

# THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, April 24, 2024

Today is Wednesday, April 24 and we are studying the Gospel of John.

## OPENING PRAYER

*Holy and loving God, be present with me as a new day dawns. Help me remember to seek you first in life before all things. As I enter this time of prayer and reflection, I calm my mind, quiet my thoughts and slow my breath. I gently inhale your love, joy and peace as firmly as I exhale any negative thoughts, cares or concerns. Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE

***Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep." John 10:7-15***

## REFLECTION

So far in the Gospel of John, Jesus promised us Living Water (John 4:14), he told us he is the Bread of Life (John 6:35) and the Light of the World (John 8:12). In chapter ten he defines himself as the Gate for the Sheep and the Good Shepherd. In times of ancient sheep herding, the sheep were gathered at night into a fold. There were only two reasons to enter the sheepfold either to care for the sheep or harm the sheep. The gatekeeper had no hesitation to allow the shepherd to enter, but he was ready to protect the sheep from predators, thieves and wolves. There were those who only wanted to steal the sheep or devour them. The good shepherd was one who was willing to lay down his life for the sheep. His love and care goes to the point of complete sacrifice. That is the kind of Savior we have in Jesus.

Jesus said he knows his sheep and they know him. The Good Shepherd walks ahead and the sheep follow his familiar voice. He knows their name. He knows my name. He has come to save me and give me life, life that is eternal in the future and abundant in the present. A life that is joy-filled and life giving. The evil one threatens to come and steal this life away from me. Destroy the goodness that Christ brings. The abundant life is not one of possessions, money, success, fame or popularity. The abundant life Jesus offers is inner peace, assurance of salvation, promise of God's presence, confidence in God's care, a love that fills to overflowing, a faith that moves mountains, a joy that bubbles up despite the circumstances, a gratitude that pours out of the heart, relationships with loved ones and friends that are rich and nourishing,

participation in a community of faith that provides growth and maturity, and a relationship with God through Christ that is the most fulfilling experience imaginable. That is abundance. That is life in Christ.

The Good Shepherd laid down his life for me. He suffered, bled and died on the cross for my salvation. He was pierced for my transgressions. He came so that I might have life - abundant life. He leads me to green pastures and guides me to still waters. He restores my soul. He is the source of life, love and continual blessings.

**Ask:** Do I know the voice of the Good Shepherd? Am I following him in every aspect of my life and finding the good pastures he has for me?

**Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Jesus, you are the love of my life and Shepherd of my soul. Thank you for loving me so much you laid down your life for me on Calvary. Forgive me when I allow negativity and circumstances to rob me of your presence, kill your dreams for me and steal my hope and peace. Help me hear your voice more clearly, follow you more closely and love you more completely. Call me by name and lead me to the places you want me to go. Amen.*