

The Fourth Sunday of Easter

(Year B)

<i>First Reading</i>	Acts 4:8-12
<i>Response</i>	The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29
<i>Second Reading</i>	1 John 3:1-2
<i>Gospel Acclamation</i>	I am the good shepherd, says the Lord; I know my sheep, and mine know me.
<i>Gospel</i>	John 10:11-18

The Fourth Sunday of Easter in Year B is focused on Jesus, the good shepherd. This is a theme that the church highlights every year during the Easter season. And, as I pointed out before but I'll point it out again, although it's the year of the Gospel of Mark, we're going to have a gospel reading today from the Gospel of John 10, the famous good shepherd discourse. And, then we'll go back and we'll look at the Acts of the Apostles and the spread of the good news through the early church in the early years of Christianity. So let's begin with John 10:11-18, this is the gospel reading for today. Jesus said:

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down

of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father." ¹

Alright, so let's stop there. This speech of Jesus where he's talking about himself as the good shepherd is one of the many speeches that Jesus gives while he's in the temple in Jerusalem, and that's a distinctive aspect of John's gospel. Whereas the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke tend to focus on Jesus' teaching in the northern part of the holy land in Galilee, John not exclusively but primarily focuses on Jesus's discourses in the southern part of the holy land in Judea, especially while he's in Jerusalem and in the temple. And, one of the things Jesus does when he's in the temple is he will speak in parables, but not the same kind of short, pithy parables that you might recall from say the Gospel of Mark or Matthew when Jesus is in Galilee, he'll do these longer parables that we might even call allegories, where he compares himself with some aspect of life or culture in the First Century A.D., in this case comparing himself with shepherding and with the herding of sheep.

So a couple of elements here are important to highlight. Number one, when Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd," he is not just drawing a comparison between himself and a good shepherd, a shepherd who might willingly die or give his life to protect the sheep that belong to him, he's also drawing a contrast between himself and wicked shepherds, which are described in the book of Ezekiel 34. I'm not going to read the prophecy right now, but if you take some time to go back to the book of Ezekiel, in the book of Ezekiel, before the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, the prophet Ezekiel gave his own allegory in which he compared the wicked priests and leaders of Jerusalem and of the temple to wicked shepherds, to shepherds who were not concerned with the well-being of the sheep, to shepherds who would slaughter the sheep and then use them for their own good instead of giving them to God or protecting them. And, so in this case what Jesus is doing is in the context of preaching in Jerusalem's temple, he's kind of acting like a new Ezekiel, except instead of condemning the Jerusalem leaders for being bad shepherds directly, which is what Ezekiel did, Jesus is drawing the contrast and reflect-

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible citations/quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994.

ing on himself as the true shepherd, as the good shepherd, as the true leader of Israel who is going to not just protect the sheep, not just not abuse the sheep, but actually lay down his life for the sheep. So in this case the sheep are obviously a symbol for the people of God, for the people of Israel and for Jesus' disciples in particular.

So you can see this contrast play out after saying he's the good shepherd, he goes on to say that he's different from a hireling, that means a hired shepherd, right, someone who doesn't actually own the sheep but is just getting paid to protect them. The second he sees a wolf he's going to run off for fear of his own life, he's not going to sacrifice himself in order to protect the sheep. So Jesus here is drawing a particular aspect of the analogy, it's really powerful, which is that his disciples, in a sense, belong to him, right. He's not being paid to take care of them, he's not being paid to be their Messiah. They belong to him and he belongs to them. They know him and he knows them. And, in order to illuminate this knowledge, he actually says, this is a really powerful statement, he says, "I know my own and my own know me. As the Father knows me and I know the Father." Now that's quite an analogy, because on the one hand Jesus is obviously on one level talking about the fact that ancient Jewish shepherds would be known to their sheep, right. They would call the sheep. They would spend day and night with the sheep. The sheep would get to know who their master was and so for example when the master would call the sheep, the sheep would be able to recognize his voice because they knew him and they were able to differentiate him from any other shepherd, or a hireling, or something like that.

