

**HOMILY**

**7/18/21**

- 1. Good shepherds – bad shepherds – what's all this talk about shepherds?**
  - a. Does the term shepherd even have any significance in our society today?**
    - i. I think the culture war battles we've witnessed over the past few years may well answer this question for us**
    - ii. This came to me because of a term I've heard thrown around in a derogatory fashion from both sides of the argument over the face mask mandate**
    - iii. And the term is "sheeple" – the merging of the words "sheep" and "people"**
    - iv. It is intended, I gather, to denote some group or party of people, who will allow themselves to be herded, or led, into something, without exercising any critical judgment of their own**
    - v. And I think there is also something of a prideful flavor to this name calling**
      - 1. It is perhaps to say, "I do not allow myself to be herded or led, like a foolish sheep. I, unlike those others, can sort these things out for myself. I am an individual thinking person. I don't need a shepherd!"**
      - 2. And, of course, the irony of this plays out best when the term "sheeple" becomes a chiding chant in a public demonstration**
    - vi. But, perhaps what is most important and what has become apparent in recent years, is that there is this element of derision of the sources the "sheeple" (those idiotic ones who don't agree with me) those sources those sheeple use to determine what is truth**
      - 1. So, you see, the argument is often boiled down to whether the source of the information we use to reach our conclusions is actually trustworthy or not**
      - 2. Is Fox News more trustworthy than CNN, or is MSNBC more trustworthy than NewsMax? Should I trust Facebook? Or perhaps are there other better sources of information (the truth) than these available?**
  - b. Can you see where I am going with this?**
    - i. Could I not replace the word "source" with the word "shepherd"?**
      - 1. Unless I am a complete narcissist and believe I know all things inherently, I should be looking for what I believe is a trustworthy source, a good, trustworthy shepherd, to help me understand the world around me and exercise good judgment**
      - 2. Isn't this what Jesus observes today in our Gospel?**
        - a. That in this world's labyrinth of lies and liars**
          - i. We just get tired of it all**
          - ii. And we thirst for the truth**

3. And if I have been given the insight, the grace, to desire to avoid the self-serving and self-destructive aspects of the narcissist, I should look to a trustworthy source, a good, trustworthy shepherd who may not always tell me what I want to hear, but who will give me the grist to come to the truth
  - ii. I should think if I come upon such a good and trustworthy shepherd and choose to follow, yes, to follow him
    1. I just might develop the capacity for three things
      - a. First, the humility to come to grips with my own weaknesses that will often impair my unaided ability to fully understand what is before me
      - b. Second, to be able to recognize a bad shepherd when one comes across my path
      - c. And finally, to be able to develop a compassionate heart for those who are seeking the truth but are being led by a bad shepherd
    2. Whether we recognize it or not, we are constantly subjected to influences that lead us to behave in the manner in which we behave
      - a. I think we really do want to believe that our behavior is abiding in the truth
        - i. Something within us desires to be right
      - b. But there is also a quirk about us, call it our fallen nature, that makes us particularly susceptible to any outside influence that affirms to us that it is right and good that our individual wants, our personal pleasures, our private desires should be fulfilled
        - i. And this can become our truth
        - ii. Our bad shepherd
2. Jeremiah, who is speaking the word of God, that is, speaking in the voice of Jesus Christ, calls out these bad shepherds
  - a. If we just look only to the Ten Commandments that God delivered to his chosen people
    - i. These ten clear, unambiguous statements for true and right living in the presence of God
    - ii. We will find today, as Jeremiah found then, big bites being carved out of them by our culture
      1. And one tortured analysis after another applied to them to make them mean what we want them to mean
    - iii. All for this single purpose
      1. So that my wants, my pleasures, my desires might take precedence in the world

# Saint Matthew's Catholic Parish

Deacon Charlie Harball

602 South Main Street  
Kalispell, MT 59901

406.250.0547

2. **That I might never have to ask myself the question –**
  - a. **What do my wants, my pleasures, my desires have to do with my love for God and my love for my neighbor**
  - b. **Because if I do ask that question I might find out that my love for God and neighbor is limited to whatever may be left over after my appetite has been satisfied**
3. **And it all turns into the perfect conspiracy**
  - a. **I won't call you out on your behavior, if you don't call me out on mine**
    - i. **And we use terms like tolerance and inclusion**
      1. **So that we can turn it around and use terms like intolerance and discrimination like a weapon**
    - b. **And we have the audacity to call this love**
      - i. **When, in fact, it is the failure to love**
      - ii. **Which is the exact definition of sin**
      - iii. **To love someone is to lead them away from sin, to repentance**
      - iv. **Back to the love of God and neighbor**
      - v. **This will not happen if God is no longer even in our vocabulary**
  - b. **This is what a bad shepherd leads us to**
    - i. **A world in which true and right living in the presence of God is a rare thing**
      1. **Held precious by a precious few**
      2. **And maligned as irrelevant or hateful by the rest**
    - ii. **I apologize for going down such a dark road**
      1. **But we cannot fully appreciate the light until we have seen just how dark, dark can be**
      2. **And have come to understand if perhaps we have played any role in it**
3. **These are the lessons from the Liturgy of the Word today**
  - a. **Jeremiah is not being harsh in his evaluation of this world**
    - i. **And its bad shepherds**
    - ii. **He is simply stating a truth**
    - iii. **Just as we are able to see the same truth before us today**
  - b. **But the truth he declares today does not stop there and leave us in the darkness**
    - i. **He tells us that there is a resolution to come out of this confused state of sin in which the world seems entombed**
    - ii. **“Thus says the LORD, I myself will gather the remnant of my flock**
    - iii. **from all the lands to which I have driven them**
    - iv. **and bring them back to their meadow;**

- v. there they shall increase and multiply
  - c. Is this not the Hope for which we pray
    - i. For the Lord God himself to be our shepherd
    - ii. To be the truth that casts out the darkness of lies and deceit
  - d. We believe and profess that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life
    - i. That he is the truth that gives light to the world and reveals the lies and deceit that bring about the darkness
    - ii. What is the fruit of this truth? And how do we come to taste it?
- 4. Saint Paul tells us that it is about the reconciliation that comes about as the result of living the truth**
- a. The truth is that we were not created to live lives of selfish pleasures
    - i. But we were meant to live the love of God by being true gift to one another
    - ii. That when we live in this way, we are no longer separate from one another
      - 1. Each with his own selfish designs
      - 2. But one person, as it were, in the life of Jesus Christ
      - 3. In the triune love of God
  - b. You see, when we live the truth, we become the truth and we conduct the light of Christ through the darkness of the world
    - i. We no longer point a condemning finger at the person who is not living the life of Jesus Christ
    - ii. But we, like Jesus in our Gospel today
      - 1. Are moved with pity for that person
      - 2. And we reach out to them in love and in truth
      - 3. Then, if they allow it and accept God's graces,
        - a. They too will carry the torch of truth to the world
  - c. This is Jesus Christ, the good Shepherd at work
    - i. This is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God
    - ii. This is the taste of the fruit of truth
    - iii. This is right living in the presence of God
    - iv. This is the Church