

Fourth Sunday of Easter – John 10:11-18

Introduction: Christian Leadership

The fourth Sunday of Easter is also called *Good Shepherd Sunday*. In each of the three lectionary Cycles, our Gospel is always taken from the 10th chapter of the Gospel of John. In Cycle B, we hear the middle verses of this chapter – not the “I am the gate” theme but the familiar “I am the Good Shepherd” theme.

In this portion of the Gospel, Jesus describes his relationship with his followers, as similar to the Relationship between a good shepherd and his sheep. As a good shepherd will take risks and even

lay down his own life in order to protect his sheep (that are indeed valuable), Jesus willingly sacrifices himself for the sake of his sheep – us! Jesus also contrasts the actions of the good shepherd with the actions of the hired shepherd who flees and abandons the sheep in the face of danger. In the verses following Jesus’ teaching, we learn that the Pharisees and the other religious leaders understand that Jesus is referring to them when he describes the hired shepherds.

Essentially, the actions of the good shepherd are based upon a loving and caring relationship between shepherd and sheep. It is not just merely a job! It is a love-in-action relationship – which defines Jesus’ identity and relationship with us. As with so much of John’s Gospel (a Gospel full of so many layers of meaning), we today hear John’s particular focus on Christology (who Jesus is) and the characteristics of his leadership: loving; caring; merciful; forgiving; inclusive; welcoming; affirming. *And we ask ourselves today: how do we measure up to this “out of this world” leadership model?*

John also includes these intriguing words of Jesus: “I have other sheep that do not belong to the fold. These also I must lead.” This possibly represents the inclusion of Gentiles but can also refer to the work of *ecumenism* to restore unity among all Christians so that we form one flock under one shepherd.

I would invite you to take time to read and ponder the words from the *Gospel of John 10:11-18*.

What word or words caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you? Challenged?

Further Questions:

In what ways does the image of “good shepherd” resonate with me? In what ways do I struggle with this image?

Recall times in your life when you have been “shepherded? Have I ever seen myself as a shepherd for others? Name those times and people.

Do you experience God’s love as pure gift or do you believe that you have to earn it?

Reflect on Jesus as the Good Shepherd. What kind of leader are you? Name those characteristics.

Not only does Jesus welcome everyone, but if I’m not there, he invites me in. Where am I?

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