

Pastor Lecia Beck

26 April 2026

St. Thomas Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bloomington, Indiana

Ezekiel 34:7-15; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10

Enough To Go Around

John 10:1-10

Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for the shepherd, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

I have never been to a potluck that ran out of food. Most of them, like our potluck last week, overflow with abundance and choice. It works even when there are unexpected guests who didn't bring anything. The tables are still full. I imagine that's because people look at what was brought, how many people need to be fed, and take just enough. We try not to take more than our fair share, even if we contributed more, so that there will be enough for everyone. Underneath all of this is a quiet assumption: there might not be enough.

This is a good instinct, most of the time—but what would it be like to not worry about whether there is enough? What would it be like to live as if there was always more than enough?

In today's Gospel, Jesus says that he came so that we may have abundant life. Professor Richard Swanson translates it even more boldly: Jesus "came in order that life they should have and that they should have *too much*." (See Note 1) That's a very different way of seeing things.

The religious leaders in Jesus' time were deeply concerned about fairness—about who gets what, and how much, that no one got more than their "fair" share. In Ezekiel, the so-

called shepherds don't care for the flock at all; instead, they take for themselves and leave others without. In fact, those shepherds decided that they would eat the sheep so that they didn't have to care for them or provide for them. And in the Gospel, Jesus is speaking to leaders who have just failed to respond with compassion.

Our Gospel for today picks up after Jesus healed the man born blind. If you remember this story, it was almost comical in the extreme responses. Imagine finally being able to see for the first time in your life, and instead of celebration, you are met with suspicion. Instead of welcome, you are pushed out. The miracle isn't just ignored, it's treated as a problem.

It is to his accusers that Jesus is talking. Rather than celebrating that someone who was blind can now see, they focused on control. Rather than lifting someone up, they worked to keep him in his place. They have sucked all the joy out of this miraculous experience. Instead of celebrating one who was on the bottom having the opportunity to rise, they did their best to keep him down.

Their system leaves people vulnerable. It depends on maintaining order, on keeping some at the top and others at the bottom. Because if everyone has enough, then the hierarchy begins to fall apart.

We see this same pattern in our world. Some worry about people getting more than their fair share, while ignoring how many are living with far too little. Entire systems are built on scarcity, where some must struggle so that others can feel secure, where some must work for nothing so others can have everything.

Workers go without, even as their labor sustains others. Assistance for those in need is treated as a threat, rather than a shared responsibility. Many of those who come looking for a better life in our county are treated with suspicion, though they only want to take the jobs we eschew.

In *Jesus for Farmers and Fishers*, Gary Paul Nabhan reminds us that shepherds—both in Jesus' time and today—are often among the most marginalized workers. They live on the edges of society, far from resources like healthcare, stability, and recognition. (See Note 2)

And yet, this is the image Jesus chooses for himself. The Good Shepherd is not a figure of power and prestige—but of presence, attention, and care for those the world overlooks.

The systems of our world require that some people live with too little because some are afraid that they might get too much. This is not by accident—it is by design. There are systems that depend on some people being underpaid, unseen, or excluded in order for others to feel more secure.

This is what happens when we believe there is not enough to go around. And it is into this kind of world that Jesus speaks.

It is into this world where Jesus brings too much. Jesus doesn't offer careful, measured generosity. He does not give just enough. Jesus is extravagant, lavishing love and life without restraint, especially on those who have been overlooked, pushed aside, or kept at the margins.

This is the Jesus who fed the women and children and 5000 men with twelve baskets of leftovers. This is the same Jesus who rescued the wedding party by turning water into wine, far more than they could need and better than any other served. And this Jesus who heals and liberates, never asking whether someone deserves it.

Even before his birth, this promise was already being sung. Ezekiel declares that God will be their shepherd, searching for the lost sheep and rescuing them, gathering the people and feeding them. As Mary sang before Jesus was born: "the mighty will be brought down from their thrones and the lowly lifted up, the hungry will be filled with good things and the rich sent away empty." (See Note 2) I imagine she kept singing it as a lullaby as her tiny baby grew, shaping his imagination of the kingdom of God.

This is the kind of life Jesus brings.

God comes to us as the Good Shepherd—seeking, gathering, and caring for the flock.

God comes as the gate, offering protection and safety.

God comes in Christ as the Lamb who Takes Away the Sin of the World so that wherever life is lacking, it may be restored—not sparingly, but abundantly. Whatever we need, wherever we lack life, the Holy Spirit comes that we may have life, and have too much of it.

This vision of abundance challenges us because we are not outside these systems. We are part of them. Even as we critique inequality, we participate in it. Our habits, our

purchases, and our structures can reinforce a world where some have far more than they need while others struggle to survive.

But the good news is *not* that those who already have will receive even more. The good news is that those who have been left out, left behind, and left wanting will be given what they need in the kingdom of God. They will have life and too much of it. The good news is that the Good Shepherd knows each one by name, whether they have or have-not.

And when we begin to live into that promise, when we trust that God's abundance is meant for all, the church becomes a different kind of place:

A place where people are fed, both physically and spiritually.

A place where hierarchies are disrupted as we gather together.

A place where generosity interrupts fear.

It's like a potluck where no one goes hungry, but even greater than that. For at this table, we do not measure out what is fair. A bit of bread and a sip of wine becomes everything we need. In it, with it, and under it, we receive all that is given - the body and blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sin, life and salvation.

At this table, there is always enough.

There is life, and life in abundance, not because we have earned it, but because Christ gives himself to us freely.

And in Christ, there is more than enough - and maybe even too much. Amen.

Notes:

Note 1: <https://provokingthegospel.wordpress.com/2020/04/27/a-provocation-fourth-sunday-of-easter-may-3-2020-john-101-10/>

Note 2: Luke 2:52

Note 3: Chapter 12: Herders