

Acts 2:42-47

**“Life Under the Good Shepherd’s Care”
Easter 4 (A)**

April 26, 2026

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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

Today is an unusual day in the Church Year. Today has almost a festival-like feel without actually being a festival day. Today isn’t based on any major life event of our Lord. We aren’t celebrating a major happening of Jesus’ life.

But today does have a festival feel. The Fourth Sunday of Easter is known as “Good Shepherd Sunday” from a metaphor Jesus says of Himself: ***“I am the Good Shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep”*** (John 10:14-15).

These words of our Good Shepherd could be read any week of the year. It doesn’t have to be on the Fourth Sunday of Easter.

But seeing Jesus as the Good Shepherd is also fitting in this Easter season. After all, the Good Shepherd laid down His life for us, His sheep, so that He might ***“take it up again”*** (John 10:17). *Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!*

Caring for His sheep is what the Good Shepherd lives to do. He feeds, He guides, and He calms. This is what the crucified and risen Christ is always doing for us!

But what about today’s First Reading from Acts 2? How does this reading even relate to the other readings? Where is the sheep? Where is the Shepherd?

It is true that our reading from Acts 2 is not explicit about sheep and a shepherd. But in this reading, we heard how our Good Shepherd and His undershepherds – *His called and ordained pastors* – lead us to pasture. In this reading, we hear about the Christian life under the Good Shepherd’s care.

So, what does this Christian life under the Good Shepherd’s care look like?

Our reading in Acts 2 may sound like St. Luke is idealizing this Christian life. It seems from our point of view to be too good to be real. It has a “once upon a time” feel to it. It seems like nothing that you and I have ever experienced. It seems too perfect.

But this was the first century church, nothing more and nothing less. Our text describes the life of this first century church, both in terms of her dependence upon the Word of Christ, the apostolic teaching and doctrine, and the Sacrament. But it also shows how faith in Christ is then lived out in brotherly love and in acts of mercy within the Body of Christ.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

You see, these early Christians were so completely devoted to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship that they were completely spellbound. They were with rapt attention. They were completely fascinated and engrossed. The Word of God simply carried them away. These early Christians were completely devoted to living God’s Word as well as learning it. Our text shows how the Church lives from the Word of the Gospel.

This devotion led the church to be bustling with activity. They were vibrant in worship, and they generously gave toward the needy.

This just seems too perfect. This is so far removed from today’s church.

Today’s church faces growing opposition from the fallen world around it. Today’s church is tempted to follow right in line with the fallen world. Today we hear more about scandals within the church. Those things that give the church a real black eye.

Then, we have us. Individually, we each have our own battles against sin. They may be your indifference to the church as you compromise with the fallen world, or holding grudges, or looking at others lustfully, while all the while, not trusting in God, who is the giver of all things. Each battle with sin leaves us bruised and wounded.

On top of our own sin, there are wounds from our neighbors’ sins against us, and our struggle to forgive our repentant brother or sister in Christ as the Lord has forgiven us.

When adding all of this, we appear to be a far cry from the world that St. Luke describes in Acts 2.

But the church in Acts 2 did have many problems. They had real problems. They faced hostility. Peter and John would be arrested by the Sanhedrin for preaching the good news of the crucified and risen Christ. Later all Twelve would be arrested. They faced scandals. Ananias and Sapphira sold some of their property but pretended to offer it all to the church. Their pious playacting and deceit disrupted the unity of the church. So, the world of the early Christians was just as messy as our world.

But all the while, despite their sin and our sin, the Good Shepherd and His undershepherds were continuously providing for the Church. You see, the Good Shepherd was and continually is providing nourishment for His Body, the Church.

The Good Shepherd is leading His flock to life – eternal life. So with the Psalmist David, we also proclaim: ***“I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever”*** (Psalm 23:6c).

And the Scriptures make it clear that your eternal life has already begun from the moment the Triune God joined you to Him in faith. For the Good Shepherd says: ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life”*** (John 5:24).

Today, at this very moment, the Good Shepherd is leading His flock through this ***“valley of the shadow of death”*** (Psalm 23:4a) – *this life now* – to the mountaintop known as heaven – the New Heaven and New Earth. We all look forward to that great and magnificent day, but that life is already here today, manifested in His church.

This good news is what changed those early Christians. Yes, they had real problems, but they also knew they had the real Savior, the Messiah, the Christ.

Because they had the good news of the Savior, they clung to Him with all their might. They showed their genuineness of their faith by continuing. Despite the hate, the ridicule, and the persecution they suffered, they remained faithful. Jesus said in John 8: ***“If you abide in My Word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the Truth will set you free”*** (John 8:31-32). And so, ***“they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers”*** (Acts 2:42). They were steadfastly devoted ***“to the apostles’ teaching”*** because that is where they heard their Good Shepherd’s voice. The apostles’ teaching served and continues to serve as a foundation to the growth and spiritual health of every Christian.

St. Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus reflect the priority of preaching the Word. He writes: ***"If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed"*** (1 Timothy 4:6). And: ***"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching"*** (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

For if we ignore ***"the apostles' teaching,"*** we are ignoring it at our own peril. If we are not taught the truth, then we will not learn the truth. So, we must continuously examine the Scriptures following the example of the Bereans in Acts 17 (Acts 17:11).

You see, the Scriptures – *the Word of God* – serves as food for our spiritual growth. But not only the Scriptures. We are also strengthened through the Good Shepherd's Sacraments. In the Lord's Supper, the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for you, says, ***"This is My body; this is My blood."*** And where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation!

So, through these Means of Grace, we are under the Good Shepherd's care as He leads us – *His sheep* – in and out to pasture, each week as we hear His voice: in the apostolic teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers.

Now, yours and my life may not be easy. We each have our own battles against sin. We struggle to forgive as Christ forgave us. This is why we needed that perfect sacrifice. This is why Jesus – *the perfect God-Man* – had to lay down His life, so that He might take it up again so that He would guide us to green pastures and to still waters with our souls restored!

Being restored in Christ, the Good Shepherd gives us His Holy Spirit so that we might bear witness to all that He has done. So, devote yourselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. For when doing so, your sins are forgiven as the Holy Spirit also strengthens your faith, so that you will have the courage to bear witness this good news to your neighbor! Amen!

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +