

Liturgy

The Fourth Sunday of Easter Year C

GATHERING

Reading: Revelation 7:9-17

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The grave is empty!
Alleluia! He is risen indeed! The Lamb is on the throne!

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

**Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before Him with joyful singing.**

Know that the LORD Himself is God.

It is He who made us and not we ourselves.

We are His people, the sheep of His pasture.

Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise;

Give thanks to Him and bless His name.

For the LORD is good:

**His lovingkindness is everlasting;
and His faithfulness continues to all generations.**

— Psalm 100

Only A Holy God

Who else commands all the hosts of heaven?
Who else could make every king bow down?
Who else can whisper and darkness tremble?
Only a Holy God.

What other beauty demands such praises?
What other splendour outshines the sun?
What other majesty rules with justice?
Only a Holy God.

Chorus:

Come and behold Him, the One and the Only.
Cry out, sing holy, forever a Holy God.
Come and worship the Holy God.

What other glory consumes like fire?
What other power can raise the dead?
What other name remains undefeated?
Only a Holy God.

Chorus

Who else could rescue me from my failing?
Who else would offer His only Son?
Who else invites me to call Him Father?
Only a Holy God. Only my Holy God.

Chorus

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Integrity's Alleluia! Music | Integrity's Praise! Music.
Michael Farren, Jonny Robinson, Dustin Smith, Rich Thompson.

LECTIONARY for the fourth Sunday of Easter, Year C

Acts 9:36-43

Psalm 23

Revelation 7:9-17

John 10:22-30

The fourth Sunday of Eastertide traditionally focuses on Christ as both Shepherd and Lamb. In all three yearly cycles of the Revised Common Lectionary, this Sunday includes the 23rd Psalm and selected verses from John 10. As we continue our observance of the fifty-day season of Easter and our contemplation of the ongoing meaning and significance of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection for the redemption of all of God's creation, our worship this week weaves together both sides of these beautiful, dual characteristics and continuing roles of Christ. And in keeping with our particular focus in Year C, we also consider how knowing and worshiping Christ as both Shepherd and Lamb encourages and enables us to walk in the joyful truth of the Resurrection as Christ's disciples who seek always to follow Him and give witness at all times to His resurrection through our words, deeds, and very selves. As we contemplate Christ the Good Shepherd, we ponder His tender care, leading, and direction of us, the sheep of His pasture. In the narrative of Acts 9, we see in Dorcas the picture of a disciple whose life looked very much like a reflection of the risen Christ's words to Peter, when He admonished him to "feed My lambs [and] tend My sheep." (We read this last week, in John 21.) Our hearts resound in worship as we join in the words of the praises of heaven: "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And we rejoice in the promise, "the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their Shepherd ..."

INVOCATION

Prayers of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving for God's presence

Holy, Holy, Holy

Holy, holy, holy!
All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns
Around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim
Falling down before Thee,
Who was, and is,
And evermore shall be.

Setting: Ellen Koehler. ©2015 . Words: Reginald Heber, 1826; Music: John B. Dykes, 1861

Praise Him! Praise Him!

Praise Him, praise Him!
Jesus, our blessed Redeemer.
Sing, O earth,
His wonderful love proclaim!
Hail Him, hail Him!
Highest archangels in glory;
Strength and honor
Give to His holy name.
Like a shepherd
Jesus will guard His children;
In His arms
He carries them all day long.

Praise Him, praise Him!
Tell of His excellent greatness.
Praise Him, praise Him
Ever in joyful song.

Public domain. Words: Fanny J. Crosby, 1869. Music: Chester G. Allen, 1869

PROFESSION OF FAITH

Jesus declared, in sure and true words of promise to His faithful:

I am the Good Shepherd;
The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.
*I am the Good Shepherd,
and I know My own and My own know Me,
even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father;
and I lay down My life for the sheep.*

My sheep hear My voice,
and I know them, and they follow Me.

*I give eternal life to them,
and they will never perish;
and no one will snatch them out of My hand.*

**My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all,
and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.
I and the Father are one.**

— John 10:11, 14-15, 27-30

Thanks be to God!

The opening reading from Revelation is wonderfully effective when scripted for a narrator/John the Beloved; two or more worshipers around the Throne; several people reading the words of the angels; and an Elder who explains the heavenly scene.

Though Psalm 100 is not included in this week's lectionary, it is a wonderful Gathering acclamation that reflects the joy of following the Good Shepherd, the risen Lamb of God. It is a familiar call to worship, and an invitation to acknowledge the Lord as Sovereign Creator and to enter into His presence with praise, thankfully declaring His faithfulness and goodness.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

To You, O LORD, we call.

**Hear the voice of our supplications when we cry to You for mercy,
when we lift up our hands toward Your holy sanctuary.**

Save Your people and bless Your inheritance;

Shepherd them also, and carry them forever.

— from Psalm 28:1-2, 9

[Silent confessions]

O Lord, both Good Shepherd and Lamb of God,

You tenderly gather us and carry us with Your all-embracing love.

**Yet, like sheep, we tend to wander from You, following our own ways,
ignoring Your voice, distrusting Your provisions.**

Forgive our stubborn rebellion, our hardened hearts, our lack of trust.

Refresh us anew and restore our souls by Your redeeming love.

**Guide our paths in Your ways, that our lives may be to the praise
of Your glory, always. Amen.**

Holy, Holy Lamb

Holy, holy Lamb; holy, holy Lamb,
Who takes away the sin of the world,

Holy, holy Lamb.

Holy, holy Lamb; holy, holy Lamb,
He's worthy of all worship and praise,
Holy, holy Lamb.

Salvation belongs to our God,

Who sits on the throne;

Salvation belongs to our God,

And unto the Lamb.

