

Fourth Sunday of Easter [a]

Trinity Lutheran Church, Alamogordo

April 26, 2026

1 Peter 2:19-25

¹⁹ For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²² **He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.** ²³ **When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.** ²⁴ **He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.** ²⁵ **For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

In the Name of Jesus.

You have a Shepherd. An overseer of your soul, says Peter.

By his wounds he has healed you.

By his cross, he freed you from your sin.

By his washing of Baptism, he clothes you in his own righteousness, he gathers you into the sheepfold, the Church.

By his Body and Blood, he cleanses you; he binds you in oneness with all his sheep.

He is overseer of your soul.

If he's not overseeing your soul, then you are. There's not really another way to go with this.

If he's not overseeing your soul, then you've got a job to do.

How will you oversee your own soul?

The record of sin, how will you erase that? The shame normally kept so well hidden, how will you cover that shame on the day of judgment?

Your soul is you. It's the fulness of you. It's your life. We think of things like consciousness or we try to describe biological life, as if we can treat a person like a frog under a microscope and divide it all up.

But your soul is you—the whole you. It's you standing at God's face.

He knows your name. But that he knows your name is not yet good news. Knowing your name, he knows all which belongs to your name. Your history, your inner thoughts, your unspoken desires, your failure to love your neighbor even, especially, when that means denying self.

Your soul is you, your whole life, your name and all that comes with it, standing at God's face.

Who will oversee that?

Jesus will. The Shepherd and Overseer of your soul.

You can't oversee your own soul. You can hold it up to the mirror of the Law and see sin. You can lament the guilt. You can despair of attempts to improve, to follow the Law, in order to justify self.

You can hear the accusation of the Law in your conscience and know there's a problem.

But you can't oversee your own soul. None of us can do that. Not when we stand at God's face as sinner.

For a person with heart-disease, for heart-attack victim in need of help, it's a doctor who is needed.

What about someone who is sick with sin? Who do they need? For a soul in need of life, it's Jesus.

He's the Shepherd and Overseer of your soul.

He is the one who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He, bearing our sin, then died for our sin, that we might die to sin. He forgave our sin and declared us

righteous, that we would now live in the righteousness provided freely by Jesus as gift.

He who committed no sin, who spoke no lie from his mouth, was reviled as he bore our sin. He was rejected as he was clothed in our lie. And as he suffered in our place, he did not threaten. Rather, he, the Shepherd, went willingly as a Lamb to the slaughter ... on our behalf.

The slaughtering of the sheep that belongs only to the sinner, he willingly took, as he bore our sin.

He, the Lamb of God who went silently to slaughter, is the Shepherd and Overseer of your soul.

If you were overseeing your own soul, you would be as a heart attack victim trying to save himself with C.P.R. No one can do that, no one can save themselves. You would be as a stray sheep trying to gather himself back into the flock he's already lost. You would be a sinner trying to cleanse sin—and that cannot be done.

But he is your Shepherd. He restores your soul, as we are given to confess in Psalm 23.

But Jesus is a Shepherd like no other Shepherd. He is a shepherd in the way our world does not expect and cannot understand.

This Shepherd, unlike any other, willingly suffered for the sheep, not they for him. He committed no sin against his sheep, though we, the sheep, had sinned against him.

He did not revile, even when it was deserved.

When he was persecuted and brought into suffering, he did not threaten.

When the fair thing to do would have been to destroy those who attacked him, to destroy every sinner for that matter, he instead entrusted himself to his Father.

Instead of holding us accountable for our sins, he bore them in his own body and put them to death on the tree.

When he saw straying sheep, he spoke kindly to us, he forgave our sin, he clothed us in his own righteousness, he served us with his gifts of grace and life—for he came not to be served but to serve—and he returned us to the sheepfold, making himself, in his mercy, in his kindness, the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.

Now, He is your righteousness, and he leads you on paths of righteousness for his Name's sake. Not because of your worthiness does he lead you, but because he placed his Name on you in Baptism, and he will not depart his Name.

Even though you live in sinful flesh and you walk in death's shadow, you need fear no evil.

For his Word of forgiveness is the rod that crushes the head of Satan. His grace is the staff continually gathering you into his Church.

The cup he places in your hand, it is his blood given you to drink for the forgiveness of your sins, and your cup overflows.

His goodness, it is his gift of life. The life we were created for in the Garden of Eden, this life is restored to the sinner by the promise of the Gospel. We have this life now not by sight, but by faith in the Gospel.

This is the life given to you from your new birth in Baptism. By this new birth of Baptism, you now live your life of faith, and by this faith you have been restored in the promise of eternal life with your Lord.

So now, as you belong to the life of faith, your Lord's mercy follows you so that you are never apart from it.

You dwell in the house of the Lord now by faith, by the hearing of his Gospel, and you dwell in the house of the Lord forever, for eternity. For by his oath, Jesus has made his own resurrection your resurrection.

For as surely as he gave himself to bear your sin on the cross, he gave you to bear his life and righteousness into eternity.

In the Name of Jesus.