

Christ Episcopal Church
2 Emerson Street
East Norwalk,
Connecticut 06855-1330

4 Easter (B)
April 22, 2018

DRAFT

8 AM and 10 AM homilies
by the Rev. Joe Parrish
“The Model Shepherd”

The Holy Gospel according to
John 10:11-18

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The 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. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care 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 the sheep. I 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."

For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No 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."

Dear Lord, may we hear your gentle voice, and follow you. Amen.

A little girl reciting the 23rd Psalm began, “The Lord is my shepherd; that's all I want.” Maybe she missed the wording, but she sure got the theology correct. When we have the Lord with us, that is all we need.

http://day1.org/989-one_life_to_give

[The Rev. Dr. B. Wiley Stephens, 2006, was senior minister of Dunwoody United Methodist Church in Dunwoody, GA]

Recently a friend of mine asked me to do a funeral for a family friend of his

whose wife had died; she had been a notable artist. I was not given much information about her, but I knew she was very much the loving mother of a young man who came to the funeral with his father, her husband. Almost all the stories I heard about her in the several eulogies which preceded the funeral mentioned her care of her son. So, I incorporated her love for her son in the Good Shepherd gospel the family had chosen for the service. Afterwards, my friend came up to me privately and said that the boy whom I had identified

as her son was not actually her biological son, but she had adopted him when she married his father. It seem like I had made a faux pas in my homily, but as I reflected on what I had said, it seemed even more as though she had been a real shepherd to her adopted son, a boy whose biological mother had died earlier when her son was very small. The artist had devoted much of her life caring for her adopted son, not concerned that he was her stepson; and he had benefitted significantly by her love. He had been a bit troubled during

his early teen years, but before his adopted mother died she had gotten him interested in continuing his education, and just before her death, he had been accepted into college and he was determined to go to college. Indeed, she had been an amazing Good Shepherd.

The late Rev. Dr. Bill Self wrote:

‘The Good Shepherd does care for us. We have picked up the idea somewhere that if we do wrong the Shepherd will not love us anymore.

Remember this Scripture talks about the scattered sheep. Even when the sheep

scatter, he is still the shepherd. The [exemplary] shepherd fights to the end for the flock and will never leave the flock. Remember, he is the shepherd; we are the sheep. The problem with many of us is that we try to take on the role of the shepherd also.

‘The other thing that we need to understand is that the shepherd stands between the sheep and the problem. The leopards, the lions, the bears can never destroy the sheep because the shepherd is there. So between you and the physical health issues that you face,

there is the Good Shepherd who loves you. Between you and the impending financial disaster that you are frightened about, there is the Good Shepherd.

Between you and the problems that are haunting you from your past, there is the Good Shepherd. Between you and the enemies who would harm you and destroy you, there stands the Good Shepherd. We fail to realize that He does know about us and cares about us.'

<http://day1.org/933->

[objects in mirror are closer than they appear](#)

Jesus Christ indeed is the model Shepherd.

Middle Eastern shepherds differ somewhat from those shepherds in North America who often drive their sheep while riding in Jeeps or SUVs. In the Middle East the shepherds always lead their sheep, going in front of them as best they can, protecting from whatever may be ahead of them, wild animals, cliffs, or whatever, helping them find the next tufts of green grass and clean water. This is probably the

image Jesus had when he declared himself to be the exemplary shepherd, the shepherd who would go far beyond what an earthly shepherd would do, risking his life for the sake of his sheep. Jesus' crucifixion showed us how much he cared for us both now and into eternity. By his death and resurrection we are born into eternal life.

Andrew Greeley, Roman Catholic author wrote: "Shepherds were at the very bottom of the status in the ancient world. They were uneducated, illiterate,

dirty, smelly, rough and irreligious men. It is simply astonishing that the image of Christ as the Good Shepherd would be the favorite depiction of Jesus in the early days of the Church. The symbol has many different interpretations in the gospel narratives – Jesus knows us as the Shepherd knows his sheep; Jesus searches for the lost the way the shepherd searches for his lost sheep; Jesus wants there to be one fold and one shepherd. All, however, emphasize the intimacy between Jesus and his

followers, an intimacy which continues even till this day,”

[http://www.agreeley.com/hom08/may04
.htm](http://www.agreeley.com/hom08/may04.htm)

Martin Luther wrote in the early sixteenth century, ‘When the Gospel was first proclaimed, it was preached to the Jews; that nation was the sheepfold. And now he says here: “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring.” Here he declares that the Gospel is to be preached to the gentiles also, so that

they also might believe in Christ, that there might be one Christian communion, composed of Jews and gentiles. This was afterwards brought about through the apostles, who preached to the gentiles and converted them to the faith. Accordingly there is now but one church or communion, one faith, one hope, one love, one baptism, etc. And this continues to be so at the present day, and will continue until the day of judgment. Hence, you must not understand this to mean that the whole world, and all men, will believe in

Christ; for this holy cross will always be with us. They are in the majority who persecute Christ, and therefore the Gospel must ever be preached, that some may be won for Christ. The kingdom of Christ is in process of growing and is not something that is completed. This is, in brief, the explanation of this Gospel.