Holy, holy Lamb; holy, holy Lamb,
Who takes away the sin of the world,

Holy, holy Lamb.

Holy, holy Lamb; holy, holy Lamb,
He's worthy of all worship and praise,
Holy, holy Lamb.

CCLI Song #1197052 ©1993 Maranatha! Music. Dan Burgess.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Brothers and sisters, this is the good news of God's love and salvation:

Grace to you and peace from Him who is

and who was and who is to come,

and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness,

the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To Him who loves us and freed us from our sins in His blood,

and has made us to be a kingdom,

priests to His God and Father,

to Him be glory and dominion

forever and ever. Amen.

— Revelation 1:4-5

Salvation belongs to our God,

who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!

Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor, power, and might

be to our God forever and ever. Amen. Alleluia!

— Revelation 7:10,12

TIME OF OFFERING

Meditations and sharing:

“The Lamb in the center of the throne will be their Shepherd,
and will guide them to springs of the water of life.”

(Rev. 7:17, NASB, NRSV)

“He who sits on the throne will shelter them with His presence.”

(Rev. 7:15, ESV, NIV)

You Have Been Good

O Lord, You have been good;
You have been faithful to all generations.
O Lord, Your steadfast love
And tender mercy have been our salvation.

For by Your hand we have been fed,
And by Your Spirit we have been led.
O Lord, You have been good;
You have been faithful to all generations.

For by Your hand we have been fed,
And by Your Spirit we have been led.
O Lord, Almighty God, Father unchanging, upright and holy.

O Lord, You have been good;
You have been faithful, You have been good.

CCLI Song #59452 ©1988 Ariose Music. Twila Paris

There are many wonderful versifications and settings of the 23rd Psalm. This song, by Twila Paris, is not strictly a setting of “the shepherd’s psalm,” but it beautifully reflects the theme of Christ as the Good Shepherd who knows us intimately and identifies with us, His sheep.

Other examples include Stuart Townend’s setting of Psalm 23 (CCLI Song #1585970 ©1996 Thanksyou Music); and classic hymns such as The King of Love My Shepherd Is and My Shepherd Will Supply My Need.

THE WORD

Acts 9:36-43

Psalm 23

Revelation 7:9-17

John 10:22-30

THE TABLE

Remembering the Body of Christ

The Lord be with you!

And also with you!

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

The Lord's Prayer (spoken)

**Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.
Amen.**

Behold the Lamb

Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away, slain for us:
And we remember
The promise made that all who come in faith
Find forgiveness at the cross.
So, we share in this Bread of Life, and we drink of His sacrifice,
As a sign of our bonds of peace around the table of the King.

The body of our Savior, Jesus Christ, torn for you:
Eat and remember
The wounds that heal, the death that brings us life,
Paid the price to make us one.
So, we share in this Bread of Life, and we drink of His sacrifice,
As a sign of our bonds of love around the table of the King.

The blood that cleanses ev'ry stain of sin, shed for you:
Drink and remember
He drained death's cup that all may enter in to receive the life of God.
So, we share in this Bread of Life, and we drink of His sacrifice,
As a sign of our bonds of grace around the table of the King.

And so with thankfulness and faith we rise to respond,
And to remember
Our call to follow in the steps of Christ as His body here on earth.
As we share in His suffering, we proclaim: Christ will come again!
And we'll join in the feast of heav'n around the table of the King.

CCLI Song #5003372; ©2007 Thankyou Music. Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty, Stuart Townend.

Holy

I will lift my voice, and I will sing,
I will sing holy, holy.
To my Lord and Savior, my God and King:
I will sing holy, holy

Chorus:

I will praise the Lamb of God who sits upon the throne.
I will worship Him, and give the praise to Him alone.
He who was and is and is to come:
I will sing before His throne forever, forever.

All the angels sing, and they bow down,
And they sing holy, holy.
We, Your sons and daughters, we praise You now:
And we cry holy, holy.

Chorus

Holy, holy; holy, holy . . .

Donnie McClurkin. ©2003 Seven Summits Music and Don Mac Music.

SENDING FORTH
The Life of the Body

Benediction

May the peace of God our heav'nly Father,
And the grace of Christ the risen Son,
And the fellowship of God the Spirit
Keep our hearts and minds within His love.

And to Him be praise for His glorious reign,
From the depths of earth to the heights of heav'n.
We declare the name of the Lamb once slain:
Christ eternal, the King of kings!

CCLI Song #4506980. ©2005 Thankyou Music.
Stuart Townend and Keith Getty.

Benediction:

"I am the resurrection and the life," says the Lord.
Because He has triumphed over death, and He lives and reigns –
the Lamb upon His throne – you also live.

Alleluia! Amen!

Since we have been raised with Christ, let us now go forth as His witnesses,
loving and serving Him in the joy and victorious power of His resurrection.

Alleluia! Amen!

Almighty God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – bless you now and forever, as
you go forth into the world to love and serve the risen Christ.

Amen. Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

A thought about worship from the Ancient Fathers –

"To those who conquer, God says, "I will give a crown of life." So be faithful to the point of death, and fight the good fight. The apostle Paul felt confident that this crown had been laid up for him. The angel also receives a crown of victory as he rides on a white horse to conquer. Another is adorned with an encircling rainbow of beautiful colors—a heavenly meadow. Similarly, the elders sit around crowned, too, with golden crowns, and the Son of Man glimmers above the clouds. If these things merely appear in the vision of John, what will it really be like when they are actually displayed? Look at the crowns. Inhale the fragrances. Why do you condemn the brow destined for a crown to a little garland or a twisted headband? For Christ Jesus has even made us kings for God, His Father.."

– Tertullian

Lectionary for next week: Acts 11:1-18
Psalm 148
Revelation 21:1-6
John 12:31-35

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