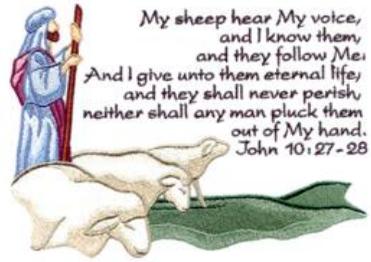


Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019

## The Fourth Sunday of Easter

White



### Collect

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life: raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above, where he reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

**Acts 9:36-43** English Standard Version (ESV)

### Dorcas Restored to Life

9<sup>36</sup> Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas.<sup>[a]</sup> She was full of good works and acts of charity.<sup>37</sup> In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.<sup>38</sup> Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Please come to us without delay."<sup>39</sup> So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics<sup>[b]</sup> and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them.<sup>40</sup> But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.<sup>41</sup> And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.<sup>42</sup> And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.<sup>43</sup> And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

**Footnotes:** a. The Aramaic name *Tabitha* and the Greek name *Dorcas* both mean *gazelle*. b. Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin.

**COMMENT:** The story of Peter healing Dorcas, the disciple of Lydda, is one of the continuing the ministry of the risen Christ through apostles - the power of the risen ascended Lord. The account finds an echo in the story of Jesus raising the daughter of Jairus in Luke 8:41-56 just as the immediately previous healing miracle about Aeneas (9:32-34) recalls the healing of the paralytic in Luke 5:18-26. In a sense, this affirms a true succession of ministry, which does not depend solely on the presence of the apostle, but on the members of the Christian community. The Spirit that functioned through the apostles would still carry on Christ's ministry through the church. The account also serves to show that Peter,

the recognised leader of the signals that Peter, actually initiated the Gentile mission. Yet the main narrative from 13:1 on deals almost exclusively with Paul - probably owing to the fact that Luke accompanied Paul on missions.

## **John 10:22-30** English Standard Version (ESV)

### **I and the Father Are One**

10<sup>22</sup> At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter,<sup>23</sup> and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon.<sup>24</sup> So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.”<sup>25</sup> Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,<sup>26</sup> but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.<sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.<sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me,<sup>[a]</sup> is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.<sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one.”

**Footnote:** a. Some manuscripts *What my Father has given to me.*

**COMMENT:** Thus far, John tells us, Jesus is accused of having only hinted at who he is. Now the hecklers who followed his every move so they could entrap him wanted him to declare himself openly. He insisted that he had already told them by his actions and they would not believe. Only those who were capable of recognizing him as the true Messiah would follow him as a flock follows its shepherd. The festival of the Dedication is celebrated today as Hanukkah, or the Festival of Lights, which occurs on the 25th of the Hebrew month, Chislev, somewhere near our Christmas. Its origin lies in the rededication of the temple after the Maccabean Revolt of 165 BC. According to the Jewish legend, when the temple was purified, only one cruse of unpolluted ritual oil was found intact. It contained only enough oil to last a single day. By a miracle the contents that little cruse lasted for the full eight days of the rededication period until new oil could be prepared according to the correct ritual formula. The portico in which this incident took place was a columned and roofed area which enclosed the temple precincts. Some models or drawings of the temple show columns on all four sides. In most reconstructions, the name Solomon's Portico is generally reserved for the eastern side only. It was breached by the Shushan or Beautiful Gate which gave general access from the Kidron Valley to the Temple Mount and the Court of the Gentiles. The portico on the north side was named the Royal Porch. People walked there to pray and meditate. There too Rabbis strolled as they talked to their disciples (not necessarily students) and expounded their particular doctrines and interpretations of the traditional faith. The narrative includes the corroborating data that “it was winter.” Such details seem to suggest that the story comes from an eyewitness. If it was the apostle John whose account of this incident is reported here, he certainly would have been aware of this location and the message Jesus delivered to his

disciples. The content of Jesus' conversation with his opponents is a continuation of the teaching in 10:1-18 in which another messianic declaration, "I am the good shepherd," is the central focus. Typical of John's sub-plot of a continuing controversy with the Jewish authorities, he has Jesus confirm the difference between those who believe and follow him, and those who don't. Obviously John was writing this to exhort his own community at the end of the 1st century to remain faithful under duress, a theme which is extensively elaborated in the Book of Revelation - this is also the challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**Psalm 23** *Dominus regit me* Grail Psalter

**℟ The Lord is my shepherd: there is nothing I shall want.**

<sup>1</sup> The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.

<sup>2</sup> Fresh and green are the pastures  
where he gives me repose.

Near restful waters he leads me,

<sup>3</sup> to revive my drooping spirit. ℟

He guides me along the right path;

he is true to his name.

<sup>4</sup> If I should walk in the valley of darkness  
no evil would I fear.

You are there with your crook and your staff;  
with these you give me comfort. ℟

<sup>5</sup> You have prepared a banquet for me  
in the sight of my foes.

My head you have anointed with oil;  
my cup is overflowing. ℟

<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me  
all the days of my life.

In the Lord's own house shall I dwell  
for ever and ever. ℟

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son :  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** This shepherd's psalm is perhaps the most loved of all in our Bible. It still brings strength and solace to the faithful. Ancient tradition and a title in the Hebrew Scriptures claimed that it was from the hand of David, Israel's legendary shepherd king. Though not entirely impossible, it is unlikely. Reference to the "house of the Lord" in verse 6 indicates a later date, since the temple was not built until after David had died. On the other hand, prior to the building of the temple by Solomon, the tabernacle of the wilderness wanderings was also considered The LORD's dwelling place. On the whole, the metaphor of the divine shepherd appeared in many Old Testament references (Psalm 100:3; Ezekiel 34; 37:24). This should not surprise us because the ancient Israelites to whom the Old Testament authors looked for their definitive traditions were primarily a pastoral people with their chief wealth represented by their flocks. During their early history, they depended on flocks of sheep for most aspects of their livelihood including food, clothing, tent, a medium of exchange and the central offering of ritual sacrifice. Even today in the thoroughly urbanized state of Israel, one can still see Palestinian shepherds with their large flocks on hillsides within a very short distance of Jerusalem and Jericho. There is a second metaphor which memory frequently overlooks in reciting this psalm. Verse 5 transfers the scene to the obligatory hospitality which every Middle Eastern pastoral society extended to anyone fleeing from enemies. Tribal feuds caused many such flights. A hunted man merely had to touch the tent of anyone with whom he might seek refuge to lay upon his host the requirement of providing sanctuary and sustenance. As seen by the psalmist, the divine host provides far more than is necessary: indeed a feast with sweet unguents poured on his head and an overflowing wine cup.

### **Short Preface**

But chiefly are we bound to praise you because you raised him gloriously from the dead. For he is the true paschal lamb who was offered for us, and has taken away the sin of the world. By his death he has destroyed death, and by his rising to life again he has restored to us everlasting life.

### **Post Communion**

Merciful Father, you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd, and in his love for us to lay down his life and rise again: keep us always under his protection, and give us grace to follow in his steps; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Blessing**

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**