-Martin Luther, c.a. 1530

<http://www.lectionarycentral.com/easter2/LutherGospel.html>

Good Shepherds come in various sizes and genders; our Hymnal has a hymn, Hymn Number 293, about one who had been a “Shepherdess on the Green” about a woman who indeed had been shepherd to her people, Joan of Arc.

The text of the hymn:

1 I sing a song of the saints of God,
patient and brave and true,
who toiled and fought and lived and
died
for the Lord they loved and knew.

And one was a doctor, and one was a
queen,
and one was a shepherdess on the green:
they were all of them saints of God, and
I mean,
God helping, to be one too.

The hymn remains a popular favorite
with American churchgoers who have
grown up with it. In a 2003 survey of
'desert island' hymns run by the website
Anglicans Online, the hymn was voted
14th [in the Top Twenty of our hymnal]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Sing_a_Song_of_the_Saints_of_God

and was published in 1929 by British children's song composer Lesbia Scott who sang it to her own children when they were growing up.

“Jesus is the great I AM, God Almighty in human form. And knowing who he is can make all the difference for us in availing ourselves of the power of his grace and love.”

2006, Philip W. McLarty

<https://www.sermonwriter.com/sermons/john-1011-18-i-am-mclarty/>

‘What a great gift it is that Christ knows us by name and calls out to each of us as though we were the only sheep in all the world. Already he knows us, and invites us to know him, to know him and follow him. But a further step is necessary. It is necessary that we listen. Even the voice of Jesus goes unheard unless something within us makes the choice to listen.

“We may regard listening as passive. Opening our ears to hear is not so obvious as opening our mouth to speak! But true listening requires great attention and energy. Ask any counselor, psychiatrist, or pastor who has just spent hours listening to troubled people, and you will find that listening demands a great deal.

“Or recall some time—I hope you have had the experience—when you felt truly heard. The person listening may have been spouse, parent, teacher, friend, or someone whose profession

requires a willingness to listen. To be truly heard by another person is something rich and all too rare, a great consolation,. It requires much of the listener and gives something real to the person who is heard.

“So the art of listening is not easy. Yet it is the foundation of discipleship. Like all true listening, listening to the Shepherd comes at a cost. But while listening to other people may sometimes drain us—it is our gift to them—listening to the Shepherd always leads to our enrichment. The Shepherd has nothing

to gain, while we have everything to gain, yet still this listening is not easy.

“Why is it so hard to listen to the Shepherd’s voice? Because true listening leaves us open to be touched and changed by the truth we hear. That’s risky business! So often the truth, if we hear it, overturns our prejudices, challenges our self-image, shakes up our view of the world. Most of us are at least a little uneasy about having our boat rocked.

“Listening is also hard because much of our society is arranged to keep us from hearing deep truths. Many people are paid to make noise so that we do not hear the true music. We may even become so accustomed to noise that we forget there is a true music.”

-2008, The Rev. Charles Hoffacker

<https://www.sermonwriter.com/sermons/john-1011-18-listen-to-the-shepherd-hoffacker/>

.....2014, James D. Kegel

<https://www.sermonwriter.com/sermons/john-1011-18-the-good-shepherd-kegel/>

“The earliest Christian image of Jesus is as a shepherd. He is pictured as a young man carrying a sheep over his shoulders. One can see it in the Roman catacombs where early Christians worshipped secretly out of fear of the Roman authorities.”

“When the roll is called up yonder, let’s all be there. There to praise the shepherd who gently firmly led us by

the hand, prepared pasture for us with wolves all around, led us through dark valleys, and the shadows, dark as death, and all the time the shepherd's two dogs, goodness and mercy hounding us, so we can live in the house of the good shepherd forever. Amen.

-Walter W. Harms, retired pastor
Austin, TX U.S.A.”

<http://www.theologie.uzh.ch/predigten/archiv-8/060507-5-e.html>

Fresco painting from the Priscilla
Catacomb near Rome; last half of the
third century

Good_Shepherd_Catacomb_of_Priscilla
(2).jpg [Public Domain]

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/
commons/9/90/Good_Shepherd_Cataco
mb_of_Priscilla.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/90/Good_Shepherd_Catacomb_of_Priscilla.jpg)

The Good Shepherd, Fresco, (ca. AD
225), Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome, Italy

[https://smecsundaymorningforum.org/2
012/04/26/the-good-shepherd-fresco-ca-
ad-225-catacomb-of-priscilla-rome-
italy/](https://smecsundaymorningforum.org/2012/04/26/the-good-shepherd-fresco-ca-ad-225-catacomb-of-priscilla-rome-italy/)





Description:

The most popular ancient depiction of Jesus in the Roman catacombs is as the Good Shepherd, dating from the early third century and perhaps before. The good, or model, or exemplary shepherd has given up his life for us in order to give us life eternal. We need to hear his voice, follow his commands, and live a life that exemplifies Christ care and concern for others.

