

## EASTER: REJOICING IN RESURRECTION HOPE

**Fourth Sunday of Easter  
(Good Shepherd Sunday)  
April 25, 2010**

**Acts 9:36-43  
Psalm 23  
Revelation 7:9-17  
John 10:22-30**

### “Tell us plainly ...”

“Inquiring minds want to know ...” In a manner similar to present-day tabloid reporting, this week’s Gospel text confronts us with yet another interrogation of Jesus by the religious leaders—this time regarding his identity. “If you are the Messiah,” they say, “tell us plainly” (John 10:24b, *NRSV*). Jesus, knowing this encounter with his opponents is another ploy to entrap him, responds by referring to the works he does in his Father’s name, works that testify to his identity.

While the John 10:22-30 passage immediately follows what is often referred to as the “Good Shepherd” discourse (John 10:1-21), it hearkens back to John 9:40-41, where Jesus upbraids his antagonists for their spiritual blindness. Here again, Jesus’ opponents refuse to believe because, Jesus says, they do not belong to his sheep (10:26).

To believe in Jesus is to be among his sheep who hear and follow his voice. To believe in Jesus is to be free of spiritual blindness and to trust the loving voice of our true Shepherd who, as stated in Psalm 23, restores our souls, and leads us in right paths for his name’s sake (verse 3).

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, assures us of an abundant life (John 10:10)—a life without fear of evil, even when we experience our darkest moments, because we are surrounded by his goodness and mercy *all* the days of our life (Psalm 23:4a, 6). Jesus, our Good Shepherd, knows each of us by name. We are his sheep and he promises us eternal life, never to be snatched out of his hand (10:28).

Chapter 10 in John’s Gospel concludes with the religious leaders seeking to stone Jesus on the basis of blasphemy. And Jesus tells them, *quite plainly*, “If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me” (John 10:37, *NRSV*). To those who do believe, it is *plain* that Jesus shares fully in God’s work and that he and the Father are one (John 10:30; 17:11).

As believers in the crucified, risen, and ascended Lord and Savior, we hear and respond to Jesus' call to follow him. And in the life to come, we shall gather with the great multitude, standing before the throne and before the Lamb and singing joyfully,

“Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”  
(Revelation 7:10b, *NRSV*)

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, the Paschal Lamb who atoned for our sins once and for all (Hebrews 7:27), is now glorified and ready to welcome us to his Father's house, our final home that he has prepared for us (John 14:2).

Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.  
(Hebrews 13:20-21, *NRSV*)

This week's Reflection was prepared by Barbara Bernstengel, former Director of the Education Unit in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship at the American Bible Society.

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**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: France** – With thanks to God for the Bible exhibition launched in February that is continuing to attract thousands of visitors, and for the *Gospel of Luke in Sign Language*, and with prayers that God will bless the many people who will encounter the Bible for the first time through these projects; **Belgium (Flemish)** – With thanks to God for the positive response to the *Lectio Divina* booklet and that the Word of God will take root in the hearts of those who have read it, and with prayers for the *Bible Stories, Our Stories* initiative and for creative ways to reach people with the Word; **Belgium (Francophone)** – With thanks to God for the 4,500 diglot New Testaments distributed among Turkish residents, and for the many exhibitions, radio programs, and conferences highlighting the relevance of the Bible today, and with prayers for God's blessing on work among migrants, on the production of a Youth Bible, and for the staff team and Bible work in **Luxembourg**.

**Activity Corner:** “The LORD Is My Shepherd” Booklet (for young children)

Supplies needed: Bible; 8-1/2” x 11” construction paper (assorted colors); 8” x 10” writing paper; 3-hole puncher and ribbon or brass fasteners (or stapler); pens or pencils; glue or paste; scissors; old magazines.

Invite children in your household to copy each of the six verses from Psalm 23 onto six pieces of writing paper. Look through magazines for pictures that illustrate each of the six verses and paste the pictures on sheets of construction paper. Use two sheets of construction paper for the front and back covers. Write “The LORD Is My Shepherd” on the cover and decorate with artwork or pictures from a magazine. Gather the pages in

order and use a 3-hole puncher to make aligned holes on the left-hand side of the sheets. Fasten the pages together with ribbon or brass fasteners (or staple the pages). Encourage the children to use their booklets to help them memorize this beloved psalm.

### “Shepherd” Word Game

Supplies needed: writing paper; pens or pencils; timer or stopwatch.

Invite members of your household to write down as many words as they can, using the letters from the word “Shepherd.” Time limit: 10 minutes

(Suggested words: deep; deer; heed; her; herd; here; peer; red; reed; seed; seep; she; shed; sheep; sheer)

Conclude by reading Psalm 23 together as a closing prayer and discuss how God is like a shepherd in caring for each of us.