

FAITH @ HOME

Week of May 3, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Easter

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Psalm 23

REFLECT: Sheep are nice animals, aren't they? They seem to be very calm and peaceful and don't have much to do besides eating grass. But here's the reason they can be calm and eat grass peacefully: they have a shepherd. A shepherd is someone who takes care of a flock (or group) of sheep. They will make sure the sheep have green fields in which to eat, and they will protect the sheep from any danger such as other animals who would harm them, and will make sure the sheep don't hurt themselves. The shepherd will also take care of the sheep if they are sick. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and we are his sheep. He will guide us, keep us from danger, and love us with a love that lasts forever. We can always trust that our good shepherd will do what is best for us.

RESPOND: Ask a parent or trusted adult for some cotton balls and glue and draw a picture of a sheep. Glue the cotton balls to the picture to give your sheep a fluffy, white "coat." Keep your picture to remind you that you always have a Good Shepherd who takes good care of you.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: QUANTRILLA ARD



Quantrilla (Quanny) Ard is a faith-based personal and spiritual development writer who lives in the DC Metro area with her husband Donny and three littles (Quentin, Dylan, and Logan). In addition to being a dedicated wife and mother, she is an entrepreneur, doctoral student, and curator of all things lovely. As a woman on her own quest of shining a light on the shadowy, hidden places in her life, she writes as the PhDMamma about things she knows to be true in hopes to encourage others to do the same. Her spiritual goals and her love for Christ propel her quest to share the spiritual journey with other women- to walk alongside them and encourage them with words, deeds, and wisdom. Quanny believes in the power in collective strength, community and fellowship. You will find her wherever people are sharing stories of triumph.

Faith @ Home is a ministry of



FAITH @ HOME

Week of May 3, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Easter

ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Psalm 23

REFLECT: I didn't grow up around sheep. Whenever I would imagine Jesus as the Good Shepherd, I would think of a man calmly leading around cute, fuzzy lambs who stayed in line and didn't need too much help with anything. If Jesus was the Good Shepherd, my job was to be a good sheep and keep up with his game of divine follow the leader.

But shepherds do not walk ahead of their sheep expecting the sheep to follow along in a perfect line. Shepherds walk in front and beside and behind, and they move along with the sheep. Shepherds help sheep find plants to eat that are healthy and not poisonous, because sheep are not good at determining between good plants and bad plants on their own. Jesus as the Good Shepherd doesn't mean that I have to stay in a perfect line, but that he is with me to guide and protect no matter what.

RESPOND: Write or draw about the things you are thankful for and the ways you see God's provision in your life. Who are the people who walk alongside you and remind you about God's love? What are the good foods or comfortable places you are grateful for that remind you of God's care? Keep these writings or drawings in a central place, like the table where you eat meals or by your bed, and add to them each day this week.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MEGAN WESTRA



Megan is on the pastoral staff team at Transformation City Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Her first book, *Born Again and Again*, releases in August with Herald Press. More of her work can be found at meganwestra.com or on Twitter at @mwestramke.

Faith @ Home is a ministry of



FAITH @ HOME

Week of May 3, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Easter

ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: 1 Peter 2:19-25

REFLECT: Have you ever been wronged and really wanted to get revenge? It can feel good to get someone back for something they've done wrong to us, but following Jesus means we are to respond differently. Even in our mistakes, sin, hurt, and pain, Jesus still sacrificed his life for us; he is the Good Shepherd. He gave his life for each of us and was no respecter of person, which means he even gave up his life for his enemies and even those who wronged him. You may be asking, are we expected to die for our enemies, too? No, that's not the reality of what Jesus is saying, but he is saying, "don't return evil for evil." (1 Peter 3:9, NRSV) It's not necessary to seek revenge. We are to trust the Good Shepherd, who is Jesus. When we give him our life, we also commit our trials and hardships to him. We can ask God to help us forgive those who wronged us and show us how to walk in love even when it feels difficult.

RESPOND: Talk about these questions with your family or friends: what are the two things you learned from Jesus' response to those who wronged him? How can you apply those responses to your life?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: FAITTH BROOKS



Faith is the Communication and Programming Director for Legacy Collective. She engages in community organizing and activism. Her passion makes her a relentless spokesperson for racial reconciliation. She is a social media strategist and blogger who writes at Faitthbrooks.com.

Faith @ Home is a ministry of



FAITH @ HOME

Week of May 3, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Easter

ADULT AND ADULT

READ: John 10:1-10

REFLECT: Jesus said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." (John 10:10, NRSV) Reading this passage in its entirety, it is easy to fall asleep counting sheep and miss the message: Jesus is the gate to abundant life! One definition of abundant life is: "life in its abounding fullness of joy and strength for mind, body and soul." (Source: Wikipedia) If abundant means existing or available in large quantities, or plentiful, then life with Jesus means superabundance! Jesus is not talking about material wealth or supersized living. In fact, a bigger house, a bigger car, and a bigger bank account only make it more difficult to get through the gate. Life itself is enough. It is an abundant "YES" and it alone is worth gratefulness. In speaking to this verse, the poet Wendell Berry says that life does not require material abundance; it requires only material sufficiency to make us members of the living world that is already abundance. He warns that this does not protect us from the wrong kind of abundance, mainly selfishness and greed. We must realize that in speaking of abundance, Jesus is not proposing to make us materially wealthy; he is doing quite the opposite. By making us free from the materialistic life, he is offering us a limitless reality.

RESPOND: At times in our lives we can end up racing against time, filled with worry and doubt, jealous of others and wanting more. When you are in one of those moments this week, stop. Pause what you are doing. Remember that we have been given the breath of life and inhale a generous deep breath. Remember to exhale! Remember this as you breathe: "I am the gate," says Jesus. "Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture." (John 10:9, NRSV) Know these words. Trust them. These are promises not for tomorrow, but for the here and now. Pray these words by Wendell Berry: "And we pray, not for new earth or heaven, but to be quiet in heart, and in eye, clear. What we need is here." See <https://recoveringabundance.com/> for how poet Wendell Berry is inspiring change.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: JAN BERRY SCHROEDER



Jan is in private practice as a Spiritual Director working with individuals and groups on deepening their faith through contemplation and other spiritual practices. She teaches Education for Ministry (EfM) at her church and consults with churches to build or enrich family ministry programs. A new writer, she is looking forward to launching a blog this year. She lives beside an apple orchard with her husband and rescue dog.

Faith @ Home is a ministry of

