

Written Copy: Revelation 7:13-17 “You are Jesus’ Little Lamb”

The 4th Sunday of Easter

Sunday, May 8th, 2022

Text: Revelation 7:13-17

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. ¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Exegetical Statement (the text’s context)

After the vision of the Church (all those called to believe in Christ) have been sealed in their faith through baptism John sees what they have been sealed for, to stand before the throne of God and the Lamb in eternal life. How many were sealed? A great crowd that is beyond counting from every people, nation, ethnic group, and language, and from throughout the course of human history. They celebrate the final victory, the fulfillment of Palm Sunday when Christ returns in all His glory and victory as the King of the Universe. These standing before Him have all come out of the times of temptation, suffering, and persecution that falls upon God’s people of all time. But they stand before Him not soiled by sin, but in the white robes they received in their baptisms, that have been washed clean of the stains of sin by the blood of the Lamb. This is the blood that flowed from the cross, the blood that paid the debt of sin that I owe and all people owed. That blood of sacrifice is the reason I now stand before my Savior perfected in body and soul. And it is in His presence I will live out my eternity, worshipping and serving Him with all I say and do. The Lamb is the Good Shepherd who has guided me through that tribulation on earth to the spring of the water of eternal life. He has guided me to that perfect eternal pasture where I will no more hunger or thirst for anything. And none of the things that caused me physical, emotional, or spiritual pain will ever strike me again. I will live forever in His real presence, and He will wipe from my eyes every single tear.

Focus Statement:

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the One who has called us to be His Sheep and in baptism has put His mark of ownership upon us. He provides peaceful pastures now and is with us even when those pastures turn into dark valleys. He protects us from all that would try to steal us away from Him. He washes us clean when we stray into sinfulness. He is at work leading and guiding us by His Word. He refreshes us with His Sacramental Meal. He shepherds us through this life so that we will stand before His throne, totally cleansed of sin, with no more wants or needs, all suffering and tears are done, to live with Him constantly worshipping and honoring Him with all we say and do.

Function Statement:

Why it’s important to know:

As we live in a world afflicted by all the things that God has declared must fall upon all people, we look for someone to lead us into a better time. We look for someone to guide us away from the dark valleys, instead of looking to the One who promises to lead us through them.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Keep listening to the voice of our Good Shepherd and live in His presence now, looking forward to the blessings of eternal life to come.

Introduction: Protected In The Arms Of Mom

There was a little boy who was called up front to solve a math problem. The teacher asked him, "How many are in your family?" He answered, "My mom and dad, and my sister and brother." The teacher said, "OK. There are 5 of you. Now, let's say that you have a pie with 6 pieces. There are 5 in your family and each one of you takes one piece, so you only have one piece left. Now you don't want anyone to fight over that last piece, so what can you do? Well, you could divide that last piece up so that everyone gets some. Now tell me how you would divide that last piece up using a fraction?" The little boy said, "Each one of us gets $1/4^{\text{th}}$ of it." The teacher said, "No, it would be each one gets $1/5^{\text{th}}$ because there are 5 in your family. Then everyone would get one more piece." The little boy said, "Not in my family, teacher. It would be divided four ways. This happens all of the time in my family because when my mother divides up the piece of pie, she never takes any herself."

There is just something special about Mom, isn't there? She's the universal symbol of love, comfort, protection. She's the one as a child you would turn to when you fell and scraped your knee, when your feelings got hurt, when you were afraid, when you just needed some comfort, love, and assurance. You turned to Dad for protection and assurance that the scary stuff in the world would never harm you. You turned to him when something broke and you needed it fixed. But when you needed comfort and love, you turned to Mom. And how many times did she show that love sacrificially? How many times when you forget that you were supposed to bring the snack to class, and you remembered the night before, and she stopped what she was doing to whip something up. How many times did she make that last minute repair on the clothes you really want to wear for a date? How many times when you were sick did she stay up to take care of you?

