

# Daily Devotions

May 1-6, 2023

## Monday May 1

### **Acts 2:42-47**

<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup>Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.

<sup>44</sup>All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup>they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup>Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

### ***For Reflection***

There is great power in the Word of God, in Christian fellowship, in gathering for Holy Communion, and in prayer. This is what the early believers "devoted themselves" to. Miracles followed! Not least of which, there was tremendous generosity and sharing of resources so that nobody was in need. Their lives were filled with joy, celebration, and friendship in Christ. How much of God's life-changing presence do we miss out on when we are not "devoted" to divine teaching, fellowship, the sacrament, and prayer? Remember, these are not "chores" to do, but they are ways by which God has promised to be present to us and for us. They aren't activities to master, but gifts to receive.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Does it make you a little nervous to think about everyone selling their possessions and sharing the proceeds with everyone else? Nowhere does it say that Christians have to do the exact same thing. But what would help you to feel free to be more generous with your time, your emotions, or your financial resources? How could you find that help in prayer, fellowship, Scripture, and worship?

2. What obstacles make it harder for you to pray and read Scripture daily or be part of weekly worship and fellowship? We all have them, so don't feel embarrassed. But be honest. What is one step you could take to make one of those obstacles smaller?

### **Read Psalm 1-5**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for victims and communities grieving from gun violence. Pray for the safety of all people, especially in schools, for reasonable laws, and for resources to combat the mental health crisis in America.

## **Tuesday May 2**

### **Read Psalm 6-8**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for all students. Ask God to grant them learning, growth, friendships, and fun. Pray that they would increase not only in knowledge, but in wisdom and character.

## **Wednesday May 3**

### **Psalm 23**

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup>He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

<sup>3</sup>he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

### ***For Reflection***

When you think of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, do you think you hear it in worship and other church spaces often, or not enough? A fun fact of our year-long lectionary, the Bible readings appointed for Sunday worship, is that Psalm 23 appears on three different Sundays. We heard this psalm as recently as the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent, and we'll hear it again in mid-October, during the season after Pentecost.

This week, the Psalm ties in with the gospel reading from John 10 where Jesus talks about being the good shepherd, as well as the “gate” for the sheep. In other words, he is the protector and provider for everyone who belongs to his flock. If we hold Psalm 23 and John 10 in mind together, we get a picture of Jesus as our loving shepherd. He leads and guides us. He provides for us and saves us from our enemies. Jesus gives us his abundant grace, mercy, and life. That is the good news of this psalm and the great news of Easter!

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. How does this familiar psalm strike you after celebrating Jesus’ resurrection to eternal life just a few weeks ago? Another way of asking this is, what is it like to imagine the resurrected Jesus as your good shepherd? How is this psalm good news for you today?
2. What pathways are you on right now that are causing you to seek your good shepherd’s guidance and direction? Spend a few minutes asking the Holy Spirit to lead you to the next right step for whatever situation comes to mind.
3. What are some places in your life or in the world around you that could use an extra dose of God’s goodness and mercy? Pray for God to shine forth his goodness there.

### **Read Psalm 9-11**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for the ministry of Reformation Lutheran Church, that we would be devoted to serving God, bearing witness to the Gospel so that others may come to believe, and serving our community so that we may bless others.

## **Thursday May 4**

### **1 Peter 2:19-25**

<sup>19</sup>For it is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup>If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God’s approval. <sup>21</sup>For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup>“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” <sup>23</sup>When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. <sup>24</sup>He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for

righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup>For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

### ***For Reflection***

Jesus is our example. He endured suffering and did not react violently. He didn't treat others as enemies, even they treated him like enemies. How different would our society look if that example were widely followed! I am heartbroken to see how often people assume the worst about others and ramp up conflict. I am even more heartbroken when I see those who are called by the name of Christ caught up in those behaviors. We need the example of Jesus.

But more than an example for us, Jesus is the Savior for us. When we fail to act with compassion or kindness or patience, he still meets us with mercy. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross" for our forgiveness, for our righteousness, and for our healing. He is the only one who can transform our hearts and lives. May we joyfully receive him as God's gift of salvation, so that we may then boldly follow him as our example.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. When is a time when you have experienced Jesus shepherding or guarding your soul? What was it like to be guided by him?
2. What does Jesus' example of suffering mean for you when you face difficult situations? How does the way he responded to abuse inform the way you handle conflict? How can you grow in this?

### **Read Psalm 12-14**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for the spiritual growth of yourself and all our members, that we would be filled with the Holy Spirit, increase in our knowledge of God's will, and overflow in love for each other and the world around us.

## **Friday May 5**

### **John 10:1-10**

[Jesus said,] "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. <sup>2</sup>The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup>The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has

brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.<sup>5</sup> They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.”<sup>6</sup> Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.<sup>7</sup> So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.<sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them.<sup>9</sup> I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.<sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

### ***For Reflection***

It's a great gift to hear the voice of someone you haven't heard from in a long time. Whether you reunite with them in person, on the phone, or over a video call, it's amazing how hearing their voice can reconnect you immediately. Hearing their voice reminds you of everything about them that you've missed.

The loving voice of Jesus calling his sheep is a theme that's interwoven through today's gospel reading. Jesus “calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” (v. 3). The sheep follow the shepherd faithfully because they know his voice.

What helps you hear Jesus' voice most clearly? You might tune your ears to the words of Scripture to help you hear the good news of Jesus' love for you. Or perhaps receiving Jesus' body and blood in Holy Communion is what helps you hear the shepherd's voice most clearly. It might be that listening to the sermon or hearing other Christians talk about their faith is how you pick up on the voice of your shepherd.

Whichever method you are tuned into, make sure to pause and listen. Really listen to the voice of Jesus, your good shepherd. He's always inviting you and calling you to follow him. He wants to give you abundant life. What's more, you get to share in that life with the other sheep around you. Jesus, your good shepherd, blesses you with his love, and keeps you in his care, anew each and every day. That's great news for us sheep!

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. What does the abundant life Jesus offers in verse 10 look like for you? How would you describe that abundant life to someone who isn't yet in a relationship with Jesus?

2. Jesus contrasts his loving ways with the lying and manipulative ways of the thieves and bandits of his time. How have you experienced Jesus' love in a way that contrasts with how thieves and bandits operate in our world today?
3. What are your strengths and your growth areas as a sheep in Jesus' flock? How do you want to grow in faith or in spiritual maturity to be more like your good shepherd? What steps are you taking to make that growth happen?

**Read Psalm 15-17**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for peace in the world, especially in Ukraine. Ask God to sustain those who suffer under persecution for the name of Christ. Pray that all people would have freedom and good government.

**Saturday May 6**

**Read Psalm 18**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for police, fire fighters, all emergency workers, health care workers, and those who serve in the military. Pray for farmers and those who transport food. Ask God to grant well-being to all in our community, and to stir up generosity to meet the needs of those who lack food, shelter, or other needs.

**The Mission of Reformation Lutheran Church is to:**

**Invite** our neighbors as Jesus invites us.

**Engage** in a community of graceful discipleship.

**Equip** our members to grow in faith and ministry.

**Embody** the love of Jesus in our world.



