

Who are the Sheep?

Easter Four Homily - May 2, 2004, Deacon Colleen Spaeth

The Lord is my shepherd – I shall not want – he makes me to lie down in green pastures – he leads me beside still waters – he restoreth my soul...

What comforting words these are –

But are they true words?? Are they words that are true in the sense that they really apply to you? As I pondered the notion of Jesus as the shepherd, I wondered who are the sheep exactly? Am I a member of the flock? What does it all mean to be a sheep to the shepherd Jesus anyway?

Jesus said – “My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.” Is that true for you? I asked myself, is it true for me? Is it true when things are good and when things are bad?

I wonder, how many of us really want Jesus to be our shepherd?

Am I willing to be the sheep? Do I want him to be my shepherd because I am told that when I am lost he will look

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for me – that when I am in danger that his rod and his staff will comfort me?

I want Jesus to be my shepherd because I am told that when this short life is over he promises his sheep another, a better life. He promises we will never perish.

“No - I will snatch them out of my hand, for what my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father’s hand.”

As we hear in the 23rd Psalm, “ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Do I really want, do we really want Jesus to be our shepherd, do we really want all that the 23rd Psalm promises, all that Jesus promises to be true?

Just by virtue of the many funeral masses that include the 23rd psalm, and all the people who can recite the Psalm by heart, I think we all deep down in our heart of hearts want the same thing.

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You want God to watch over you – a God to protect you..
A God to bless you – a God to seek you out when you're lost
– A God to comfort you when you are sick - A God to walk
with you when you walk through the valley of the shadow of
death, a God to bring you to your final home.
I think we all want that.

Well, the great news is that Jesus says to us all today, you
can have it – you can have it from me, I am the good
shepherd, I am the one who looks after his sheep, the one
that loves his sheep with a love that is stronger than death.

Of course is this a gift we are willing to open? Are we willing
to be Christians all the time, are we willing to be accountable
to the shepherd for our actions?

The story goes that two cars were waiting at a stoplight. The
light turned green but the man didn't notice it. The woman in
the car behind him is watching traffic pass around them. The
woman begins pounding on her steering wheel and dash.
The light turns yellow and woman beings to blow the car

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horn, flips him the you know what, and screams a stream of profanities and curses at the man.

The man looks up, sees the yellow light and accelerates through the intersection just as the light turns red. The woman is beside herself, screaming in frustration as she misses her chance to get through the intersection.

As she is still in mid-rant she hears a tap on her window and looks up into the barrel of a gun held by a very serious looking policeman. The policeman tells her to shut off the car while keeping both hands in sight. She complies, speechless at what is happening.

After she shuts off the engine the policeman orders her to exit the car with her hands up. She gets out of the car he orders her to turn and place her hands on her car. She turns, places her hands on the car roof and quickly is cuffed and hustled into the patrol car.

She is too bewildered by the chain of events, and is driven to the police station where she is fingerprinted. She is booked and placed in a cell. After a couple of hours a policeman

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approaches the cell and opens the door for her. She is escorted back to the booking desk where the original officer is waiting with her personal effects.

He hands her the bag containing her things and says, I am so sorry for this mistake. But you see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn, cursing a blue streak at the driver in front of you. Then I noticed the Choose Life license plate holder, the What Would Jesus do bumper sticker, Follow Me to Sunday Sschool bumper sticker, and the chrome plated Christian fish emblem on the trunk, so naturally I assumed you had stolen the car.

So are we his sheep? What do our actions say about us?

My sheep know my voice and they follow me. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers. I know my own and my own know me. My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me.

Today we welcome with joy a new sheep into the fold. We promised to support him and make our circle larger for the newest sheep. Cameron Leedy Brown. We promise by our

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prayer and witness to help this child to grow into the full stature of Christ. Together we renounce all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God.

I wonder, could it be that our Christian life is something akin to an open book test? A test of whether or not we ARE the sheep of the Good Shepherd – a test of whether or not – no matter what fold we may happen to come from – we are all a people who belong to God?

Do we pass the test? Do we know and listen to the Shepherd's voice?

Amen.

Could it be that life is something like an open book test? A test of whether or not we are the sheep of the good shepherd; a test of whether or not – no matter what fold we may happen to come from – we are a people who belong to God?

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Do we pass the test? Do you know and listen to your shepherd's voice?