Some of you have your mothers and fathers still living, and if you do take time out to celebrate both Mothers and Father's Day with them, because they won't always be there. For those of us whose parents are no longer living, both Mother's and Father's Day can be hard as we miss them afresh. And those who still have their mothers and fathers living find that the roles are progressively changing as they increasingly must take on the role of caregiver and nurturer, and their parents increasingly have the needs that you once had as their children. This can be hard in many ways too.

Today, the 4th Sunday of Easter, is also known as Good Shepherd Sunday, where we meditate upon the loving and caring role that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has taken on for you and for me. And as he functions as our Good Shepherd, we can see Him fulfilling the roles of both our mothers and fathers and doing it in ways that they never could. No matter how old you are, you are “Jesus Little Lamb”, and you will remain that until your days are done upon this earth. Especially in these days which are turning increasingly evil, when the worries of what is going on in the world: the war in the Ukraine and what the future might hold, rising prices for gas and food, continuing health worries, and the pressure of caring for loved ones, as well as our sorrow over those who have departed. But as you face the overwhelming problems of this world, don’t forget you do so as little lambs who are under your Good Shepherd’s care every day.

Jesus As Our Good Shepherd Now

Psalm 23:1-3 ¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

David wrote this Psalm to describe how the LORD had worked in His life to love and care for Him like just as he had once cared for his sheep as their shepherd. Our parents cared for us the same way because they were being the hands and feet of our LORD, the Good Shepherd in our lives. Through them He was loving and caring for you. All your needs as well as many of your wants were provided by His loving hand through them. He provided the green pasture that was the home and life you enjoyed. And when they brought you to be baptized, and continued to bring you to Church, they were His means to restore your soul. Your LORD is still at work as the source of your physical and spiritual health. It is from His Word and Sacraments that you are being restored both body and soul. It is through His means of grace that you are being led in paths of righteousness: instructed and led to live in ways that keep you in right standing with God.

And why does He do all this? Because out of the greatest love you can ever know Jesus called you to be His own precious little lamb and made you so in your baptism. He gave you the gift of faith that witnesses in your heart that you indeed are His precious little lamb. And He continues to strengthen you to live out that faith you so that you bring glory to Him as you show yourself to be His precious little lamb in word and deed, testifying that your Lord Jesus Christ is your Good Shepherd.

Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

But things are not always perfect, are they? Last Sunday we read about what it means that our Good Shepherd ascended to the right hand of the Father. He is the one who took from the hand of the Father the scroll that lists all that must happen before He returns on the Last Day. The Father has declared that there must be difficult times, times of war and famine, suffering and affliction, times of natural disaster, times of plague and sickness. And because of our sin, each one of us must face the day of our death. These are the dark valleys of life, the valleys of the shadow of death. But when Jesus Christ our Lord is our Good Shepherd, we never walk through these valleys alone. Our Good Shepherd is not only the One presiding over all that must happen according to the Father's, but He is also the One who is personally walking with us through every dark valley of fear, trouble, and woe. He is the Good Shepherd who stands beside you, His precious little lamb, to protect you from being overwhelmed and becoming lost, from falling away. The evil in the world, including the devil and his demons are real. But our Good Shepherd is more than a match for them. His rod is the protective power of the Holy Spirit given to you in your baptism, the Spirit that came upon you and promises never to depart. His staff is His Word that leads and guides you. It corrects you. It reaches out to you through the law and stops you when you are tempted to head down the wrong path, and with His loving Gospel the Good Shepherd guides you back. He will always be with you, to lead you through all the dark valleys and even to that final valley of the shadow of death, where Your Good Shepherd guides your soul to join Him at His side. And then will guide you to that perfect pasture to come.

