

# Sunday Message

THE WORD

Year B • Psalter Week 4



## JESUS, THE MODEL SHEPHERD

(JOHN 10:11-18)

The readings from the Gospels continue to reflect on Jesus' fulfilling the mission given to him by the Father. He reflects on the difference between himself as "the model shepherd" and the one who simply does the job for money and is not committed to the members of the flock for any other reason.

The essential factor is that the paid employee has no meaningful relationship with those entrusted to his care: elsewhere, Jesus likens himself to the shepherd who knows all the sheep by name, illustrated by his addressing Mary Magdalene by name at the tomb on Easter Day. We might note that, although the Hebrew scriptures talk about the messianic shepherd who will gather the scattered people together, there is no notion of one who will give his life for the flock.

Jesus' commitment to the Father is shown by his being willing freely to lay down his life and take it up again, as he will demonstrate later in the washing of the disciples' feet at the Last Supper. Thus, what happens to Jesus is not some tragic accident, but rather "the command I have been given by my Father". It is in this mystery that the love of the Father will be revealed, difficult though it may be for us to understand. ■

## REFLECT

One reason why farmers apparently are reluctant to give names to their animals is that it makes them in a sense into pets and so would cause all sorts of problems when the time comes to send them to be slaughtered for their meat. On the other hand, there are stories of tough and seasoned shepherds being reduced to tears when their dog, which has been their companion perhaps for many years, has to be put down to spare it further suffering. The difference in reaction reveals the contrast in relationship. In our Gospel reading today, we are invited to reflect on what

the Easter mystery tells us about Jesus, ourselves and what being a disciple means.

In the Gospel reading today, Jesus is not saying that he has power to lay down and take up his life again, so much as that he has authority to do so. He stresses that this is his own decision, freely taken. We might consider that what matters in the end is our own personal relationship with Jesus. It is easy to imagine the Church as a sea of anonymous faces, for example as pictures of St Peter's Square suggest: there is truth in this, that the

## SAY

Jesus is the model shepherd: he knows my name.

(see John 10:11)

## LEARN

There is only one commandment in the Fourth Gospel: "love one another".

There is no equivalent to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew) or on the Plain (Luke) in the Gospel according to John.

The figure of the shepherd is used in the Hebrew scriptures to refer to the leaders of Israel, often in a context of criticism.

## DO

Notice the people in the street as you walk along: do you imagine Jesus having a general interest in their well-being or his having a personal interest in each one? How do you feel he relates to yourself?



Church is the people of God, but not in the sense of an amorphous crowd: John's thought is that of a community of committed individuals, each with a personal relationship to Jesus, a relationship marked by love. There is very little ethical teaching, such as we find in the Synoptic Gospels, in the version according to John. This means that it can be more demanding: love is often more challenging – and exhausting – than simply living by rules imposed from outside ourselves. ■

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth;  
by the word of the Lord the heavens were  
made, alleluia.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

**COLLECT**

Almighty ever-living God,  
lead us to a share in the joys of heaven,  
so that the humble flock may reach  
where the brave Shepherd has gone before.  
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Acts 4:8-12

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.  
Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter said:  
"Rulers of the people, and elders! If you  
are questioning us today about an act of  
kindness to a cripple, and asking us how he  
was healed, then I am glad to tell you all, and  
would indeed be glad to tell the whole people  
of Israel, that it was by the name of Jesus  
Christ the Nazarene, the one you crucified,  
whom God raised from the dead, by this  
name and by no other that this man is able  
to stand up perfectly healthy, here in your  
presence today. This is the stone rejected by  
you the builders, but which has proved to  
be the keystone. For of all the names in the  
world given to men, this is the only one by  
which we can be saved."

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Psalm 117

Response:

The stone which the builders rejected  
has become the corner stone.

or  
Alleluia!

1. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good,  
for his love has no end.  
It is better to take refuge in the Lord  
than to trust in men;  
it is better to take refuge in the Lord  
than to trust in princes. (R.)

2. I will thank you for you have given answer  
and you are my saviour.  
The stone which the builders rejected  
has become the corner stone.  
This is the work of the Lord,  
a marvel in our eyes. (R.)

3. Blessed in the name of the Lord  
is he who comes.  
We bless you from the house of the Lord;  
I will thank you for you have given answer  
and you are my saviour.  
Give thanks to the Lord for he is good;  
for his love has no end. (R.)

**SECOND READING**

1 John 3:1-2

A reading from the first letter of St John.  
Think of the love that the Father has lavished  
on us,  
by letting us be called God's children;  
and that is what we are.  
Because the world refused to acknowledge  
him,  
therefore it does not acknowledge us.  
My dear people, we are already the children  
of God  
but what we are to be in the future has not  
yet been revealed;  
all we know is, that when it is revealed  
we shall be like him  
because we shall see him as he really is.  
The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;  
I know my own sheep and my own know  
me.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

John 10:11-18

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
John.

Jesus said:

"I am the good shepherd:  
the good shepherd is one who lays down  
his life for his sheep.  
The hired man, since he is not the shepherd  
and the sheep do not belong to him,  
abandons the sheep and runs away  
as soon as he sees a wolf coming,  
and then the wolf attacks and scatters the  
sheep;  
this is because he is only a hired man  
and has no concern for the sheep.  
I am the good shepherd;  
I know my own  
and my own know me,  
just as the Father knows me  
and I know the Father;  
and I lay down my life for my sheep.  
And there are other sheep I have  
that are not of this fold,  
and these I have to lead as well.  
They too will listen to my voice,  
and there will be only one flock  
and one shepherd.  
The Father loves me,  
because I lay down my life  
in order to take it up again.  
No one takes it from me;  
I lay it down of my own free will,  
and as it is in my power to lay it down,

so it is in my power to take it up again;  
and this is the command I have been given  
by my Father."

The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
*(all bow during the next two lines)*  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the  
Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living  
and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.  
Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Grant, we pray, O Lord,  
that we may always find delight in these  
paschal mysteries,  
so that the renewal constantly at work within  
us  
may be the cause of our unending joy.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

The Good Shepherd has risen,  
who laid down his life for his sheep  
and willingly died for his flock, alleluia.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Look upon your flock, kind Shepherd,  
and be pleased to settle in eternal pastures  
the sheep you have redeemed  
by the Precious Blood of your Son.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
Amen.

