

John 10:22-30 Good Shepherd Sunday/Mother's Day  
May 12, 2019

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Happy Easter!

Today is the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter. Today we continue our celebration of the resurrection, but now things are starting to take a turn. As the season of Easter starts to wind down, we are beginning to look forward, to the Ascension, when Jesus will be bodily assumed into heaven.

For 40 days, Jesus walked with his disciples resurrected from the dead. During those 40 days, he forgave them, comforted them, loved them, and reiterated to them what their ministry was to be once he permanently left them to return to heaven.

During those 40 days, Jesus again told them that they are his body in the world, that they would continue his work in their own flesh with the gift of the Holy Spirit, which was given on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the Resurrection according to Acts.

With the Holy Spirit, disciples are the body of Christ, which means we are lambs, who like Jesus give of ourselves for the good of others. And as lambs, we are not by ourselves, but are being led by our shepherd.

Jesus is the Lamb of God, killed for the salvation of the world. We are the body of Christ, Jesus resurrected for the good of the world. And God is our shepherd leading us to the living stream of water, which pours out from the Baptismal font.

Remember, Easter is a baptismal celebration. During the Easter Season we celebrate that in the waters of baptism, we are united with Jesus in his death and resurrection.

So, it's all very circular. God loves us. God sends us out to be Christ in the world. And we return to God so that we are strengthened to go back out and do God's work in the world.

And, we never go out into the world on our own. We are shepherded by the lamb who calls us into life, and then sends us to share that life with others.

In the second reading that we have for today, we hear about Peter and Tabitha, aka Dorcas. Tabitha and Dorcas both mean gazelle. Tabitha in Aramaic and Dorcas in Greek.

With a name like gazelle, we can imagine a young woman full of energy.

In Acts, we hear about how dedicated she was to God and God's work in the world. She made high quality tunics and other clothing for the poor. Beautiful clothing for those who were in need, just like Jesus was in total need on the cross and in the grave. Others had to take care of him.

Through the gift of sewing, Dorcas was able to give life to those who were dead in poverty. Because, without clothing, you cannot farm or work in order to live. And, without clothing, you cannot be of benefit to others. So Tabitha, aka Dorcas, used her gift to bring life to a hurting world.

She gave beautiful and sturdy garments to those in need. They were her first fruits. She didn't give the poor old rags or last year's fashions that were worn and torn. No – she gave them new beautiful clothing. Much like the beautiful new clothing we receive in baptism.

In baptism, we are clothed with Christ, Jesus resurrected from the dead. And clothed in Christ, we do his work in the world. He is resurrected in us to bring life to the world.

Luther was once asked, "How does a Christian shoe maker serve Christ?" The answer is not by putting little crosses on each of the shoes. A Christian shoe maker serves Christ by making the best shoes possible and then selling them for a fair price or giving them to those in need to the glory of God.

God gifts us so that we can gift others.

Dorcas, aka Tabitha, made beautiful high quality clothing and she gave it to the poor for free. It was life giving, and so when she died, the sisters were beside themselves with grief – such an amazing gift to the world had been lost.

And then Peter is called to the scene. Does this remind you of anything that happened with Jesus? Lazarus perhaps?

You may recall the story of Lazarus in chapter 11 of John.

In that story, Jesus' good friend Lazarus has died.

Four days later Jesus shows up on the scene and his sisters, Mary and Martha, are distraught. Even Jesus himself weeps. And then, Jesus calls Lazarus out of the tomb. “Lazarus come out!” And he does, Jesus brings Lazarus back to life.

In Acts, Peter continues in Jesus’ footsteps. Just as Jesus brought Lazarus back to life, so Peter brings Tabitha, aka Dorcas, back to life, and we can imagine the beautiful gazelle once again full of life.

What Jesus has done, he sends his disciples to do.

Jesus’ disciples are to bring life to the world. Jesus’ disciples, his sheep, hear his voice and then follow him out into the world to bring life to the world. Life through forgiveness, comfort, encouragement, love, and the gifts we ourselves have been given.

There is a fancy Church word called discernment. Does anyone know what that means?

Discernment basically means to be still and listen for the shepherd’s voice.

If we are still and just listen, Jesus will call us to him and send us where he needs us to go. If we stop and listen, Jesus will tell us where to go and how to bring life into that situation.

Sometimes it is very easy to hear Jesus’ voice, and at other times there is so much noise that it is difficult to hear him. In those times, we need to be still and silent until we can hear Jesus’ voice. After all, we know Jesus’ voice. When we hear it, we know it. It is the voice of unconditional love.

So, if we are not hearing the voice of the one who died for us to proclaim God’s love to us, and for us and the world, then we need to remove the obstacles that prevent us from hearing that message of love. We need some noise canceling headphones.

And actually, we do have them. We have noise of the world canceling headphones. They are worship. They are Holy Communion. They are the Scriptures. They are the fellowship of believers. They are the gifts of the Church, which are the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

When we sit still and discern, that is listen for Jesus’ voice, God will tell us how to use our gifts and passions in the world.

God will lead us into that peaceful place where what we love to do is a gift of peace for World, and I'm not talking about the entire planet. I'm talking about our little part of the world in which we have influence.

Dorcas loved to make beautiful clothing, so she served God by taking care of the poor in Joppa.

What do you love to do? What is your passion? What gives you joy, both to do and to give away? That's where Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is calling you out into the world. That's where the still waters are.

You are Jesus' sheep and you know his voice – it's the voice of life, which is the voice of love – and he is calling us out into the world for the sake of the world.

God is all about life – for everyone.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Amen.