

Sunday 1st May 2022 - Good Shepherd Sunday
David Coster

Scripture: Ezekiel 34: 11-16

Reflection:

For the disciples the experience of being lost and scattered on Good Friday was all too real. In our reading from the Prophet Ezekiel this experience of the disciples is reflected as God says, "Behold I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out."

Why is God having to search for God's sheep? God has to search simply because the Kings of Israel (God's shepherds) had misused and abused their power and instead of caring for their people as God asked that they do, and the people had fled. The Kings thought more about their own wealth, power and prestige than they did about the welfare of their people.

Psalm 23 also picks up this dis-ease which lies at the heart of our humanity. The Psalm says, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want" but the problem is that we do "want" and discontent seems to be built into our DNA and fed by political power and commercialisation of our society.

In a cemetery a Grave Stone had the Inscription, "She died for want of things." And just alongside it was another Inscription, "He died trying to give them to her."

When we lose sight of what it is to care for each other, then we lose sight of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom values.

Scripture: Isaiah 53: 1-9

Reflection

The reading we have just heard is the fourth of the Suffering Servant songs in Isaiah. The Church has from very early in its life seen these Songs as referring prophetically to Jesus.

Saint Óscar Romero (15 August 1917 – 24 March 1980) was a prelate of the Catholic Church in El Salvador. He served as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, the Titular Bishop of Tambeae, as Bishop of Santiago de María, and finally as the fourth Archbishop of San Salvador. As archbishop, Romero spoke out against social injustice and violence amid the escalating conflict between the military government and left-wing insurgents that led to the Salvadoran Civil War. In 1980, Archbishop Romero was shot by an assassin while celebrating Mass. Though no one was ever convicted for the crime, investigations by the UN-created Truth Commission for El Salvador concluded that Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, founder of the right-wing Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) political party, had ordered the killing.

In 1997, Pope John Paul II bestowed upon Romero the title of Servant of God,. During Romero's beatification, Pope Francis declared that his "ministry was distinguished by his particular attention to the most poor and marginalized."^[6] Pope Francis canonized Romero on 14 October 2018.

In The Scandal of Redemption Oscar Romero wrote: -

Our Shepherd

He is Messiah and Lord,
kyrios, emperor and king,
not with vain and grandiose triumphalism but with a divine royalty
that makes him all-powerful,
that makes him present in his church,
that makes him the architect of history,
that makes him the cornerstone of all human movements,
and that makes him the compass that guides all of history toward its true destiny.
He is the Lord of history,
the Lord of ages,
the Lord of eternity.

He is the key which
encompasses past, present, and future. "Christ forever," says Saint Paul.

Christ is the Lord.

Christ lives.

Christ has risen, and death no longer has dominion over him.

But this Christ presents himself as the Good Shepherd.

What a marvellous thing,

to consider that this powerful king, this man who bears the marks of all his suffering now
made into glorious stars, is now our great liberator and our great shepherd!

Scripture: John 10: 11-18:

Reflection

In the Revelation of John we have a scene where the veil is drawn aside and John is given a picture of the multinational community that is the people of God: a cosmopolitan, cross-cultural, diverse gathering. In this vision, all of these people are united in their praise of Jesus. The angels, elders and living creatures also join in, falling on their faces and worshipping God. For the life of heaven is a continuous joyful oration, and earthly choirs and orchestras are rehearsing for the final destiny of the soul and of humankind.

Jesus recognises full well that some people will never believe him – no matter how much evidence is put before them.

But to those who hear his voice, recognise it and follow Jesus he promises that they will be part of the heavenly choir mentioned in the Revelation of John. To them Jesus promises eternal life.

What a wonderful promise that is! Jesus is promising us that if we are genuinely His sheep, then nothing can change that fact. If we are His followers, we will inherit eternal life. To put it another way, God is holding on to us, and won't let go. This is a tremendous promise that should encourage us when we fail. We cannot mess up so badly that we are lost to God, because we are not holding on to God – God is holding on to us. The Good Shepherd always has us in his care.