

Scripture Study

Fourth Sunday of Easter – Cycle A



Opening prayer

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

(Ps 23:13a, 3b-6)

1 Peter 2:20-25

John 10:1-10

Overview of the Gospel:

- This Sunday's gospel takes place right after Jesus' healing of the blind man which we heard about on the Fourth Sunday of Lent (John 9:1-41). He is addressing this present discourse to the Pharisees who reacted with hostility to both Jesus and the blind man as a result of that healing.
- The theme of God as the shepherd of Israel runs all through the Old Testament (Psalm 23:1-4, 80:1; Genesis 48:15, 49:24; Micah 7:14). Among the leaders of Israel there were good shepherds, like David (1 Samuel 17:34-36) as well as bad (Jeremiah 23:1-6).
- The Old Testament also promised that God would one day replace these corrupt leaders and shepherd his people himself (Ezekiel 34:11-16; Isaiah 40:11). Jesus often described himself in pastoral terms as a shepherd who sought out the lost sheep and carried them home to rejoicing (Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7; John 10). He also used the image of a shepherd in many of his other teachings (Matthew 7:15, 9:36, 25:32-33; Mark 14:27; John 21:16-17), as did the early Church (Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25).

Questions:

- In the 1st Reading, Jesus is not called a "shepherd", but he is given another title (see verses 36 and 39). What promise is given to those who repent of their sins and call upon his name?
- In the 2nd examples, what kind of example did Jesus set for us? What did he do for us that enables us to return to him as our Good Shepherd (see verse 24)?
- In the Gospel Reading, what do the sheep, shepherd, the sheepfold, and the stranger represent? How does the story of healing of the blind man in chapter 9 provide one example of what this story is about?
- How do the sheep respond to the shepherd? How does this relate to the Pharisees' understanding of Jesus?
- What does Jesus mean by likening himself to a gate for the sheepfold? Who are these "thieves and robbers"? How is Jesus unlike them?
- How does Jesus' death relate to his promise in verse 10? How does Jesus identify himself with the "good shepherd" (verses 11-15)?
- What was the turning point for you in terms of hearing "God's voice" and responding? How do you discern his voice from all the other voices that vie for your attention?
- How does it make you feel to think of God caring for you as the Good Shepherd?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 753-754, 764, 2157-2158

Closing Prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

I, with [Jesus] Who is always by my side and in my heart, should I be afraid? --St. Rose of Lima

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"

Scripture: *John 10:1-10*

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber; but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." This figure Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and 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.

Meditation: Do you know the peace and security of the Good Shepherd who watches over his own? The Old Testament often speaks of God as shepherd of his people, Israel. *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want* (Psalm 23:1). *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!* (Psalm 80:1) *We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture* (Psalm 100:3). The Messiah is also pictured as the shepherd of God's people: *He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms*



(Isaiah 40:11). Jesus says he is the *Good Shepherd* who will risk his life to seek out and save the stray sheep (Matthew 18:12, Luke 15:4). He is the *Shepherd and Guardian of our souls* (1 Peter 2:25).

What can shepherding teach us about God and our relationship with him? At the end of each day the shepherd brought his sheep into shelter. They knew the voice of their shepherd and came at his beckoning. So familiar was the shepherd and his sheep, that each was called by a distinct name. In the winter the sheep were usually brought to a communal village shelter which was locked and kept secure by a guardian. In the summer months the sheep were usually kept out in the fields and then gathered into a fold at night which was guarded by a shepherd throughout the night. He was literally the *door* through which the sheep had to pass. The scriptures describe God as a shepherd who brings security and peace to his people. *The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and for evermore* (Psalm 120:8). Even the leaders of God's people are called shepherds: *they shall lead them out and bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep which have no*

shepherd (Numbers 27:17). Just as a shepherd kept watch over his sheep and protected them from danger, so Jesus stands watch over his people as the *Shepherd and Guardian of our souls* (1 Peter 2:25). Do you know the peace and security of a life fully submitted to God?

Augustine writes:

"He has accomplished what he taught us: He has shown us what He commanded us to do. He laid down his own life for his sheep, that within our mystery he might change his body and blood into food, and nourish the sheep he had redeemed with the food of his own flesh. He has shown us the way we must follow, despite fear of death. He has laid down the pattern to which we must conform ourselves. The first duty laid on us is to use our worldly goods in mercy for the needs of his sheep, and then, if necessary, give even our lives for them. He that will not give of his substance for his sheep, how shall he lay down his life for them?" (Tr. 46 in John, 5th century).

Do you look to Jesus the Good Shepherd, to receive the strength and courage you need to live and serve as his disciple?

"Lord Jesus, you always lead me in the way of peace and safety. May I never doubt your care nor stray from your ways. Keep me safe in the shelter of your presence."

© 2011 Don Schwager
www.rc.net/wcc/reading