



## FOURTH SUNDAY IN EASTER – SHEPHERD SUNDAY SUNDAY, MAY 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020

### Freedom: Resurrecting the Victims



**The Black Sheep**

During the Easter Season – a period of fifty days from Easter Sunday until Pentecost – the Christian Church focuses upon the theme of freedom. These last weeks the Gospel readings in particular have led us to think about freedom: first the *freedom to question* (as represented in the scepticism of the disciple Thomas the doubter, as he queried the truth of Jesus' resurrection); but also the freedom to move beyond mere empirical evidence – having to see and touch the wounds of Jesus – to the challenge interpreting what Jesus' resurrection meant. Second, last week, we discovered the *freedom to imagine* beyond the obvious, to look further ahead to the horizon (as the resurrected Jesus' invited the people on the road to Emmaus, to do, paralysed as they were in despair at his execution). In my verbal introduction on-line I referred to this freedom to imagine, as something that arises from the personal yearning for *our own* resurrection (Rahner: The Resurrection of Jesus)

Today, we move to another related theme: resurrection as resurrecting the victim.

## GATHERING

### Announcements

#### Greeting

Christ is risen!

Sing a new song!

Sing praise to our still-laughing Easter God;

***who has rolled away the limitations of yesterday.***

Immerse your anxiety and despair in the fountain of resurrection;  
for God takes ordinary things;

***and makes them extraordinary.***

#### We turn our eyes to the Paschal Candle

We light the candle knowing that our faith in Jesus

and what he represents

is sometimes strong,

***sometimes elusive,***

Easter is the season when we thoughtfully celebrate

***Christ breaking the bounds of death***

#### Hymn: Let us sing (TiS 52, Sing Hosanna, Richard Thomas Bewes)

#### A Prayer Confessing Our “Hubris” – Self Sufficiency

Freedom to question, and freedom to imagine are fundamental to modern life, but to do so requires a sense of responsibility and a capacity for nuance. One of the real challenges is what the Greeks referred to as *hubris* – what we today call arrogance or pride. How can we imagine and question, without developing an unrealistic, exaggerated view of ourselves, a loss of contact with reality, and perhaps even a sense of loneliness in the universe? Our prayer today arises from the image in the Gospel about sheep. The image, which we moderns see as unflattering, nevertheless, opens the door to a reality check about human vulnerability, and the need for a realistic sense of humility – despite our modern self-sufficiency. This prayer is an attempt to point to those many situations, where we as human beings still plead for God’s presence and compassion, when we are out of our depth. It takes the format of the Lord’s Prayer

O Lord our Shepherd,  
may your flock not want

in the refugee camps  
of Yarmouk, of Darfur, of Dadaab.

May life-giving pastures of nourishment be theirs  
in Sudan, in Niger, in Chad.

***May waters of peacefulness and healing flow  
in Somalia, in Syria, in the Ukraine.***

And may souls be restored in our own cities and towns  
where violence and hunger still live.

O Lord our Shepherd,  
death shadows the valleys  
and the houses and hills of the earth's many nations and states.

May the strength of your grace and  
the assurance of your love  
ever with us and ever embracing,  
bring comfort to the many grieving and alone.

***May there be a table of reconciliation prepared  
where enemies may sit down in peace***

and may the cup of joy overflow for those  
whose suffering has been their drink.

Let your goodness and mercy pursue us,  
O Shepherd, our Lord,  
and may all your people dwell  
in the unity of your love  
as long as life endures.

***Amen***

**The Peace**

Christ is risen!

***He is risen indeed!***

## **A Song based on Psalm 23: The Lord is my shepherd (TiS 659, My Shepherd, Brian Boniwell)**

### **The kids leave for Sunday Morning Group (SMG)...on-line**

#### **A Way into the Readings**

Everywhere and always, when human beings either cannot or dare not take their anger out on the thing that has caused it, they unconsciously search for substitutes, and more often than not they find them.

*René Girard, The One by Whom Scandal Comes*

There is nothing in the Gospels to suggest that God causes the mob to come together against Jesus. Violent contagion is enough. Those responsible for the Passion are the human participants themselves, incapable of resisting the violent contagion that affects them all. The war of all against all becomes the war of all against one – the victim, the scapegoat.

#### **BREAKING OPEN THE WORD**

##### **Acts 2:42-47 (J.B. Phillips New Testament)**

Luke paints us a picture of people who have received the Spirit and responded to Peter's preaching. It is an ideal scene. Yet we can believe that Luke was intent on depicting what he was convinced were the kind of things that happened at the movement's beginning. So, in one sense it is historical reconstruction. In another sense it asserts values which Luke sees as needing to inform church community life.

Luke's image of unity in 2:44 is probably both belief and ideal. Some Greek and Roman philosophers mused about such ideal communities and perhaps Luke is citing Christian beginnings as the true realisation of such hopes, to appeal to their followers. On the other hand, there were historical precedents for shared property. Some Essenes shared property, officially bound up with rigorous provisions about entry, to which surrender of property belonged. The closer analogy and probable background is the practice of the disciples who journeyed with Jesus, where allegedly Judas was responsible for managing the accounts. It is thus very probable that at least some Christians in Jerusalem did as Luke suggests.

