

Scripture Study

Fourth Sunday of Easter – Cycle B



Opening prayer

Acts 4:8-12

(Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28-29)

1 John 3:1-2

John 10:11-18

Overview of the Gospel:

- This Sunday's gospel reading is closely tied to the episode of the healing of a blind man in the preceding chapter (John 9ff). Jesus' opponents steadfastly refuse to believe he has performed this miracle, probably because it would mean accepting his authority. As a result, they remain blind guides to the people (John 9: 39-41; Matthew 15:12-14).
- In contrast to these leaders, Jesus presents himself as the Good Shepherd (this discourse actually starts at verse 10:1). The theme of God as a shepherd was very important in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 34; Genesis 48:15; 49:24; Micah 7:14; Psalm 23:1-4; 80:1, etc). King David, composer of Psalm 23, was the Old Testament proto-type of the shepherd (see 1 Sam 17:32-37), as was Moses and his successor, Joshua (Numbers 27:15-23).
- As the Good Shepherd, Jesus will watch over his own, protecting them and keeping them united as one flock attentive to only his own voice (verse 16). Ironically, immediately following this discourse (verses 20-21), Jesus' opponents show a marked lack of unity among themselves.

Questions:

- In the 1st Reading, how many times is the "name" of Jesus invoked? What power is there in his name?
- In the 2nd Reading, what is the basis of our great dignity in being Christians? Where did this great dignity come from? How and why is this sometimes hard to see in our lives? What, ultimately, is our destiny in Christ?
- Who is Jesus speaking to in today's Gospel Reading (John 9:40; 10:6-7)? How does the story in chapter 9 flow into Jesus discourse about the Good Shepherd in chapter 10?
- What do the sheep, shepherd, sheepfold and stranger represent? Who are the "thieves and robbers" (Jeremiah 2:8; 10:21; 23:1-4; Ezekiel 34:2ff)? How is Jesus unlike them?
- How do the sheep respond to the shepherd? How does this relate to the Pharisees' difficulty in accepting Jesus (chapter 9; 10:19-39)?
- Who are the other sheep Jesus must bring also (Ephesians 2:11-22)? What characterizes his flock?
- What final claim does Jesus make (verses 17-18)? Why do his listeners respond as they do? How would you have responded?
- 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 voices that vie for your attention?
- How does it make you feel to think of God as caring for you as the Good Shepherd?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 60, 609, 614, 649, 753-754

Closing prayer

He did what he said he would do: He gave his life for his sheep, and he gave his body and blood in the Sacrament to nourish with his flesh the sheep he had redeemed (John 6:51). ~St. Gregory

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"I am the Good Shepherd"

Scripture: *John 10:11-18*

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).

Jesus made three promises to his followers. He promised them everlasting life. If they accept him and follow him, they will have the life of God in them. Jesus also promised them a life that would know no end. Death would not be the end but the beginning; they would know the glory of indestructible life. Jesus promised a life that was secure. Jesus said that nothing would snatch them out of his hand, not even sorrow and death, since he is everlasting life itself. Our lives are safe in his hands.

The words which Jesus spoke upset many of the Jewish leaders. How could he speak with the same authority which God spoke and claim to be equal with God? He



must either be insane or divine. Unfortunately some thought he was mad even though he cured a man who was blind from birth. We are faced with the same choice. Either Jesus is who he claims to be – the Son of God and Savior of the world – or the world's greatest deluder! We cannot be indifferent to his claim. For those who accept him as Lord and Savior he offers the peace and security of unending life and joy with God. **Do you know the peace and security of a life fully submitted to Christ?**

Cyril of Alexander, a 5th century church father comments on Jesus as our Good Shepherd:

“He shows in what manner a shepherd may be proved good; and He teaches that he must be prepared to give up his life fighting in defense of his sheep, which was fulfilled in Christ. For man has departed from the love of God, and fallen into sin, and because of this was, I say, excluded from the divine abode of paradise, and when he was weakened by that disaster, he yielded to the devil tempting him to sin, and death following that sin he became the prey of fierce and ravenous wolves. But after Christ was announced as the

True Shepherd of all men, *He laid down his life for us* (1 John 3:16), fighting for us against that pack of inhuman beasts. He bore the Cross for us, that by His own death he might destroy death. He was condemned for us, that He might deliver all of us from the sentence of punishment: the tyranny of sin being overthrown by our faith: fastening to the Cross the decree that stood against us, as it is written (Colossians 2:14).

Therefore as the father of sin had as it were shut up the sheep in hell, giving them to death to feed on, as it is written in the psalms (Ps. Xlviii.16), He died for us as truly Good, and truly our Shepherd, so that the dark shadow of death driven away He might join us to the company of the blessed in heaven; and in exchange for abodes that lie far in the depths of the pit, and in the hidden places of the sea, grant us mansions in His Father's House above. Because of this he says to us in another place: *Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom* (Luke 12:32)."

Do you listen attentively to the voice of the Good Shepherd and obey his word?

"Lord Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd who keeps watch over our lives. May I be ever attentive to your voice and submit fully to your wise rule for my life. Draw me near to you that I may always find peace and joy in your presence."

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