

Lectionary Texts for April 21, 2024 • *Fourth Sunday of Easter* - Year B  
Acts 4:5-12 • Psalm 23 • 1 John 3:16-24 • John 10:11-18

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**John 10:11-18**

*Christ Child as Good Shepherd*, 17th century, by an Indian artist, Portuguese colony of Goa, India  
Carved ivory, 6 7/8" x 2 5/8" x 2"

Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland

*Continued*

Portuguese merchants first traveled to India in the early 16th century, with the small area of Goa (less than 1500 square miles on the southwestern coast) becoming an overseas territory of the Portuguese Empire until it was annexed by India in 1961. Since the early days of Portuguese Goa, it has been home to a Jesuit training center for missionaries. During some of that history, ivory carvings such as this were made for these missionaries in India as well as for export.

Overlapping the early days of this period, from approximately 1526 to 1857, the Mughal Empire, a Muslim dynasty, reigned over South Asia. Jesus is regarded as a prophet in Islam, and images of Jesus and other prophets were collected by the Mughal courtiers and painted on the walls of Mughal palaces. One of the Mughal princes converted to Christianity, and another, Akbar (1542-1605), famously studied and discussed other religions, including Christianity, but he never converted.

(Islam prohibits the use of images of Mohammed, and some scholars say this prohibition extends to other prophets revered by Muslims, including Jesus. Yet others cite Islamic acceptance and use of images of Jesus throughout history, including images such as this that became especially popular in India at the end of the century 16th century.)

At the top of the carving is the meditative figure of the Christ Child holding a lamb. His eyes are closed. His right hand, lightly touching his hair with two fingers, is seen by some scholars as adopting a gesture of the Buddha. Below him is the fountain of life, suggestive of baptism, with doves and lambs. At the bottom, Mary Magdalene reads scriptures in a mountain cave, where, according to legend, she retired in later life.

— Art curated and narrative provided by Norman Mahan  
Document edited and produced by Donna V. Adair  
Lay members, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Houston

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## **Acts 4:5-12**

The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.

When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.' There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

## **Psalm 23**

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

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.

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

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.

## **1 John 3:16-24**

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us — and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

## **John 10:11-18**

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

"The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away — and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd. 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. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."