

Jesus said, I am the Good Shepherd, In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost +

On the Feast of Christ the King, the last Sunday of the Liturgical Year, we pause to reflect on the Kingship of Jesus. We remember what a king is and how the actions of Jesus reflect the ancient understanding of kingship and finally how his kingship is eternal.

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday; it is the Second Sunday of Easter. The events of Holy Week and the death of Jesus shattered the lives of the disciples and the Apostles. They felt abandoned and their faith in Jesus must have been tested sorely.

And then comes Easter Morning, not only had he died, but now even His body is gone. Forlorn, frightened and perhaps even feeling a bit foolish for having followed this man it is time to reflect and plan for the future.

How might they have planned for the next step in their lives? We will never know, but perhaps they reflected on the works of Jesus as they considered all that had happened and what they might do next. They would have remembered one who was like them as a shepherd is with his sheep. They would remember how He shared life with them, protected them and led them.

We know what happened. We know that Jesus appeared many times to the Apostles and the other disciples. We know that he opened their minds and filled their heart with courage and joy. Finally he led them one more time, to Galilee which is a symbolic call to the mission field so that they could begin the work He had given them to do.

Jesus was not done being the Good Shepherd for them or for us.

So how do we.... relate to this Gospel? What meaning is there for us in our lives and how we live them?

First, no matter how much we want to pretend to be people of our will and desire. No matter how much we want to believe that we are different, special and a cut above the normal curve, it just not true. We are each unique and we are each known by God, but we are but one of many brothers and sisters. We are sheep.

What does it mean when we accept the fact that we are sheep? Can we expect that the 23rd psalm will become reality in our lives? Yes and no. Yes, in that the Lord wishes us to be led by still waters and to have all that we need. He wants us to be protected and safe in this life and the life to come.

With the negative answer I want each of us to recognize what the life of a sheep teaches each of us. The sheep do not stay in one place, they move as the shepherd guides them from the already worn pasture, to a new place. The sheep do not lead, they follow.

There no question in their minds that they just might be the one who is different.... the one for whom the rules do not apply.

Finally, the 23rd psalm is not reality in this time and place, because the act of creation is not been completed. We are in the final days, but the Created Order is not yet finished. There is still disorder and disobedience. But it does not need to be so.

In the prophet Isaiah we read these words in the 11th chapter:

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

This Vision given to Isaiah by God is a vision of the time of fulfillment. We might see it as a parallel to the 23rd psalm. What God wants for us, but in our time has not yet been attained. St. Paul also reminds us that in our time, the whole creation groans for redemption.

Romans 8: 8-24

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.

We might reflect upon this week is how Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

He has not abandoned us or left us with a hireling, rather He has gifted us with His presence and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

All that is good comes from God, who created Heaven and earth. And God has provided for us not only the foods we need and the pure water and air but he has also provided for us the medicine to heal us.

In His own Body and Blood in the mystery of the Eucharist Jesus is with us to cleanse us of our sins and to strengthen us on our journeys.

Finally, we might consider how **we live** each moment of our lives. In the Venite recited each day at Morning Prayer we say: *For he is the lord our God* and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.*

Do we believe that the Lord is the Good Shepherd and that we are his people?

Do we live like sheep allowing Him to lead us and guide us or are we rebellious in our lives and our actions?

Each of us will become lost at times. Each of us will fall down. But it is in the seeking the right path home that we are found by the Good Shepherd and it is His hand that raises us up when we are unable with our own strength to go on.

The Lord is my Shepherd and He leadeth me beside still waters and I know that one day he will lead me from shadow of death into the new life He promised.

Alleluia the Lord is Risen

He is Risen indeed

And one day He will raise us up so that we will be with Him forever

AMEN