



# Come and See!

April 22, 2018

## The Word...

"I am the good shepherd.

A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away...

This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me...

and I will lay down my life for the sheep.

I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.

These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice,

and there will be one flock, one shepherd.

*(from Jn 10:11-18)*

## Pondering the Word...

Let's look at the difference between the good shepherd and the hired one. First, note the adjective, "good." We know all too well there are those entrusted to lead flocks whose motivations and actions are anything but good. And we also know there are "hired" shepherds—those whose chosen profession is to protect the public—who lay down their lives every day for complete strangers. Of course, there are some who abuse this position as well, but I believe the majority are courageous men and women willing to put their lives on the line.

I think of and honor the school teachers and staff who, in recent years, have died protecting students. I doubt when they chose their career path, having to risk their lives was part of what they envisioned, nor was the prospect of coming to work armed very high on their list of professional goals!

This passage tells us that good shepherds are also willing to look beyond their own flocks, to lay down their lives for those who don't even belong to their fold. John tells us of Jesus, "*He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins--and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.*" (1 Jn 2:2) All the world—everyone.

While most of us are not called to risk our mortal lives, in order to be the kind of shepherd Jesus is for the world, we need to be willing to set aside our biases and preconceived notions so that, by our actions and the way we live, we can serve as gentle, loving guides to all the world, so that everyone will hear his voice and follow. How are you called to be a good shepherd?

## Living the Word...

We might think the image of a shepherd comes into play only in the hierarchy of church, or, if we are really idealistic, we might hope to someday view our government officials and politicians that way too. Take time to consider this: If you were to wake up and commit to being a good shepherd for the day, what might that look like? How would you treat the people you encountered? How would you treat the earth? What kind of behavior would you model? Write some ideas in your journal and then give it try. See how you can improve your shepherding skills!

Personal Reflections and Ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

**Apr 23:** *The brothers heard the Gentiles had accepted the word of God. When Peter went up to Jerusalem the circumcised believers confronted him: "You entered the house of uncircumcised people and ate with them."* (Acts 6:1:1-18)

Disagreements over who's "in" and who's "out" happened a lot in the early days of Christianity. They happen today. I think of the Christian congregations I've read about recently experiencing dissention and conflict over the sheltering of undocumented immigrants. Some feel obliged by the rule of the land; others follow God's command of love and mercy. In my own country, we see more and more that mercy is taking a backseat to nationalism and exclusion. There were those in the early church who rejected Peter, Paul, and their outreach to the Gentiles—it was a violation of the all-important written law. What if Peter and Paul had folded under the pressure and opted for the path of least resistance? What might have happened to the fledgling church? Something to consider if you struggle to reconcile the rule of the law with the call to be merciful.

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**Apr 24:** *"I tell of Egypt and Babylon among those who know the LORD; 'This man was born there.' And of Zion they shall say: 'One and all were born in her...' And all shall sing, in their festive dance: 'My home is within you.'"* (Ps 87)

"Where are you from?" It's one of the first questions we ask a new person we meet, especially if their ethnicity seems to be different than ours. I read an article about a Chinese-American professor who often gets told, "Your English is very good," to which he responds, "Well, I hope so, since I was born and raised in Oregon!" We are quick to make assumptions based on appearances, even when our intention is to be welcoming. But too often, we use appearances to erect walls between "us" and "them." Do we really think that's what God wants? The God who says, "My home is within you?" Today, look past others' appearance to the God abiding within. See if that changes the way you view others and the way you treat them.

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**Apr 25:** *Cast all your worries upon him because he cares for you.* (1 Pt 5:5-14)

I talk to God about my worries and anxieties, but I'm not sure if I really "cast them upon him." Sometimes I feel like I am just venting rather than trusting in God's care. I don't know whether it's my need for control or if there is some leftover question in my heart: "Does God really care for *me*?" It can be hubris to think that God can't or doesn't want to deal with the concerns I have in my life. So why then am I so hesitant to trust in God's care and desire for my welfare? If this sounds familiar, spend some time in prayer. What keeps you from entrusting your life to God?

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**Apr 26:** *"I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, that my hand may be always with him, and that my arm may make him strong."* (Ps 89)

"I have found (your name), my servant; I have anointed you, that my hand may be always with you, and that my arm may make you strong." Imagine Jesus praying this blessing over you.

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**Apr 27:** *"I am the way and the truth and the life."* (Jn 14:1-6)

When Jesus says, "I am the way," he means it literally. "Look at me. Look at my life. This is the way you are to live if you seek truth and life." It's not some vague expression of faith in his divinity or following a set of rules. *"In the last analysis faith is not a way of speaking or a way of thinking; it is a way of living...To acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and Savior is only meaningful in so far as we try to live as he lived and to order our lives according to his values... He himself did not regard the truth as something we simply 'uphold' and 'maintain,' but as something we choose to live and experience....We can refer to traditional authorities and theological arguments, but what we believe can only be made true, and be seen to be true, in the concrete results which faith achieves in the world."* (from *Jesus Before Christianity*, by Albert Nolan, O.P.)

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**Apr 28:** *Jesus said, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip?"* (Jn 14: 7-14)

How well do you know Jesus? I am reminded of the words spoken by Job to God: *"By hearsay, I had heard of you, but now my eye has seen you."* (42: 5) There are still lots of people who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus, who don't know really know him. The book referenced yesterday can help you to learn more, but to know Jesus, we must spend time being vulnerable with him. Today's a good day to get started!