

Easter 4B - Pericope Study for Sunday, April 22, 2018

Presented Tuesday, April 17, 2018 by Richard Burgess

Collect / POD (ELW)

O Lord Christ, good shepherd of the sheep, you seek the lost and guide us into your fold. Feed us, and we shall be satisfied; heal us, and we shall be whole. Make us one with you, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

General Thoughts & Questions for the Week

This Sunday is usually referred to as “Good Shepherd Sunday”. Can you give it a non sheep & shepherding title that would also fit?

Acts 4:5-12 (NRSV)

⁵The next day [the] rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, ⁶with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, ¹⁰let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. ¹¹This Jesus is

‘the stone that was rejected by you,
the builders;
it has become the cornerstone.’

¹²There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven

given among mortals by which we must be saved.”

Notes, Observations, & Questions:

Context: In chapter 3 Peter & John heal a man lame from birth and then preach to the crowd. In 4.1-4 Peter & John had just been arrested for “proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead.”

4.10, 12 What does it mean to be healed or saved by a *name*?

4.12 How do we preach or pastor in a pluralistic world when our scriptures include this verse and others like it which seem to condemn all non-Christians?

Psalm 23 (ELW)

¹The LORD | is my shepherd;
I shall not | be in want.

²**The LORD makes me lie down | in
green pastures
and leads me be- | side still waters.**

³You restore my | soul, O LORD,
and guide me along right pathways |
for your name's sake.

⁴**Though I walk through the valley of
the shadow of death, I shall | fear no
evil;
for you are with me; your rod and
your staff, they | comfort me. R**

⁵You prepare a table before me in the
presence | of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, and my
cup is | running over.

⁶**Surely goodness and mercy shall
follow me all the days | of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the
| LORD forever. R**

Notes, Observations, & Questions:

What are your or your parishioners memories about this Psalm? Ever memorize it? Find comfort in it?

Note that 23.1-2, 6 refer to "the LORD" in the 3rd person and 23.3-5 in the 2nd person. Significance?

What feelings, memories, or thoughts are evoked by the various images in this psalm? "shepherd", "pastures", "right pathways", etc

23.5 What does it mean to sit down and eat with one's enemies? "The LORD" would seem to be the host here. Why not the psalmist or you / us?

1 John 3:16-24 (NRSV)

¹⁶We know love by this, that [Jesus Christ] laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

¹⁸Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. ¹⁹And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him ²⁰whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; ²²and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

²³And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. ²⁴All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

Notes, Observations, & Questions:

3.16 *ought to lay down our lives for one another* Is it realistic to expect us to follow Jesus’ example to this extreme?

3.17 How do we handle this when we “see” thousands of people in need in newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, & the internet, the vast majority of whom we are unable to help? Where & how do we draw the line? How do we minister to people who take this verse literally to various degrees?

3.18 What is the difference between “word or speech” and “truth and action” or for that matter between “truth” and “action”?

3.22 *we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him* Is this salvation by works? How or how not?

3.24 *And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.* Does “this” refer to the commandment in 3.23, our obedience to that commandment in belief and love, or something else?

John 10:11-18 (NRSV)

[Jesus said:] ¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

Notes, Observations, & Questions:

How do you explain (or understand) *shepherd* to people who have no significant direct experience with sheep or shepherding? What would be a more contemporary image or illustration?

There is a lot of “good shepherd” art out there. What are the pros and cons of it? How do you decide what to use or not?

10.13 *hired hand* Remember that clergy are hired hands. (Just saying 😊)

10.16 *other sheep that do not belong to this fold* What is “this fold”? What does it mean to “not belong” to it? Does that belonging status need to change / be changed?

10.17-18 Why does Jesus need to say he voluntarily lays his life down for the sheep and then emphasize it is his choice 2 more times and then say it is a command from his Father?