Tags:

Shepherd, good, model, exemplary,

Luther, enemies, listen, voice,

catacombs, Roman, ancient, hymn,

shepherdess, Joan, Arc, Psalm, funeral,

Greeley, leopards, lions, bears, Middle

Eastern, SUV

Other material:

[Gary Burge, NIV Application Commentary, reminds us that “The Middle Eastern shepherd is well known for having a personal devotion to his sheep. He talks to them and sings to them. Often shepherd will carry a short flute and use a repeated tune so that the flock has a consistent cue to follow.” A

story that Burge tells:] ‘In the late 1980s the Israeli army surrounded a dissident Palestinian village near Bethlehem.

‘The officer in command rounded up all of the village animals and placed them in a large barbed-wire pen. Later in the week he was approached by a woman who begged him to release her flock, arguing that since her husband was dead, the animals were her only source of livelihood. He pointed to the pen containing hundreds of animals and humorously quipped that it was impossible because he could not find

her animals. She asked that if she could in fact separate them herself, would he be willing to let her take them? He agreed. A soldier opened the gate of the pen and the woman's son produced a small reed flute. He played a simple tune again and again -- and soon sheep heads began popping up across the pen. The young boy continued his music and walked home, followed by his flock of twenty-five sheep.

Pastor Cindy in Central Illinois
posted on her blog April 6, 2009 :

‘To accept that Jesus is the Good Shepherd means that we pop up our heads, catch the timbre of his voice, or recognize the tune he is playing, and get ourselves behind him, wherever he leads.

‘This means paying attention to God’s voice, as we hear it through Jesus, first of all and above all the other voices that are seeking our attention and allegiance.’



‘The point is that, for Christians, no other voice sounds as sweet or carries

the power to move us the way Jesus' voice does. Stephen Carter, in writing the "The Cultural of Disbelief," said, "Our religion is, at its heart, a way of denying the authority of the rest of the world."

<http://philoprespastor.blogspot.com/2009/04/jesus-good-shepherd.html?m=0>

[Interesting blog on bullies by Eric Parker, Pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Selkirk, Manitoba:

“12 Reasons why it is good to be a church bully”, January 23, 2014

<https://millennialpastor.net/2014/01/23/12-reasons-why-it-is-good-to-be-a-church-bully/>

Compare a bully with a shepherd—the bully belittles, the shepherd cares for the little.

Lutheran Pastor Edward F. Markquart wrote: ‘I prefer the translation, “Jesus was the noble

shepherd” more than Jesus was the good shepherd. Why was Jesus noble? because he was willing to lay down his life for the sheep? That is always the source of nobility. Why was Mother Theresa noble? because she was willing to lay down her life for others. She put the needs of others before herself. Why was St. Francis of Assisi noble? because he was willing to lay down his life for others. He is said to have written: “It is in giving that we receive. It is in dying (to self) that we are born to a living hope [to eternal life].”

Daniel P. Horan, OFM

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There is probably no saint more revered and well known in all of Christian history than St. Francis of Assisi. Today Christians, and many non-Christians alike, celebrate the life and legacy of this medieval Italian man who is known the world over for his exemplary life of holiness and model of peaceable living he leaves to us, nearly 800 years after his death. Just as he remains a popular figure across many cultures and religious traditions, there is probably no

Christian prayer more popular (with perhaps the predictable exception of the “Lord’s Prayer”) than the one that bears the name of this Saint from Assisi: “The Prayer of St. Francis.”

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light.

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

Grant that I may not so much seek to be
consoled, as to console;

To be understood, as to understand;

To be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

And it is in dying that we are born to
Eternal Life.

Amen.

Many people are shocked to learn that the prayer most closely associated with St. Francis was not actually written by him. In fact, the prayer called “The Prayer of St. Francis” is generally believed to be only about 100 years old, a creative and sincere prayer penned by an anonymous French writer. Over time this anonymously drafted prayer became linked with the spirit of the 13th-century friar whose continual striving to follow more closely the Gospel of Jesus Christ led to a renewal in the church at many levels.

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they were all of them saints of God, and
I mean,

God helping, to be one too.

2 They loved their Lord so dear, so dear,
and God's love made them strong;
and they followed the right, for Jesus'
sake,
the whole of their good lives long.

And one was a soldier, and one was a
priest,

and one was slain by a fierce wild beast:

and there's not any reason, no, not the
least,

why I shouldn't be one too.

3 They lived not only in ages past;

there are hundreds of thousands still;

the world is bright with the joyous saints

who love to do Jesus' will.

You can meet them in school, or in

lanes, or at sea,

in church, or in trains, or in shops, or at
tea;

for the saints of God are just folk like
me,

and I mean to be one too.”

The hymn remains a popular favorite with American churchgoers who have grown up with it. In a 2003 survey of 'desert island' hymns run by the website Anglicans Online, the hymn was voted 14th. [in the Top Twenty of our hymnal]

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