brought together by the One who knows us intimately and calls us to embody His presence in the world.

Discovering this identity means embracing who you are in Christ—a calling that requires living in the light of the resurrection. The Shepherd not only guides us but also empowers us to live differently: to cultivate lives marked by openness, generosity, and attentiveness to God's voice. This identity transcends fear and grounds us in His transformative word.

- Reflect on how you understand your identity as part of a royal priesthood.
- What changes might you make to live more fully as one who is called and known by the Shepherd?
- In what ways can you share the Shepherd's call with others?

- Pray for a deeper understanding of your identity in Christ and for the courage to live it out daily.
- Seek wisdom as you reflect the Shepherd's call to those around you.

Day 4

Scripture: Psalm 23

Psalm 23 paints a picture of a journey with the Shepherd through valleys and into green pastures. The Shepherd promises presence, guidance, and comfort even when the path seems uncertain. At Easter, this passage reveals a deeper truth: the Shepherd calls us not only to walk alongside Him, but to move toward

resurrection life.

Today's reflection invites you to consider the Shepherd's ongoing presence in your life, not only in quiet pastures but in every step of your journey. The Shepherd's voice leads us forward, away from fear and into a courageous, transformative life shaped by resurrection power.

- How does knowing the Shepherd walks with you through life's valleys change your outlook?
- What does following the Shepherd mean in your everyday decisions and actions?
- Reflect on your experiences with uncertainty. How did the Shepherd guide you?

- Pray for deeper trust in the Shepherd's presence throughout your life's journey.
- Seek courage to follow His call, wherever it may lead.

Day 5

Scripture: Matthew 28:19–20

The Shepherd sends His sheep on a mission, embodying resurrection life beyond familiar walls. The Great Commission invites us to share the good news and live out this abundant life in the wider world. This final day challenges you to reflect on how you respond to the Shepherd's call to go forth and make disciples.

As you conclude this devotional, consider how these themes have transformed your understanding of life as a follower of Christ. You are called to listen attentively, discern the Shepherd's voice, and courageously live out His mission, deeply rooted in His persistent love and confident that you are called by name.

- How can you incorporate the Shepherd's calling into your daily actions and words?
- In what ways can you help share the gospel and make disciples?
- Consider who in your life needs to hear the Shepherd's call.

- Pray for opportunities to live out the Great Commission with courage.
- Ask for clarity and strength as you share God's love with those around you.

End notes and further reading

End notes and further reading

Harrington, Daniel J Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew
Moloney, Francis J, SBD, Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of John
Johnson, Luke Timothy: Sacra Pagina: The Gospel on Luke
Collins, Raymond F., Sacra Pagina: First Corinthians
Andrew McGowan substack.com/@abmcg
N.T. Wright, Twelve months of Sundays Year A
Andrew Pratt, pastor and hymn writer (theworshipcloud.com)

Let your faith and relationships
be shaped by love and patience
for God's love is
revealed in lives, not letters.



Brabarlung Totem

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