<sup>41-42</sup> Then those who welcomed his message were baptised, and on that day alone about three thousand souls were added to the number of disciples. They continued steadily learning the teaching of the apostles, and joined in their fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayer.

<sup>43-47</sup> Everyone felt a deep sense of awe, while many miracles and signs took place through the apostles. All the believers shared everything in common; they sold their possessions and goods and divided the proceeds among the fellowship according to individual need. Day after day they met by common consent in the Temple; they broke bread together in their homes, sharing meals with simple joy. They praised God continually and all the people respected them. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were finding salvation.

### **Psalm 23 (New Revised Standard Version)**

The fourth Sunday in Easter is traditionally known as ‘Shepherd Sunday’ with Psalm 23 included in the set of readings. Psalm 23 is one of the best known and loved of the psalms. It is a resounding statement of faith in the God who behaves like a caring and gracious shepherd of the flock. Further, it is important to remember that when the Israelite kings were given authority as rulers they were also expected to be ‘shepherds’ of the people (cf. Ezekiel 34). This was one of the main metaphors for kingship right across the ancient Near East and it was applied to gods (as is the case in Psalm 23) as well as to human kings. The primary attribute of Yahweh as shepherd in Psalm 23 is that God wields power for the good of the people. God uses that to sustain, to guide and to protect. The King, to be a king in the genuine sense of the term, was to do likewise;

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup>***He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;***

<sup>3</sup>he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.

<sup>4</sup>***Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me.***

<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

<sup>6</sup>***Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.***

## **1 Peter 2:19-25 (J.B. Phillips New Testament)**

We slip into this passage without hearing 2:18 which gives it its context. 2:18 exhorts slaves to be subject to their masters, cruel or otherwise. 2:17 had commended honouring the emperor. For slaves there is a reward of some kind for suffering unjustly; none, however, for suffering what they deserve (2:20). 1 Peter lives within a structure of authorities, including abusive authorities, and obviously sees no way out except to remain faithful, and at most, shame or silence the abusers, as 2:15 suggests. This is all very well, but to assume that those who abuse will be reached through their refined conscience – authorities, employers, or violent men, is quite probably expecting too much. There are times when the only alternative is to endure, and these words based upon Jesus' endurance, may be helpful, but their relevance is limited to those sorts of situations. Taken more broadly, as a theology for passivity, is dangerous and quite foreign to the broad narrative and themes of Scripture, beginning with the Exodus: an act of rebellion.

**18-20** You who are servants should submit to your masters with proper respect—not only to the good and kind, but also to the difficult. A man does something valuable when he endures pain, as in the sight of God, though he knows he is suffering unjustly. After all, it is no credit to you if you are patient in bearing a punishment which you have richly deserved! But if you do your duty and are punished for it and can still accept it patiently, you are doing something worthwhile in God's sight.

**21-25** Indeed this is part of your calling. For Christ suffered for you and left you a personal example, and wants you to follow in his steps. 'Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth'. Yet when he was insulted he offered no insult in return. When he suffered he made no threats of revenge. He simply committed his cause to the one who judges fairly. And he personally bore our sins in his own body on the cross, so that we might be dead to sin and be alive to all that is good. It was the suffering that he bore which has healed you. You had wandered away like so many sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

## **John 10:1-10 (Good News Translation)**

This reading about sheep, gates and shepherds presents its own challenges. The first point concerns the rich imagery which takes us back to the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. The Latin translation of shepherd, 'pastor', has tended to associate the shepherd image with ministry. Originally it was most common as a metaphor for rulers, as far back as the Pharaohs. It was a way of describing royal responsibilities which included caring for subjects, the flock. It was apt symbolism when David became the shepherd king and the model for messianic hope. Second, there is another dimension to the image of sheep, and this is not one that is picturesque, indeed quite the reverse: sheep as the victims, the sacrificial victims of the Temple ritual, In short, the insight in John's Gospel of Jesus as the

“good shepherd”, is about his defence of the sheep, those who are marginalized and rejected.

**10** Jesus said, “I am telling you the truth: the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> The man who goes in through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> The gatekeeper opens the gate for him; the sheep hear his voice as he calls his own sheep by name, and he leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought them out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> They will not follow someone else; instead, they will run away from such a person, because they do not know his voice.”

<sup>6</sup> Jesus told them this parable, but they did not understand what he meant. <sup>7</sup> So Jesus said again, “I am telling you the truth: I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All others who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the gate. Those who come in by me will be saved; they will come in and go out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness.

The Gospel of the Lord

***Praise to you Lord Christ***

**Some thoughts**

**Offering**

**Doxology**

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,  
praise him, all creatures here below,  
praise him above, ye heavenly host,  
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

**Prayer of Dedication**

**THE EUCHARIST**

**Surrexit Christus**

**The Lord is ri-sen** al-le-lu-ia. Sing out and praise the Lord, al-le-lu-ia. / **Jau kè-lès**  
**Kris-tus** a-le-lu-ja! Gie-do-kim Vieš-pa-ciui a-le-lu-ja!