But, in this case, Jesus takes that analogy of the knowledge of the shepherd by the sheep to a deeper level because he says my sheep know me as I know the Father and the Father knows me. So here Jesus isn't just talking about intellectual knowledge or even the kind of knowledge by which we recognize someone, like the sheep might recognize the shepherd. He's talking about a kind of mutual indwelling, an intimate knowledge, the kind of Trinitarian knowledge, right, that the Father has of the Son and that the Son has of the Father. So this analogy between the knowledge of the shepherd by the sheep and the knowledge of the Father by the Son immediately tells you he's not talking about an ordinary sheepfold or he's not describing here an ordinary shepherd. This is an analogy with the mystery of the

kingdom, just like he does in the Synoptics but in a slightly different mode, right. He's trying to use the knowledge of a shepherd for his sheep and of the sheep for the shepherd to reveal the mystery of the intimate knowledge that he not only has with the Father, but that he desires his disciples to have with him. And this is going to be one of the key themes in John's Gospel. It's why scholars sometimes call John the mystical gospel, because he's trying to show us that God doesn't want to just save us, he wants to dwell in us, right. That's the essence of mysticism, the focus on union with God, on spiritual communion with God. And, so Jesus is drawing out this analogy of himself as the good shepherd to say that that's ultimately the aim that he has as a shepherd, for us to know him like he knows the Father and like the Father knows the Son. It's the entry of our lives into the life of the Blessed Trinity.

Now having made that revelation he goes on to say something even more remarkable. In verse 16 he says, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold; and I must bring them in also, so that they will heed my voice." Now what's he talking about? Well again if you go back to the Book of Ezekiel 34 and you look at Ezekiel's prophecy of the wicked shepherds and the sheep that are abused, Ezekiel is talking about Israel. He's talking about the chosen people and he's comparing them to a fold of sheep that are led by shepherds. But Jesus here takes the analogy farther and says that this flock of sheep, that this fold that he's the shepherd over, isn't the only one but that he actually has other sheep that have not yet been brought into this fold and they too are going to hear his voice. Well who's he referring to? Well scholars agree, and this goes all the way back to the church fathers, that this is a kind of cryptic allusion to the conversion of the Gentiles. In other words, that not only is Israel going to be the flock of God, the people of God, but the non-Israelite peoples of the world are also going to be brought into this fold. They're going to be brought into the people of God. They're going to be brought into the new and everlasting covenant, so that there aren't going to be two kinds of people in the world anymore, you know the chosen people and then the pagans, or the Israelites and then the Gentiles. But, there is going to be one flock and there's going to be one shepherd and Jesus is going to be Lord over all the peoples of the world, not just the Israelites as at the time of Ezekiel.

And, so in order for this to happen Jesus now says, “For this reason the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it again.” So in other words, how will the conversion of the Gentiles come about? How will these other sheep come into the fold? Well it’s going to be through the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. That’s going to be what ultimately triggers the ingathering of the other sheep, the conversion of the Gentile nations. And, you’ll see if you pay attention to this over the course of the Sundays in the Easter season, that the conversion of the Gentiles is going to be a major theme because that’s going to be one of the first aspects of the church and its mission after the resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The church is going to begin to not just evangelize the Jews, or even the Samaritans who are kind of half Jews, they’re descended from Israel, but all the nations of the Earth. And, Jesus is already anticipating this in the good shepherd discourse.

Another aspect of this text which is really important to emphasize is Jesus’ image of the unity of the church, right. I don’t know about you but from my experience growing up as a Catholic in the United States, from my youngest days I always was aware of the existence of many different Christian denominations, or many different Christian churches; we’ll freely use that plural term there. And there are really thousands of them in our day and time. And, that’s just part of our lived experience if you’re a Christian growing up in the wake of the Protestant Reformation that took place in the 16th century and which has led to the proliferation of many, many different forms and denominations of Christian churches, or ecclesial communities. So we’re just used to the fact that there are many churches, but notice that’s not Jesus’ vision here when he’s describing himself as the good shepherd. He’s not just revealing his own identity as the true king, or the true priest who’s going to care for his flock, he’s also telling us something about the nature of the church, he’s showing us that his church is supposed to be one. It’s supposed to be a united church, and just as there is only one Messiah, and there’s only one king, and there’s only one high priest, Christ himself, so too there’s only supposed to be one flock, there’s only supposed to be one fold. There’s going to be one church, one body of his disciples who are ideally supposed to be as united with one another as he is with the Father. We’re going to see that a little bit later when we look at his high priestly prayer in John 17.

