

Sunday Sermon April 26, 2026

We Are God's People, the Flock of the Lord...

Our scripture readings for this Good Shepherd Sunday had me thinking about Christian Community all week. Christian community, which we often refer to as “church.”

In today's first reading from the Book of Acts, Luke the Gospel writer paints an idyllic picture of the early Christian community. He writes of their devotion in coming together for the breaking of bread and the prayers, for what will come to be known as the Eucharist.

He speaks of their being in “awe” of the wonders and signs that were taking place through believers, and how they held things in common, and sold their possessions to support the needy, and how they continued with temple worship.

Luke paints a picture of a community characterized by joy, generosity and thankful praise, and while we do not know if this was aspiration or reality, we do know that the early Christian community grew by leaps and bounds, even as followers of Jesus faced of persecution and death.

Today's Gospel is the first 10 verses of the Good Shepherd Discourse in John. Here we find community characterized as a flock of sheep following the shepherd. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for the sheep – you and I. A simple, beautiful depiction often captured in paintings and stained glass windows and children's bibles.

Today's passage describes how shepherds herded their sheep into a common enclosure – a sheepfold – each night. The fold had a single entrance and the shepherds would take turns laying across the opening to keep out the predators and thieves. Literally laying down their lives...

In the morning, the shepherds would lead their sheep out to pasture, calling their sheep by name or piping or singing a tune. The sheep would not follow a stranger, only the one whose voice they knew and trusted.

I don't think she ever said an unkind word to anyone, though when she encountered attitudes or actions that were hurtful or unchristian, she would challenge them in her clear, loving way. In a way that left you feeling good about being corrected. She was able to do this without pretense or judgement.

When Anthony was released from jail, he really wanted to turn his life around, and so he started coming to church regularly. He found his way into Anita's pew and sat next to her, hoping, perhaps, that some of her holiness would spill over onto him.

The first Sunday Anthony was back, he came forward for communion and was kneeling next to Anita at the rail as I came along with the bread. I paused and looked at the two of them shoulder to shoulder, hands outstretched to receive the bread of life, and I thought: "what a picture, the convicted felon and the living saint side by side, together, hungry for a taste of new life. There's a glimpse of the kingdom of God."

Community. God's flock hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd and following Him in the way that leads to new and abundant life- The Way of Love.

Community. Those early believers gathered together to break the bread, to heal, to share what they had, to care for the needy.

Community. What we rely on when the storms of life set in.

Community. Where the needy, hungry and dispossessed know that they are Beloved, cherished children of God, and where the rejected are accepted.

Community. Our gathering together to build the Kingdom of Love here on earth as it is in heaven. Reaching out with compassion, kindness and understanding to help to heal the world with love and to build up the Body of Christ.

Community is powerful. Let us give thanks and praise for it.

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