

**GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

The Fourth Sunday of Easter (A)

Acts. 2.42-47

Psalm 23

1 Peter 2.19-25

John 10.1-10

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From Easter through Pentecost the Old Testament lesson is replaced by a lesson from the Acts of the Apostles. The readings from Acts focus on the birth of the Church in Jerusalem (reporting, *e.g.*, the sermons of Peter and Stephen). The Gospel readings are generally from John, focusing on the post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus to His disciples.

**Acts. 2.42-47**

1. Luke here describes the early Church in terms of the “marks” of the Church.
  - a. The marks or characteristics include gathering in the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, prayer, and the “breaking of the bread” (eucharist).
    - i. Luke also describes that the Christians had “all things in common”.
      1. In this, and in describing fellowship, he is describing *koinōnia* (which translates as “community” or “fellowship”).
2. The “teaching “ of the apostles (*didachē*) includes proclamation to outsiders.
3. *Koinōnia* is only used here by Luke, but is used thirteen times by Paul in his letters. The connotation is of a bond of mutual responsibility between believers, enjoined upon believers by their assent to the gospel. (*See, e.g.*, 2 Cor. 8.4; 9.13; Gal. 2.9-10.)
4. The disciples meet in the Temple, which Jesus had used as His forum in Jerusalem. This emphasizes the continuity between the old and new covenants.

**Psalm 23**

1. This is, of course, probably the best known psalm. It is an individual song of trust; probably originally a royal song.
2. The image of shepherd was universal in the ancient world for the king, emphasizing leadership and providence for the king’s subjects.
  - a. Quite apart from Jesus’ use of this image in John 10, Rev. 7.17 applies the image of the shepherd to the Lamb (Christ).
3. A hint of the history of the Hebrew’s captivity is found in v. 4, which says “I shall fear no evil.”
  - a. The root used for “evil” in Hebrew is a cognate of the name of the Egyptian “god” *Ra*, from whom the Hebrews were delivered by the LORD, their shepherd!
    - i. *Ra’* (evil) is defeated by *rō’î* (“my shepherd”).
  - b. The psalm is filled with personal pronouns (*my* shepherd), framed by the proper Name of the LORD, emphasizing the God’s presence is intimate.
4. This psalm should be compared to Mark 6.30-44, the feeding of the five thousand.
  - a. Jesus takes pity of the people because “they were like sheep without a shepherd” (6.34).

- b. The people are in a “lonely place,” described by Mark using the word *aramōn* (6.32).
  - i. This is the same word used by Mark to refer to a “wilderness” (1.12).
    - 1. In other words, this is a wilderness or desert.
      - a. Yet the people are described as sitting on the “green grass” (6.39).
        - i. In other words, Jesus as the shepherd is feeding the people who lie in a “green pasture”!
        - ii. And lying in this green pasture, the people are fed abundantly.

### 1 Peter 2.19-25

- 1. This lesson is taken from a section in Peter’s letter in which he is focused on teaching. Here, he begins teaching about how to behave as a Christian under another’s power.
  - a. Peter is here literally addressing himself to slaves.
    - i. The early Church did not attempt to change the ancient social order which included very widespread slavery.
      - 1. Old World slavery was not, however, a phenomenon based on race.
- 2. In v. 23 this translation states that Jesus “... entrusted *himself* to the one who judges justly.”
  - a. Most translations read that he entrusted “everything”.
    - i. In fact, the Greek original has no object of the verb “entrusted”. It appears that Peter is being deliberately vague, that the proper relationship with God (modeled by Jesus) is one of trust, but not trust for a particular thing or outcome.
- 3. Peter has quoted from Isaiah regarding the Suffering Servant. Now, recalling Jesus’ words, Peter makes clear that the Servant is now the Shepherd.
  - a. The LORD is the shepherd of Israel in Ps. 23 and at Gen 49.24.

### John 10.1-10

- 1. Jesus’ teaching here is quite transparent, but still the people do not understand (v. 6).
  - a. This translation refers to Jesus’ teaching as “a figure of speech”.
    - i. John refers to a *paroima* (proverb), a term he uses to mean a teaching like a “parable” as found in the Synoptic Gospels.
      - 1. The underlying Hebrew tradition is a *māšāl*, a proverb.
- 2. In treating the crowd as sheep without a shepherd, Jesus recalls the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6.35).
  - a. He is also recalling Ezekiel 34:
    - i. The sheep are left wandering as prey for wolves (34.1-10).
    - ii. The LORD promises to go and gather His sheep (34.11-16).
  - b. Here in John (v. 9) Jesus identifies Himself by one of His “I AM” (*ego eimi*) sayings, using the proper name of the LORD.
    - 1. He says that He is the gate.
      - a. Compare this to Ezekiel 34.30-31:

And they shall know that I, the LORD [I AM]\* their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord GOD [*Adonai* I AM]†. And you are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, says the Lord GOD [*Adonai* I AM].

\* The proper Name of God.  
("the LORD").

† God's title ("the Lord") followed by His Name