

Easter 4/ The Good Shepherd / April 26, 2026

1 Peter 2:25

“For you were straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

The Shepherd and Overseer of our Souls

Peter begins our text saying, *“This is a gracious thing, when mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.”* Sorrow and suffering are part of life in this world cursed by sin, dominated by the devil and our sinful nature and under the condemnation of death. Where do we find hope in the sorrows and sufferings of life that are common to all the fallen children of Eve? Where do we find hope in the shadow of death? St. Peter, servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ, directs us to God, who in Christ is our Shepherd and Saviour. In and of themselves there is nothing good or glorious in sorrow, suffering and death. They are part of the fallen creation, effects of sin and sinfulness. In the new creation, which will come at the return of Christ, sorrow, suffering and death will be no more.

In Revelation chapter 21 St. John sees the renewed creation and hears a voice from the throne of God say, *“Behold, the dwelling of God is with humans...He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither shall there be mourning or crying or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”* We receive endurance in our sorrow and hope in our sufferings, by remembering Jesus the Shepherd of our souls and that this is the goal of our faith, the place to which He leads us. We receive strength to endure the sorrows and sufferings of life by remembering God in Christ, the sufferings Jesus endured for our salvation and by drawing close to Him in faith. Jesus is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls in time for eternity.

Jesus came into the world to join us in the sufferings of life and in all the afflictions of life in a world in bondage to sin, under the control of the devil and our sinful nature and under the condemnation of death. A day will come when mourning, crying, pain and sorrow will be no more. That is the goal, the telos, the fulness towards which we press on in faith. That’s what we remember when we are mindful of God. That’s what Jesus came into our world and into our lives to accomplish. Until that day Jesus is with us in our sorrows in the word and through the sacraments, giving us comfort, consolation, hope and strength to endure the afflictions of life. More than simply giving us strength to endure, Jesus strengthens

our faith in trial and tribulation so that we mature in our understanding of His will, so that our faith is deepened and we draw closer to God and walk more closely with Him in faith and faithfulness.

In the letter to the Romans Paul says that rather than simply enduring suffering, we are enabled and empowered to rejoice in suffering. We rejoice not for the sake of suffering. We rejoice because Christ is with us in suffering, affliction, tribulation, grief and death. Paul says, *“suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”* It is not the suffering itself, it is Christ who is with us in our sufferings that gives us hope, produces endurance and creates character. It is a gracious thing to be mindful of God in sufferings. God gives us hope in all things through Christ Jesus. Jesus is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls in time for eternity.

Suffering and sorrow come in all shapes and sizes, forms and fashions. There is suffering we bring upon ourselves by our own misadventure. Misadventure being a polite way of saying ‘foolishness.’ There is suffering we bring upon others by our recklessness and others upon us by their recklessness. There is suffering that comes because of chance and circumstance, being in the wrong place at the wrong time. There is suffering that comes for no discernable reason, such as when we receive a diagnosis of a critical illness. There is suffering that comes because of our beliefs and associations. Jesus told the disciples that they would suffer because of their association with Him and belief in Him as the Messiah. In the book of Acts the apostles were beaten by the religious authorities in Jerusalem, because of their association with Jesus and their belief in Him as the Messiah. St. Luke says they rejoiced. They didn’t rejoice because they enjoyed the beating. They rejoiced, because they were suffering for the sake of Jesus. They were able to rejoice, because they experienced Jesus’ presence in their suffering. They were able to rejoice in suffering because they were mindful of God in Christ Jesus, who suffered for our salvation and was wounded for our healing.

To be mindful of God is to be mindful of God in Christ Jesus. In Christ, God is present in our sufferings to give us endurance, character and hope. To be mindful of Christ is to remember the sufferings He endured for our sake to secure our salvation. St. Peter writes, *“Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not*

threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly.” When we suffer, we entrust ourselves to God who judges justly in Christ Jesus.

Jesus took suffering upon Himself so that He would fulfill God’s righteousness for us in His sinless life, bear our sins and make atonement for us through His sacrificial death. Jesus’ wounds effected healing in our relationship with God which we receive through faith in the forgiveness of our sins. Some suffering comes because of sin, ours and others. Some suffering comes because of the sinfulness of the world, broken in relationship with God and under the condemnation of death. Some suffering comes for the sake of Christ, because of our association with Him as Christians and our belief in Him as our God and Saviour. We have hope in all our sufferings no matter what their cause, because in Christ God is with us in all things and will bring us through all things to dwell forever in His presence in peace.

It is a gracious thing to be mindful of God in Christ in all things, especially when we are suffering and enduring sorrow. God is present as a refuge and a help at all times, especially in times of trouble. In Psalm 50 God says, *“Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you.”* The fact is that we tend to be more mindful of God and of our need for His help and deliverance when we are in trouble, when we are suffering and sorrowful. One of the reasons we focus on our sins and sinfulness so often, every Sunday in confession and absolution, is to keep us mindful of God and our need for His help and deliverance. We so quickly and easily forget about our need for God, His help and deliverance, when we are untroubled and free of sorrow. Why do we need absolution if we feel no guilt and sense no sins for which we need forgiveness? But if we have no sense of sin and sinfulness, what need do we have of Jesus and His forgiveness? So easily like sheep do we go astray! Whether we feel guilt or not, whether we are aware of specific sins and our general sinfulness or not, we always have sins, are always sinful and always need Jesus our Saviour to forgive us, lead us and guide us. It is a gracious thing to be mindful of God while suffering. In fact, it is an essential blessing of the Holy Spirit. We always need to remember our need for Jesus to be our Saviour and Shepherd.

Peter writes of Jesus and of our lives in Christ saying, *“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.”* How often must we die to sin in order to live for righteousness? If we think its one and done, we are done! The sinful part of us buried with Christ in baptism, always comes back to life. There is nothing more resilient than our sinful nature. It will never be truly dead and gone until our bodies are dead in the grave and our spirits have gone to rest in God’s presence in Christ Jesus. We will never truly die to sin

and live to righteousness until Christ calls us to rise body and soul in the resurrection to eternal life.

As long as we live in this life we need to die to sin not once or twice, but again and again. We die to sin by returning to the drowning of our baptism in repentance. We live to righteousness by continually receiving the renewal of the Holy Spirit in absolution. Peter writes, *“By His wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”* How often are sheep liable to go astray? As often as the shepherd is out of sight or out of mind. How often do we need to return to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls? Daily, day in and day out. The Shepherd saves the sheep by continually watching over them lest they go astray, lest danger comes upon them by the malice of predators or the misfortunes of life. Jesus is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. He constantly watches over us. He continually protects us from dangers to our faith and threats to our souls. He is not our Saviour, once and done. He is our Saviour time and time again in time, until time passes into eternity and He calls us to rise in His righteousness and dwell in His Father’s house.

Jesus watches over our souls so that our faith is preserved in time and our lives saved to eternity. In King David’s beautiful psalm of the Shepherd, He speaks of all that the Lord does for us in time for the sake of eternity. He says, *“He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”* He preserves and protects us from evil in time in view of eternity, so that He may lead us through the valley of the shadow of death to dwell in His Father’s house forever. The goal of our faith, the purpose for which Jesus watches over us, is not that we would be healthy and happy in time. The goal towards which our faith presses, the purpose for which Jesus works in our lives, is that we would dwell in His Father’s house forever. Whatever sufferings we experience, whatever sorrows we must endure in time will be as nothing in comparison with eternity in the Father’s house. Jesus our Good and Faithful Shepherd preserve our faith in time and bring it to the fulness of life in eternity. In His Name. Amen