

Our Sunday Readings

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 4:8-12
 PSALM 118:1,8-9,21-23,26,28-29
 1 JOHN 3:1-2
 JOHN 10:11-18

True Leaders

ACTS 4:8-12

Reading closely

1. Who in this passage has power?
2. Why is Peter being questioned?
3. What all might be running through Peter's mind as he speaks?
4. What all might be running through the minds of Peter's adversaries?
5. What part of Peter's proclamation most captures your attention?

Living the word

6. What would you most want to proclaim about Jesus?
7. Were you ever surprised by your courage?
8. What courageous action could you take in your life right now?

THE FIRST READING

From Judaism to Christianity

In writing about the early church, Luke must also tell the story of how Jesus and his followers became separated from Judaism. As the apostles continue the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus, they encounter greater and greater hostility from the Jewish leadership. Eventually a new religion, Christianity, emerges.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Those who tried and executed Jesus have arrested two of his disciples, Peter and John, for proclaiming that Jesus is risen. Although Peter and John fled and hid themselves during Jesus' passion, now they speak with remarkable boldness. The *cripple* is a man Peter healed (3:1f).

The disciples' power to heal and their boldness of speech indicates that Jesus truly is risen and has empowered his disciples. His Spirit gives his followers the courage and wisdom to speak despite the danger.

The cornerstone

By acting as witnesses to the risen Jesus, the apostles show that they are the true leaders of God's people. The Jewish leadership, by contrast, rejected Jesus, whom God made foundational for salvation.

Peter quotes Psalm 118:22, a passage that pops up in other New Testament writings. Jesus is like a stone at the corner of a building. Such stones were essential to the stability of the whole structure. Peter and the other apostles built on this foundation.

JOHN 10:11-18

Reading closely

1. What motivates the good shepherd?
2. What motivates the hired man?
3. What motivates the wolf?
4. What all could *catching* and *scattering* the sheep mean?
5. How does Jesus *know* people?
6. How do people *know* Jesus?
7. How will Jesus lead his sheep?
8. Why does Jesus give his life for the sheep?
9. What is the relationship between Jesus and his Father?
10. How might people have reacted to Jesus' words?

Living the word

11. How has Jesus shepherded you?
12. Have you ever been led astray or attacked by wolves?
13. Can wolves and hired men become part of the flock?
14. How do you listen for Jesus' voice?
15. Most of us don't know what it's like to herd sheep. If Jesus were speaking today, what metaphors might he use?

THE GOSPEL READING

Hired men and wolves

In John 9 Jesus cured a man of blindness. The cure led to controversy over Jesus' identity. This passage is part of Jesus' response to accusations leveled against him.

Jesus compares the Jewish leaders to hired men and wolves who abandon or attack the sheep (the Jewish people). By publicly rejecting God's Son, they're leading – even snatching – people away from eternal life.

I know mine and mine know me

Jesus uses the word *know* to mean both *have knowledge of* and *to love*. Jesus says he has a deep and intimate bond with those who accept him as God's Son. Because Jesus knows and is known by his Father, those who know Jesus are also known and deeply loved by the Father.

GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY

The Fourth Sunday of Easter always features a Gospel passage in which Jesus refers to those who believe in him as his *sheep*. He speaks of loving and giving his life for them. This day is thus known as *Good Shepherd Sunday*.

Good Shepherd Sunday was originally the Second Sunday of Easter. It was moved to make room for stories in which the risen Jesus appears to his disciples. These stories connect more closely to Jesus' resurrection.

They will hear my voice

It's not clear who exactly *the other sheep* are. Jesus could be referring to Gentiles who will come to believe in him later. Most likely Jesus isn't referring to any particular group of people but to how the flock will grow.

The flock grows because people hear Jesus' *voice*. John's Gospel begins by presenting Jesus as God's living Word. All who seek truth will hear it in the words (and works) of Jesus and will become part of his flock.

The powerfully obedient Son

Although John portrays Jesus as being completely in control, especially of his suffering and death, Jesus doesn't act independently of his Father. John is careful to show that Jesus acts in perfect unity with God. His actions flow from his complete obedience to the Father he loves.

PRAYER

adapted from St Gregory of Nyssa

O good Shepherd,
it is but one sheep,
this entire human race,
whom you lift onto your shoulders.
Show me where there are green pastures.
Let me know restful waters.
Lead me out to nourishing grass and
call me by name so that I can hear your voice.
Through that voice calling me, give me eternal life.
Amen.