

Sermon
Deacon Debra Vela
"Our Good Shepherd"
Jeremiah 23:1-6
Psalm 23
Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

The readings today speak to "Our Good Shepherd" to God and to Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Psalm 23 is loved by all as "The Lord is my Shepherd." It is read in our grief at the loss of loved ones. It is read in our own time of trouble, end of life, in our time of great need.

The Psalm declares that with our Shepherd:

1. We will need for nothing.
2. He makes us lie down in green pastures.
3. He Leads us beside still waters.
4. He revives our souls.
5. He guides along the right pathways for His namesake.
6. Even though we walk in the shadow of death, we do not fear for He is with us.
7. His rod and His staff, they comfort us.
8. He spreads a table before us.
9. He anoints our head with oil and our cup is running over.

What a wonderful Shepherd we have in God for He cares and loves us as the Good Shepherd loves His sheep.

In the Gospel today, Jesus saw a great crowd and had compassion for them. Jesus said, "they were like sheep without a Shepherd."

Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd." He said he was not like a "hired hand" who does not care for the sheep, runs when the wolf comes to devour the sheep. He said, He is the Good Shepherd, loving, protecting, caring for His sheep. And, Jesus says His sheep "Hear His voice."

In the reading of Jeremiah the Good Shepherd sends woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of His pasture. He said he would punish the shepherds who have scattered the flock and not attend the flock.

Who is this Good Shepherd? In the Gospel today, when Jesus got out of the boat, and the people recognized him, they rushed into the region and brought the sick on mats and wherever he went, in the land and in the marketplaces, the people would beg him that they might just touch the fringe of his cloak and all who touched it were healed.

In a time of desperation, the people knew where to go for comfort, for healing, for the love of God. The Good Shepherd in the Gospel is also our Good Shepherd.

Jesus said, my sheep hear my voice. Who is Jesus to us, do we hear His voice. Is He our Good Shepherd? Do we know Jesus, our wonderful, caring Lord. Are we in a true relationship with this wonderful caring Shepherd? Can we hear His voice?

There is a story of “bummer lambs.” Sometimes a ewe will give birth to a lamb and reject it. She will never take back the lamb. These little lambs hang their heads so low that it looks like something is wrong with their necks. Their spirit is broken. These lambs are called “bummer lambs.”

Unless the shepherd intervenes, the little lamb will die, rejected and alone. So a good shepherd takes that little lamb home, hand feeds it and keeps it warm by the fire. He wraps the lamb with blankets and holds it to his chest so that lamb can hear the shepherd’s heartbeat.

Once the lamb is strong enough, the shepherd will return it to the flock. The lamb never forgets the care of the shepherd. So, when the shepherd calls for the flock, the “bummer lamb” is first to run to the shepherd. The lamb knows the shepherd's voice intimately.

So many of us are bummer lambs, rejected and broken. But He is the Good Shepherd. He cares for our every need and holds us close to His heart so we can hear His heartbeat. We may be broken but we are loved by the Shepherd.

Psalms 23 gives so many caring qualities of our Good Shepherd. My prayer for us today is that we may know our Good Shepherd, we may hear His voice and continue to grow into a relationship with Him. Do you know the Good Shepherd? Can you hear His voice?