

4 Easter A 2020 SML JN 10:1-10

You know, He loved them as well – the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the religious authorities and teachers of the law.

- ✓ They attacked Him,
- ✓ they challenged Him,
- ✓ mocked Him,
- ✓ lied about Him,
- ✓ plotted against Him,

and did all they could to destroy Him. And in our 2000 years-later-hindsight, how we hate them for it.

But not Jesus. He loved them in the midst of such opposition. It's an astounding truth – so astounding, some would deny it. He came to save the lost, not push them away. And in that, as mind-bending as it may seem, the cry of His heart was the same to the religious leaders as it was to anyone else. “Come to me . . . and you will find rest for your souls.”

When we think of Our Blessed Lord coming to seek and save “the lost,” we tend to envision drug addicts, prostitutes, convicts, and the like. But on a closer look, who could possibly be more lost than one who assumes, by virtue of his own righteousness, his own education, perhaps his own superior

lifestyle, that he doesn't need to be found? Those who say, "He came for the likes of him, not the likes of me." That's the heartbreak of such lostness. Lost, but they don't know they're lost!

And so these men, appointed by God to bless and shepherd His children,

- ✓ adorned themselves from head to toe in flamboyant displays of presumed holiness,
- ✓ strutting among the people like heaven's own peacocks,
- ✓ sitting proudly in the front row seats of first century Israel,
- ✓ pontificating and dissertating on what they thought was the law with such "dot the I and cross the T" precision

that they missed "the Law" completely, though they longed, probably more than anyone else, to look into God's eyes . . .

Well, they did look into God's eyes. In fact, at 12 years old, slipping away from His father and mother and into the temple courts of Jerusalem, Jesus chose to go to them first. And some 20 years later, slipping away from Judea and into the synagogues of Galilee, He went to them again, and again, in the temple of Jerusalem, after they humiliated the adulterous woman, and banned the man born blind, and He taught them, yet again.

So yes, they would look into God's eyes, day after day, month after month, for two, perhaps three years. And what they would see in His every glance was:

- ✓ God's love for them,
- ✓ God's heartbreak for them,
- ✓ God's conviction of them.

This is a mystery. If anyone should have recognized that Jesus was the Messiah, it was these very men – the Pharisees and teachers of the law – who fought Him tooth and nail, and stood as His enemy every step of the way. They studied the Scriptures like no one else. They knew the messianic prophecies of old like no one else. They could quote it all backward and forward, inside out and upside down. They lived it and breathed it and begged God for it every day of their lives.

But they missed it. Heartbreak of heartbreaks, they opted for stubborn pride despite the obvious, and missed it, and missed it, and kept right on missing it. Why? Because they wanted Him to be like them, and the fact that He wasn't – the fact that He was more interested:

- In people than pomp
- In goodness than glory
- In salvation than Sabbath

- In righteousness than rightness

And what they got was simple Love, Love beyond Love, feeding a hungry person, healing a broken heart, resurrecting a tortured spirit, and in today's gospel, leading them as a good shepherd.

From day one, He had answered their every challenge, their every question. He had:

- ✓ reasoned with them,
- ✓ explained Himself to them,
- ✓ loved them,
- ✓ invited them,
- ✓ rebuked them.

He had displayed all the wonders of His Father's glory in front of their eyes time and time again. He pled with them to know Him and to know His father, time and time again.

2000 years ago, Our Blessed Lord used the "Ego Eimi" the I AM saying, "I am the Good Shepherd" to help explain who He is. Other I AMs:

I am the way, the truth and the life.

I am the bread of life.

I am the gate.

I am the light of the world.

I am the vine.

I am the resurrection.

Jesus comparing Himself to a vocation or an object to explain who He is, the Son of God.

During this pandemic?

I am the good doctor.

I am the good nurse.

I am the good EMT.

I am the researcher.

I am the police man.

I am the grocer.

I am the mask.

I am social distancing.

I am a thorough washing of my hands.

I am the dad and the mom

I am the employer

I am who and what God wants me to be to use me how he wishes, to get us all through this pandemic without leaving the side of the good shepherd.

What we get from the Good Shepherd is simple Love, Love beyond Love, feeding a hungry person, healing a broken

heart, resurrecting a tortured spirit, leading us like a good shepherd . . .

From day one, Jesus meets our every challenge, our every question. He reasons with us, explains God to us, loves us, invites us, rebukes us. He displays all the wonders of the Father's glory in front of our eyes time and time again. He asks us to know His Father, time and time again.

2000 years ago, He said, "I am the good shepherd." During this pandemic, could Jesus say He were you? I am Father Dan Swift. I am . . . just fill in your name.