So this theme of the unity of Christ's disciples is a major theme in John's gospel in particular. John highlights the fact that our Lord not only envisioned a unified church but, as we'll see in John 17, that's going to be one of the last things he prays for before he lays down his life in his passion and in his death. So I just bring this up because as a Catholic this is one of the marks of the church that we profess in the Creed, right. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. Well where do we get the idea of one church from? Isn't that some kind of, you know, pipe dream? Isn't that unrealistic? No, that element, that aspect of the Creed is one of the marks of the authentic church. And, it goes back to the will of Christ himself, and it goes back to the teaching of Christ himself, in Jerusalem as he's standing before the Jewish leaders and he's telling them look, I'm the true shepherd and there's going to be one flock. The Gentiles are going to come in and we're all going to be united in this one flock, or as he calls it Matthew's gospel his *ecclesia*, his church, the gathering of his people.

The final aspect of Jesus' teaching in the good shepherd discourse, and we really only looked at half of it in this particular Sunday, the church breaks it up over the course of several years, is on the freedom with which Christ goes to the cross. This is a very important thing. Jesus freely lays down his life on Calvary. He says this in verse 18, "no one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord." I think this is really important to stress because in contemporary times we sometimes, in our emphasis on the humanity of Christ, can easily forget the divinity of Christ, the sovereignty of Christ, and the fact that he was in complete control of everything that was happening at every moment of his passion, okay. That his passion wasn't a kind of tragic accident, right. Jesus didn't, you know, unexpectedly get caught in the Roman dragnet and be brought to the cross in order to be crucified. Although some modern scholars have depicted the crucifixion that way, as a kind of you know, unfortunate tragedy. No, Christ freely chooses to lay down his life. He's going to tell Pilot later in the gospel, "You would have no power over me if it had not been given to you from above," right. Which means that his passion and his death is part of the plan of God's divine providence, by which he would save the world, and that it's something freely chosen.

And, that's really crucial for us to emphasize. Because it shows us that what makes the death of Christ meritorious, what makes it so precious in the eyes of the Father,

is not just how much Christ suffered. I mean that suffering reveals the love to us, but it's how much he loved in freely choosing to lay his life down. That he could have at any moment, as he says in the Gospel of Matthew, called down a legion or 12 legions of angels. Which by the way, is I think about 6000 angels per legion, so you're talking about a lot of angels, I won't try to do the math, because I'll get it wrong, but that's a lot of angels. In other words, Jesus could have easily stopped the passion at any moment during his scourging at the pillar, or his trial, or his mockery, all that stuff is something he freely chooses. And, by uniting it to his free will, he makes it all an act of love, right. And it's that love that redeems us, it's that love that covers a multitude of sins, as Peter says. And it's that love that reveals to us that he really is the good shepherd, who doesn't just want to protect his sheep, right, he doesn't just want us to flourish, he's willing to lay down his life for our sake so that we might live and have life abundantly. And, that's the mission that's given to him by his Father and that is what he is going to accept.

Oh, there's another element there too that I almost forgot, which is he says, "I have the power to lay it down but I also have the power to take it up again," which is equally part of his divine sovereignty. There of course he's speaking of his resurrection, that he has the power not just to rise from the dead but to raise himself from the dead, right, and this is really crucial. We've seen other people come back from the dead before. Think about Jairus' daughter, who was you know, it says she was sleeping, but she was recently deceased, Jesus brings her back to life; or Lazarus, who was completely dead, and had been dead for four days, whom Jesus brings back to life and raises him from the tomb. Well in both those cases someone else raises the person from the dead, right, Jesus is the one who has the power over life and death. But, in this case, Jesus is both going to succumb to death, right, although not to corruption, his body doesn't decay in the grave, but he lays down his life, he succumbs to death and at the same time displays the divine power to take up his life again, to raise himself from the dead. And, that is truly miraculous. That is a sign of his divinity, right. And, if you doubt me on that, try it yourself sometime, right. So when you're dead, try to raise yourself from the dead, it's impossible. No human being has that kind of power, we are mortal. That's precisely one of the characteristics of our created life after the fall, is that we are going to suffer and we are going to die and we have no control over it. We can try to stave it off for a time but we can't stop it. Jesus by contrast sovereignly lays his life down and sov-

erignly takes it up again, because he's not just fully man, he's also fully God. And, that's what makes him a truly good shepherd, because of course in the Old Testament, I almost left this one out, it's not just Ezekiel 34 he's alluding to, it's also Psalm 23, right. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. So who's described as the true good shepherd in the Old Testament? Well it's the Lord himself, right. God is the ultimate shepherd, and here Jesus is comparing himself to the good shepherd of Psalm 23. And, thereby implicitly revealing that he isn't just the high priest, he isn't just the king, he is God come in the flesh.