What Jesus Our Good Shepherd Is Leading You To

Revelation 7:9-10 ⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

And what is that final pasture that our Good Shepherd is leading us to? John shows us in the vision from our 2nd Reading. He shows us The Last Day, which is the beginning of Life Everlasting. The Apostle John is giving us a symbolic glimpse of that life that is yet to come. We see the countless multitude who have been raised from death and given a new and perfect life, a body and soul that is clean from the stain of sin, completely clean like a white robe. What we are seeing is the fulfillment of our Palm Sunday worship. On Palm Sunday the people welcomed their King who rode in to be the Lamb of Sacrifice. Now He has returned on the Last Day in all His glory to rule as the exalted King that He truly always was. And this multitude is engaged in heartfelt worship as they never have been able to give before on earth, giving to Him the praise and worship He deserves for being that Lamb of Sacrifice who is also their King.

Revelation 7:13-15 ¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

John needs help figuring out who exactly makes up this multitude that no one can count. One of the elders that stand before the throne, and you may remember from last week there are 24 of them, which symbolize the Church of all time that is always present before throne of God, gives to John the answer. These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation. These are Jesus little lambs who He has guided through all the dark valleys of death that are part of our fallen world. This is the Church that our Good Shepherd has led and guided in order to bring them to this final destination, eternal life.

You are among that crowd. You are among those who He has kept in faith. In baptism you were born again and given a new life of faith in your Good Shepherd, and that new life is symbolized by that white robe. Throughout your wanderings in this world you disobeyed your Good Shepherd. You wandered off into sin, you soiled that robe so badly that nothing you could do would ever make it clean again. But you have the cleansing power of your baptism. Your faith makes the blood of the Lamb of Sacrifice which He shed on the cross the cleansing agent that washes away all of your sin. And as you live out your baptism through Confession and Absolution your sin continues to be washed away. As quickly as you soil that robe, Jesus' blood washes it clean again and again. In this way your Good Shepherd continues to provide what you need the most.

And now you are there standing before Him on that Last Day. Your days of sinning are over. You have been raised up from death to live forever with a perfectly sinless body and soul. And with that perfect body and soul you get to live out your eternal existence always in the presence of your Good Shepherd. No matter where you are on the new heaven and earth you are in His real presence. Everything you do is a service of love and worship to Him. Serving Him will never be a chore, because just as it was with Adam and Eve in the garden, every task preformed will be done in perfect love and obedience toward God the Father and the Lamb ruling on the throne. And it will all be a joy because you will live forever in perfect unity and love toward your fellow little lambs among with whom you will share this eternity with.

Revelation 7:16-17 ¹⁶ **They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.** ¹⁷ **For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."**

This is the glorious future your Good Shepherd is right now leading and guiding you to. It is a glorious reality that is beyond our imagining. You will never again have times when you hunger or thirst, either for temporal physical things, emotional things, or spiritual things. All of the things that caused you pain and discomfort will never again afflict you. The heartache and pain of death, be it yours or your loved ones, your mother and father, your spouse, your brothers and sisters, your children and grandchildren, this pain will be gone forever as our Good Shepherd constantly supplies you with the springs of living water-the water of everlasting life. And all the times of tears and sorrows of this life will not be remembered. God Himself will wipe away every tear from your eye.

Conclusion

God provided us with parents that were His hands and feet to care for us as His precious little lambs as we grew up. And we remain His precious little lambs. As our sermon hymn says: "I am Jesus' little lamb, ever glad at heart that I am." For my Good Shepherd Jesus' Christ gently guides me, guiding me through all the troubles, temptations, and dark valleys that this world is full of. "He knows my needs and well provides me", not with all I want, but with what I truly need. "Loves me every day the same. Even calls me by my name". Your Good Shepherd knows you personally by my name. No matter where you go or what you do your Good Shepherd remains with you, gently reproving and correcting you, guiding you away from those paths that would otherwise lead to your destruction, and back on the path that leads to the eternal bliss He died and rose again to give you. "And when your short life is ended. By His angel host attended. He shall fold you to His breast". And there within His arms, in His eternal presence, You and I will find eternal joy and rest. "We are Jesus' little lamb". And He is shepherding us through this world so that we can enjoy the pleasures of the eternal pasture to come. Amen.