

Every 4th week of Easter we have Good Shepherd Sunday

These readings are presented

Recalling that God himself chose to be identified with shepherds

He is the King of Kings

The Lord of Lords

He is the 2nd person in the Holy Trinity

And yet again and again he chose the route of humility

When Moses discovers the burning bush

He is shepherding his father-in-law's sheep

When Samuel comes to anoint a new king

All of David's brothers are presented

David is out with the sheep

David, who takes out Goliath

A Philistine warrior who desired to enslave Israel

Using only a shepherds slingshot and 5 stones

These five stones foreshadow Jesus' 5 wounds

And how he used them to defeat Satan

Who desired to enslave all of humanity

And when he was born

Among the first to hear of his birth

Shepherds outside of Bethlehem

Shepherds were not the most appealing class of people

In fact they were more likely identified as thieve and robbers

They were seen as a dirty people

Nomads

Probably not a group we would freely associate with

And yet God identifies with them

Promising through Ezekiel

One day he himself would shepherd his flock

And bring them to the Promised Land

Christ would break the mold of what a shepherd is

He is the Good Shepherd

Willing to give his life for his flock

For his people

And being the Good Shepherd

He will not leave us orphans

He does this in a real way in the Eucharist

His body and blood, soul and divinity

There for our healing and salvation

To be with us in the Real Presence

But he also does this in a way we can see

He remains with us through his apostles and disciples

Giving his authority to the disciples

So his work will continue

We see this in the reading from Acts

Peter and John had just healed a crippled man

They are hauled in front of the authorities to explain themselves

Peter says: this healing came through human action

But the healing itself was accomplished

In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean

Whom you put to death

It is this name alone that we find salvation

Jesus is the stone

Rejected by the Chief Priests

And has become the cornerstone

We are his people

The flock of the Good Shepherd

See what love the Father has bestowed on the world

Beloved, we are God's children now

To be one of his flock is to be lifted out of the world

Even while we live in the world

That constant tug of the world

And the constant tug of God bringing us above the world

Reflecting on this, I was brought back to my days on the farm

Now I don't know that much about sheep farming

A neighbor would use our buildings for them at lambing time

But I do know cattle

At times they would give birth out in the woods

We would go to bring them back to the pasture

Sometimes the calf would be separated

We would have to go back to get them

Hiding in the multi floral rose bushes

Thinking they were safe from coyotes

Or from us

Get them out

Put them on your shoulders

Carry them to the good pasture

Where their mama was

Didn't know this

Fight

Kick and bellow

Then pee down your shirt

Or worse

And we let it happen

Because we knew where it was truly safe

Where the good pasture was

Where mama was

This is what Christ does

He came into this world

He doesn't wait until we are converted

He came while we were still enemies

While we were sinners

He came into the thickets

Into the brambles

To take us by the hand

To place us on his shoulders

To carry us to where he knows the green pasture is

Where the fresh water is

Where he Himself waits

Sometimes we fight

Because we do not know where he is taking us

We want comfort

We want what we know

Even if what we know is not for our ultimate good

Sometimes we do even worse than what the calf would do

We sin and turn our backs

But he doesn't force us

He respects our free will

Another story I saw this week bear this out as well

The opening remarks of a new bishop

Thanking those that impacted his life

And he thanked his parents

Who never gave up on him

Even when he made it difficult for them

If we only trust him

The invitation is there

Calling to us

To stand in his mercy

Lord, I trust you

And live lives of Eucharistic thanksgiving

That he never gives up on us