

Sunday, May 8, 2022 – Fourth Sunday of Easter – Good Shepherd Sunday

First Reading: Acts 9:36-43

36 - Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity.

Many congregations have a Dorcas Circle – a group of women who are devoted to good works and acts of charity.

37-39 - At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples sent two men to Peter with the request, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them.

After you die, how will you be remembered? What do you want to be remembered for?

40-42 - Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

Cf. the account of Jesus' raising Jairus' daughter in Mark 5 –

37 – He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John.

40 – Then he put them all outside.

41 – He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!"

Acts 9: 43 - Meanwhile Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

This is just before Peter had the vision of clean and unclean animals, and Peter is called to go to the house of Cornelius, the Roman centurion.

He might have been feeling that he was being very openminded by staying at the home of a Jewish tanner, but God is about to send him to the home of a Gentile.

When have you felt that you were taking a pretty big step, but God says to you, "Now you are going to take a really big step"?

Psalm: Psalm 23

1 - The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.

1 Samuel 16: 11 – Jesse to Samuel – "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep."

1 Samuel 17: 28 – David's oldest brother Eliab – "Why have you come down? With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness."

David took a position that was looked down upon and used it to help us understand God and what God does for us.

1 Corinthians 10: 31 – Do everything for the glory of God.

2-4 - The LORD makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters. You restore my soul, O LORD, and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for you are with me.

Wanting to be PC and avoid the pronoun "he" for the Lord, this translation covers over the transition from "he" to "you" when the Psalmist talks about the valley of the shadow of death. I believe the change in pronouns is intentional and significant, because the Palmist wants to be as close to God as possible at the time of death.

Second Reading: Revelation 7:9-17

There are five parts to this vision of heaven that can give us the hope, courage, strength, and encouragement we need when we face the toughest of times.

The gathered throng

9-10 - After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice.

The occupied throne and the slain Lamb

10 - "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Worshipping angels

11 - And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God.

1 Peter 1: 12 – Good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things into which angels long to look!

Springs of the water of life

Revelation 7: 14 - "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

15-17 - "The one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd. He will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Gospel: John 10:22-30

22-23 - At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon.

27-29 - My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.

*Sermon – "The Sound of the Master's Voice" – Nipper and "His Master's Voice"
Scene in the movie, "War Horse" - Children's message*

Romans 8: 38-39 – I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.