

John 10:11-18
The Fourth Sunday of Easter (B)
Good Shepherd Sunday
May 3, 2009
The Good Shepherd

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

In the name of the Good Shepherd, Jesus. Amen.

We hear it all the time. Even when we don't mean it we still say it. *I don't care*. It is a common part of our everyday lives. Even those who say is it, desire to have some one care for them. What do we desire? We desire companionship, love, time, and most especially care.

Even for those who say they do care. And they may, yet they struggle with showing love and care for those they are responsible for. The government promises care for those in financial distress and many people continue to lose homes and jobs. Husbands and wives promise to love and honor each other in their wedding vows. But after awhile they begin to bicker, argue, and not care about their spouse. Those who are supposed to care for children or have children of their own find themselves mad or upset with their children and begin to not care and abuse them. Even us clergy fall trap to this. At times other priorities overwhelm showing care to our members or our families. Sometimes our cares are placed in the wrong place: We don't care when our favorite team's game goes into extra innings, but we sure seem to care a lot when the service is ten or even five minutes too long. (Are our cares misplaced in this area of our lives?)

Care is an essential part of our lives. We need physical care, for our bodies are ravaged by sin, and we need those to care for us physically. Emotionally we need care as we struggle with the ups and downs of our daily lives. Even spiritually we need care. Care for our souls and for our faith in Christ.

There is one who cares! Who cares completely and always. Who never says, I don't care. Who never lets the distractions of life cause Him to throw up His hands and walk away. Christ, Jesus the Good Shepherd! Yet, what if Christ didn't care. What if our Lord said, I don't care about these people. If He had given in to the temptations of the Devil, if He had come down from the cross as the chief priests and the crowds taunted Him.

-We would have no place to lay our head.

-Rather than cool still waters we would struggle with raging rivers.

-Our souls would be destroyed.

-We would be left forever in the valley of the shadow of death. There would be no escape.

-Our enemies would eternally overtake us.

-Goodness and mercy? Try sinfulness and brutality, and eternal separation from God.

The Good Shepherd is not like that! He won't run off when the lions and wolves come to attack the sheep. He lays down His life so that the sheep may continue to live. The Good Shepherd keeps working and speaking until all are gathered together in one flock. The Good Shepherd is not just good because He is nice it is because He is perfect. Perfect as in the beginning. Perfect as things were when Adam and Eve first roamed the Garden of Eden before they fell into sin.

Jesus doesn't know, I don't care. It's not apart of who He is. His care for us is not only evident in the Word's that He speaks, but it is also evident in His action. His care for us is seen throughout history. We have His loving deeds that speak to us and open our eyes to His care.

He rescued His children from the bondage of Egypt.

Our Lord chastised them when they began to complain about the food and the drink in the wilderness.

He gave them the promised land that flowed with milk and honey.

God used kings and kingdoms of the pagans to remind His children that He was their Lord over and over again in Judges.

God sent the nation of Babylon to enslave the Israelites and bring them to repentance.

He released them from their bondage and sent them back to their land.

Even those things that didn't seem pleasant at the time, the snakes in the wilderness, the time spent in exile, the punishment the Lord used on His people was all done out of care for them. We remember what the writer of Hebrews says: **All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.**

God made you His. He did the ultimate caring act, He laid down His life for you on the cross. Christ is that corpse who hung on that rugged tree. That place, that spot on the cross should be mine. It should be yours. It was for all of us. But the Good Shepherd, the sinless one, was attacked and devoured by the animals, died in our place. The Shepherd gave Himself up on the cross, though He didn't deserve it. His heavenly Father cared for Him, even as He abandoned Jesus on the cross, He raised Him from the dead!

Jesus has made us His Sheep! In the waters of Baptism He has made you His little lamb. He has brought you unto His fold. We have heard His voice and know that His promises are true. He has promised never to abandon you, to give you all the things that we need in this life and the life to come. We have been shepherded by the Good Shepherd. Made His sheep. He doesn't high tail it when things get rough. He cares. He remains with us, guiding, leading, shepherding, and retrieving.

And Psalm 23: These words are true because Christ lives and cares:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and loving-kindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

His work is not over, either. He continues to shepherd us even during these times. He guides us through the dark nights, the raging waters, and the parched lands with His Word. His Word which never fails. He feeds us over and over with the BEST FODDER possible. Life filled fodder! His own living body and blood that nourishes our bodies and souls. Though His hirelings come and go, the Shepherd who owns the sheep remains. His love for you never changes, just as His Sacraments never change. When you hear that word, I forgive you all your sins, they are forgiven for it is the shepherds Word.

In a world that doesn't seem to give a damn (can I say that in church?) the Good Shepherd does! You can be sure that the Good Shepherd died and rose for the forgiveness of YOUR sins. He cares for you continually, day and night. And maybe you don't want His caring Word and Fodder very often, maybe you think He cares too much, or that His care is like that of the world, fleeting or superficial. Yet the care of the Good Shepherd never runs out, it never becomes any less special, it never becomes like the empty care of the world. His care is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Thanks be to God that I don't care is not in our Lord's vocabulary.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.