

MARK 6:30-34

The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. Then he said to them, 'You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But people saw them going, and many could guess where; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length.

COMMENTARY: To be without a genuine shepherd leaves people floundering and open to attack.

In one very real sense all the baptised should think of themselves as shepherds: parents to their children; teachers; carers of others in any form.

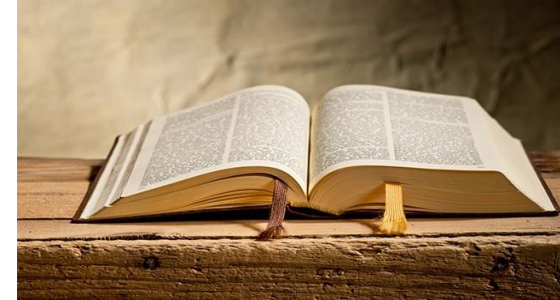
Psalm 23 on the cover makes for a wonderful prayer. It will almost always move us when prayed from the heart.

God/Jesus ultimately is our genuine shepherd. What image comes to mind when you find yourself praying psalm 23 or singing it in Church?

Liturgy of The Word

21.7.24

16th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit.

He guides me along the right path; he is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness
no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your staff;
with these you give me comfort.

You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing.

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever.

JEREMIAH 23:1-6

‘Doom for the shepherds who allow the flock of my pasture to be destroyed and scattered – it is the Lord who speaks! This, therefore, is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says about the shepherds in charge of my people: You have let my flock be scattered and go wandering and have not taken care of them.

Right, I will take care of you for your misdeeds – it is the Lord who speaks! But the remnant of my flock I myself will gather from all the countries where I have dispersed them, and will bring them back to their pastures: they shall be fruitful and increase in numbers. I will raise up shepherds to look after them and pasture them; no fear, no terror for them anymore; not one shall be lost – it is the Lord who speaks!

‘See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when I will raise a virtuous Branch for David, who will reign as true king and be wise, practising honesty and integrity in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel dwell in confidence. And this is the name he will be called: The-Lord-our-integrity.’

COMMENTARY: Jeremiah uses a common occupation as a metaphor for the leaders of God’s people. Shepherds were among the poor and lowly in society, but the image is also used for Kings. It is the kings, especially in the kingdom of Judah (the southern region of Israel) referred to here. They were meant to protect the people and to ensure they were treated justly. Forgetting about justice is at the core of Jeremiah’s condemnation.

One needs to read the entire book to understand, but what we can easily see is how powerful people use their position for self-gain.

The Church exists to teach the importance of Justice and to lead by example.

EPHESIANS 2:13-18

In Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far apart from us have been brought very close, by the blood of Christ. For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, actually destroying in his own person the hostility caused by the rules and decrees of the Law. This was to create one single New Man in himself out of the two of them and by restoring peace through the cross, to unite them both in a single Body and reconcile them with God: in his own person he killed the hostility. Later he came to bring the good news of peace, peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near at hand. Through him, both of us have in the one Spirit our way to come to the Father.

COMMENTARY: Understanding the first sentence leads us into the great mystery of unity. This verse refers to the fact that before the sacrifice of Jesus, Gentiles (non-Jews) were considered outsiders to the Jewish faith and were not able to participate fully in the religious life of the Jews. However, through the sacrifice of Jesus, Gentiles are now able to draw near to God and are no longer considered outsiders. In other words, the Christian faith is open to all. Jesus is emphasising the fact that all of humanity can consider themselves to be Children of God. We are brothers and sisters because of Christ.