



*Union with God
is the only heaven there is—
and it begins here on earth.*

—Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB

(d. 26 April, 2020)

GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY **3 May 2020**

Invitation to Prayer — Psalm 23

You are my shepherd,
I shall want for nothing;
You bring me to green paddocks for rest
and lead me beside still waters that renew my spirit.

Gathering Prayer

Shepherd of our souls and of our very lives:
awaken us to the light of your love
and raise us fully into your presence.
In our rest and our restlessness,
you have kept us safe through the night
and you open before us this new day
in which we might search for you
and love you.
Send your Spirit to us, we pray,
and illumine your dwelling place
within and among us.
For our hearts long to be one with you
now and forever.
Amen.

Scripture Reading — John 10:1–10

Introduction

In the chapter prior to today's reading, the Gospel tells of a man blind from birth who receives sight from Jesus. This healing causes no small amount of uproar within the village, ending with the man being driven out from the synagogue. What might be going on here?

In John's Gospel, blindness is a spiritual state. It represents one's inability to perceive Jesus as he reveals a God who is entirely love. According to John, this is a congenital disability—we are all born spiritually blind. But through Christ, we receive sight and can see the Presence of Love everywhere.

The story in John 9, then, is slightly contentious. It speaks into the painful divisions between Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah and those who didn't that erupted in the evangelist's time. It identified the reality of many in the beloved community—that is, they were being driven away from their familiar places of worship and its practices. The ability to maintain belief was increasingly difficult and the Gospel hopes to embolden the hearts of the beloved, encouraging them and us to remain faithful in uncertain and challenging times.

John 9, then, paints a picture of the way things are. In response, today's reading offers the comforting image of a shepherd who leads the sheep into pastures of abundant life. Here are two options for how you might savour this reading:

Option 1 — *Read the passage slowly three times. The first time read it for familiarity. The second time, read and notice or underline the word or few words that resonate for you right now. Hold one of these words in prayer for several moments, inviting the Spirit to speak to you through it. Read the passage a final time.*

Option 2 — *Read the passage one sentence at a time as you walk slowly, mindfully through your neighbourhood, garden, or along the beach. You might paraphrase each sentence in your mind as you meander. How does your journey illumine or speak into and out of what you are hearing in the Gospel?*

Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers."

Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

Going Deeper

Choose the gate/door image below that best reflects your journey with God at this time. Don't over think it! The image to which we're drawn is often the "right" one for us. Spend several minutes getting to know the image, noticing details, taking in the shapes, lighting and mood.

- What, if anything, is the Spirit revealing to you through this image?
- What would you like to say to God about what has been revealed in this time?



Reflections in Solitude

You might read the reflection here or spend time in meditation or quiet reflection.

Prayers of Intercession

*“True solitude is deeply aware of the world’s needs.
It does not hold the world at arm’s length.” —Thomas Merton*

Source of Life, you who send rain on the just and the unjust, we are grateful for the countless ways you uphold creation. Thank you for the rising of the sun and its setting, for the air we breathe, the rhythms and seasons of Earth that provides us with all we need and more. In these days of necessary refrain, we are especially aware of the sustaining power of relationships, the joy that comes from friendly exchange, the healing potential in a loving touch. In the silence, we become aware of the gifts for which we are grateful...

We pray for those who are going through a dark valley at this time—those who are worried for the future, those who are burdened with responsibility, those who are downtrodden, in transition or depressed...

We pray for those who are experiencing difficulty as a result of the pandemic—those who are ill, those who are grieving and lonely, those who are living in strained or violent situations, those whose sense of identity or spirits are flattened for lack of activity and connection...

Finally, we pray for our world and the news that weighs heavy on our hearts...

Disciples’ Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

Blessing

In touch once again with the deep love that surrounds and keeps us,
may we be assured that goodness and mercy will follow us all our days
for wherever we are, there a Great Goodness dwells with us.

The love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ and the communion of the Spirit be with us all.