**Acts 4:1-12** And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, **2** greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. **3** And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. **4** But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. **5** On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, **6** with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. **7** And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” **8** Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, **9** if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, **10** let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. **11**  This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. **12** And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

**1 John 3:16-24** By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **17** But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? **18** Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. **19** By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; **20** for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. **21** Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; **22** and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. **23** And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. **24**  Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

**John 10:11-18** I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. **12** He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. **13** He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. **14**  I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, **15**  just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. **16** And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. **17**  For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. **18**  No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

**“No One Else”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. If confirmation day is going to be during the Easter season, this fourth Sunday of Easter fits well. The Lord being the good shepherd is a wonderful image for His Church. You can go back throughout the Old Testament for the shepherd theme. The firstborn son of Adam and Eve, Abel, was a shepherd who brought a portion of his flock to God only to die at the hand of his brother Cain. We can jump ahead to Egypt where God as a shepherd used His servant Moses to crush the wolf Pharaoh and his raging army, but delivered His sheep Israel through the Red Sea. Again, in the Promised Land God called David, a shepherd to kill Goliath and become the iconic king of Israel. He also happened to write Psalm 23, which many recognize the opening lines, “The Lord is my shepherd…”

Since today is confirmation, we look forward that some baptized sheep of Christ will make a good confession of their great shepherd Jesus and desire to follow Him. Of course, they were able to avoid their last examination, but these sheep do not get off that easy. Instead, as pastor, I decided the whole flock of God today will suffer together with them by sharing in answering parts from the Small Catechism. Since everything in life will be shaken, Easter puts before us Christ who died and now lives promising He alone is our refuge. The only good shepherd Jesus saves His sheep by the great love He gives.

1. **Love committed to make an irrefutable defense.**
2. Jesus unpacks the “good” of the good shepherd.

* He says, “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”
* The “good” of this shepherd can also be better translated “Right” Shepherd, “Honorable” Shepherd, and even “Beautiful” Shepherd.
* Turn to page 322 in the hymnal so that we can read together the “What does this mean?” about The Second Article of the Apostles Creed.
* Plenty can give their life in honorable and loving ways, but none of it lasts and sadly ends up forgotten over the years.
* However, the Good Shepherd Jesus commits to save lost and condemned sheep saying by His sacrifice, “You did not choose me, I chose you.”
* Wolves only see food and hired hands only see profit, but Jesus by His death chose love being able to see sinners righteous and blessed in Him.

1. **Love built on a relationship that cares.**
2. Rather than just being a commodity, Jesus reveals every sheep matters to the Good Shepherd.

* He says, “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.”
* This is knowledge more than info or memory work in confirmation, but knowing in the sense of relationship between Jesus and His disciples.
* Turn to page 330 in the hymnal to “Christian Questions with their answers” looking at the last question #20.
* It is easy to forget how we know Jesus, which without His Word and Sacrament we end up grazing off into fatal pastures.
* Foolish straying brings death, but St. John says, “…whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.”
* Jesus remains faithful and uses pastors to deliver how the Good Shepherd relates to His sheep seeing you through all trials, sufferings, and even death.

1. **Love never content with being quite.**
2. Jesus is confident that there is no closed off community only His one flock, because He is the one shepherd.

* He says, “And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.”
* Turn finally to page 323 in the hymnal to answer how the sheep are able to hear and follow by the third article of the creed.
* Peter shared freely the witness worked by the Holy Spirit so others could hear, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”
* Our confirmands receive their Bible verses today not to hide, but direct any to hear that Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

Life is about moving through transitions with the better grace of God. The fourth Sunday tells us who owns the flock by His life for Jesus said, “I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.” As we wrap up the resurrection theme of Christ and the Easter Season turns now to the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost. It is not in comfort and ease, but troubles and fears where the most ancient image of Scripture draws God close to our lives. The only good shepherd Jesus saves His sheep by the great love He gives. Amen. In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.