Music: J. Berthier  
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1. All you heavens bless the Lord, ***Surrexit Christus, Alleluia!***  
 stars of the heavens bless the Lord. ***Cantate Domino, Alleluia!***
2. Sun and moon bless the Lord, ***Surrexit Christus, Alleluia!***  
 and you night and day bless the Lord. ***Cantate Domino, Alleluia!***
3. Frost and cold bless the Lord, ***Surrexit Christus, Alleluia!***  
 ice and snow bless the Lord. ***Cantate Domino, Alleluia!***
4. Fire and heat bless the Lord, ***Surrexit Christus, Alleluia!***  
 and you light and darkness bless the Lord. ***Cantate Domino, Alleluia!***
5. Spirits and souls of the just bless the Lord, ***Surrexit Christus, Alleluia!***  
 Saints and the humble hearted bless the Lord. ***Cantate Domino, Alleluia!***
6. Give thanks to the Lord for God is good, ***Surrexit Christus, Alleluia!***  
 For God's love has no end. ***Cantate Domino, Alleluia!***
8. I shall not die, I shall live, ***Surrexit Christus, Alleluia!***  
 I shall live and recount his deeds! ***Cantate Domino, Alleluia!***

### **Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

May the God of resounding joy be with you!

***And also with you!***

Easter people, may your hearts be filled with joy!

***May God fill our emptiness with the carols of angels!***

Children of the resurrection, lift your praises to God!  
***We join with all creation in shouting our praise  
to the One who loves us!***

From the rubble of chaos,  
you shaped a sanctuary for creation.

Trumpeter swans glided gracefully across lakes,  
tall trees waltzed across green fields,  
stars piped choruses of joy in the night.

Having formed us in your image,  
your Spirit breathed peace into us,  
inviting us to freely wander.

But we chose to hide ourselves behind  
the locked doors of brokenness and death.

Prophets came to witness about your  
willingness to forgive and  
take our fears from us.

When we would not respond  
to your gracious invitations,  
Jesus came, to free us from our brokenness.

With our ancestors in the faith,  
with our children and grandchildren,  
with everyone who sees you coming,  
we state our glad praise to you:

***Holy, holy, holy, God of surpassing greatness.  
Everything that breathes praises you.  
Hosanna in the highest!***

***Blessed is the One who you exalt.  
Hosanna in the highest!***

Holy are you, God of our ancestors,  
and blessed is Jesus Christ, the first and last.  
Co-creator of all that is around us,  
he came to bear witness to your promises.  
Our Lord as well as our God,

he blesses all who believe in him  
 whether or not they have seen him.  
 Serving you in life as well as death,  
 he became the first-born of the dead,  
 so we might be your children through eternity.

As we remember all he did and taught,  
 as we celebrate the wonder of his resurrection,  
 we state that mystery we call faith:

***Christ died for us;  
 Christ rose for us;  
 Christ will come for us.***

## **Institution**

### **Breaking of the Bread**

Christ is the bread of joy  
***Who shares food with us***

Christ is the cup of life,  
***Who revives us***

Let us receive what we are;  
***Let us become what we receive***

### **Lamb of God (Agnus Dei)**

Jesus, Wisdom of God,  
***have mercy on us***

Jesus, Word made flesh,  
***have mercy on us***

Jesus, Liberator of creation  
***grant us peace.***

## Communion

### Distribution

### Prayer after Communion

God of heaven and earth,  
 you make us one in Christ.  
 Inspire us with new vision  
 and the wisdom of ancient dreams.  
 Give us strength to walk together as an Easter people  
 seeing things differently.

***In Christ's name***

***Amen***

### Prayers of the People

The one who prays after a series of petitions says, "Raise us Lord" and the people respond, "Make us a risen people".

*We end with the Lord's 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 for ever. Amen.***

하늘에 계신 우리 아버지여

이름이 거룩히 여김을 받으시오며  
 나라이 임하옵시며  
 뜻이 하늘에서 이룬 것 같이  
 땅에서도 이루어지이다.  
 오늘날 우리에게 일용할 양식을 주옵시고  
 우리가 우리에게  
 죄 지은 자를 사하여 준 것 같이  
 우리 죄를 사하여 주옵시고  
 우리를 시험에 들게 하지 마옵시고  
 다만 악에서 구하옵소서  
 대개 나라와 권세와 영광이  
 아버지께 영원히 있사옵나이다. 아멘

**Closing Hymn: The day of resurrection (TiS 361, Ellacombe, John of Damascus)**

**Blessing and Sending Out**

Christ is risen!  
 He is risen indeed!

We see reality through resurrection  
 We look to the signs of a new world  
 We live out the signs of this new world.

The service has ended  
 Go in peace to love and serve the Lord  
***In the name of Christ***

**Musical Postlude**