

“Good Shepherd Sunday”
Psalm 23; Revelation 7:9-17; John 10:22-30
April 25, 2010

Show Power point - “Campaign for God”

I saw a few things this week that I wanted to share with you. I hope that you enjoy the images that are being projected on the screen this morning. I apologize to those of you listening on the radio and wish that you could see the beautiful images of creation. On each picture a comment is written as though it is something that God might be saying to us. It is beautiful And thought provoking.

As I thought about sharing these images with you I also ran across some humorous things that I also wanted to share with you. I know that you are great multitaskers that can take in the images and still listen to some disconnected thoughts.

This is what I found There was the story of a father who asked his young son what the highest number that he had ever counted up to. In response the son quickly replied, “973.” The father asked why the boy had stopped counting there. The boy said, “Because church was over.”

Or there was the 4 year old girl that was attending a Catholic mass and dozed off. She slept soundly until the altar boy shook some bells during the consecration of the elements for Holy Communion. The bells woke her and she jumped up with a start and hollered, “The ice cream man.”

One article listed quotes from actual job performance evaluations. The comments included evaluations like these: “Works well when under constant supervision and when cornered like a rat in a trap.” Or “This young lady has delusions of adequacy.” Or - “He sets low personal standards and then constantly fails to achieve them.” Or - “This employee is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot.” Or - “This employee should go far - and the sooner he starts, the better.”

My favorite article involved the maiden flight of a new airplane. It was full of reporters and journalists. A little while after takeoff, the captain's voice was heard over the speakers. “Ladies and gentlemen, I'm delighted to welcome you for this plane's historic first flight. I can tell you the flight is going well. Still, I have to tell you about a minor inconvenience that has occurred. The passengers on the right side of the plane might notice that the closest engine is vibrating slightly. That shouldn't worry you, because this plane is equipped with four engines and we are flying along smoothly at an acceptable altitude. As long as you are looking out the right side, you might as well look at the other engine on that side. You will notice that it is glowing, or more precisely one should say, burning. That shouldn't worry you either, since this plane is designed to fly with just two engines if necessary, and we are maintaining an acceptable altitude and speed. As long as we are looking out the plane, those of you on the left side shouldn't worry if you look out your side of the plane and notice that one engine that is supposed to be there is missing. It fell off about ten minutes ago. Let me tell you that we in the cockpit are amazed that the plane is doing so well without it. However, I will call your attention to something a little more serious. Along the center aisle all the way down the plane a crack has appeared. Some of you are, I suppose, able to look through the crack and may even notice the waves of the Atlantic Ocean below. In fact, those of you with very good eyesight may be able to notice a small lifeboat that was thrown from the plane. Well, ladies and gentlemen, you will be

happy to know that your captain is keeping an eye on the progress of the plane from that lifeboat below."

I would not be surprised if you are wondering if there is a point to all of this. Well, there is. Today is the 4th Sunday of Easter And it is also a Sunday that is designated as Good Shepherd Sunday. Today much of what we encounter in the scriptures points us to Jesus as not only the Risen Savior but the one who comes to lead us through this complex maze of life. We say that this Jesus, risen from the dead walks with us - He does not simply watch from the safety of the lifeboat below {or above} as we limp along with 3 engines failing or gone and a gaping crack developing in the floor beneath our feet. He is the Good Shepherd that leads us when we are willing to follow, feeds us when our strength is diminished and gives us eternal life when we can no longer go on.

It sounds good, doesn't it. We love the sound of scriptures like the 23rd Psalm. It is so poetic and beautiful. We turn to it quickly at times of great struggle and death. But beyond that it is hard for us to get too excited about a good shepherd in our lives. Yes, it is great church imagery. But it does not fit too well in our world. Sheep and shepherds are not a part of our daily experience. God is somewhat out of date. So we see how high we can count rather than getting too involved in worship and find ourselves far more excited about the coming of the ice cream man than the coming of God. Maybe if we got a 'tweet' from God in our twitter account or if God would join my list of "Facebook" friends ... maybe then I might respond a bit better. But a Shepherd in long, out-of-date robes carrying a shepherd's crook and inviting us to gather in the 'fold' that shepherd we just don't think that we need so much.

Yet we stumble along the pathway of life and the grass is not always green nor the waters still. Do we need one who will lead the way?

I ran across a poem entitled "He Leadeth Me" that is a good word for us today. It says:

He leadeth me, in pastures green? No not always.
Sometimes He who knoweth best
in kindness leadeth me in weary ways
Where heavy shadows be;
Out of the sunshine warm and soft and bright,
Out of the sunshine into the darkest night.
I oft would yield to sorrow and to fright
Only for this: I know He holds my hand
So, whether led in green or desert land
I trust, although I cannot understand.
He leadeth me. Beside still waters? No, not always so.
Oft times the heavy tempest round me blow,
And o'er my soul the waves and billows go.
But when the storm beats wildest, and I cry
Aloud for help, the Master standeth by
And whispers to my soul: "Lo, it is I."
Above the tempest wild I hear him say:
"Beyond the darkness lies the perfect day;
In every path of thine I lead the way."

So whether on the hilltops, high and fair
I dwell, or in the sunless valleys, where

The shadows lie -- what matter? He is there.
And more than this; where're the pathway lead
He gives to me no helpless, broken reed,
But His Own hand, sufficient for my need.
So where He leads me I can safely go.
And in the blest hereafter I shall know
Why in His wisdom He hath led me so.
AMEN