Okay, so that's the gospel for this week. It really is good news, it's the good news of the resurrection that we're celebrating during the Easter season. But, one of the things the church also wants to do during the Easter season is look at the spread of the gospel, the spread of the good news in the early church. And, so she gives us on each of the Sundays during Easter a quotation, a first reading, from the Book of Acts, from the Acts of the Apostles. So this Sunday let's turn to Acts 4:8-12. And, this is a very important passage, it's an excerpt from St. Peter's speech to the leaders in Jerusalem not long after Pentecost. Now before I read it, I want to make just a couple points. First, I love the fact that during Easter the church gives us readings from the Acts of the Apostles. I think this is one of the most important books in the New Testament, because it's the first history of the church that we have. It's also one of the most neglected books, like a lot of Catholics in my experience haven't read the Acts of the Apostles quite as much as they've read say the Gospels for example. And, so it's really important for us to familiarize ourselves with how the church spread in the early centuries as recorded in the Book of Acts. With that said though, on the other hand, the readings that we're given from the lectionary are often very brief from the Book of Acts. And, so you can kind of miss very easily the importance of these readings if you don't go back and look at the context. So as we're working through these quotations from Acts over the course of the Easter season, I want to try to make sure we put them in context before we read the actual readings themselves, okay.

So a couple of quick points. Number one, the initial context of the reading I'm about to give you from Acts, it takes place in the wake of the disciples having been arrested in Jerusalem for performing a miracle, and for beginning to preach the gospel. So this is basically set in the context of early persecution of Peter and

James and John, not by pagans, not by the Roman Empire, but by the Jerusalem leaders; Ca'iaphas, Annas, the same men who had Jesus put to death on the cross of Calvary, right. So what's happening, a second point, is that people are beginning to hear the good news from Peter and James and John and the apostles, and conversions are starting to take place. In fact, in Acts 4:3 it says that 5,000 people had come to believe after hearing the word of the apostles preaching in the city. So I want you to think about that too as the context. Another reason Peter and the disciples have been arrested is because this thing is getting out of control, okay.

One of the caricatures of Christian history that my students frequently bring into the classroom because it's everywhere is the idea that Gentiles listen to the gospel but the Jews didn't convert. I'll have students ask me all the time, well Dr. Pitre why didn't the Jews believe in Jesus? And, I always have to tell them well first of all your question presupposes something that isn't actually true. If you read the Book of Acts you'll see not only did some Jews convert, but many Jews converted. In fact, Acts 4 here is describing only Jews, these are the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And so we have 5,000 Jews, at least 5,000 Jews becoming disciples of Jesus, becoming believers, being baptized in the early years of Christianity, right. So it's, in other words, Christianity is spreading like wildfire through Judaism, in Jerusalem, in the capital city, and that's why the leaders of the people are starting to get alarmed. So what happens? The high priest, Annas and Ca'iaphas, and some of the other members of the high priestly family, call Peter and John, they take the disciples, they arrest them, and they bring them before them and ask them a key question. And, this is the key question, it says, when they had set them in their midst they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" In other words, by what power are you performing these miracles, and in what name are you accomplishing these things, right.

Now that reading, that verse, isn't included in the lectionary, but it's crucial to understanding Peter's response, because it's the same question that was posed to Jesus during his public ministry. When he was going around proclaiming the good news and performing miracles, some of the Jewish leaders accused him of doing so by the power of Satan, by the power of the devil. So they're asking Peter basically a question of authority, right, by what power are you doing this. Just like they asked

about John the Baptist, by what authority does he baptize, okay, that's the issue. And, with that context in mind let's read the reading now, and how Peter responds:

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a cripple, by what means this man has been healed, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well. This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Alright, well first thing I hope that gives you a little bit more context here. I want you to think about this for a second. Peter is addressing this speech to Annas and Ca'iaphas, and the members of the High Priestly family, the very men who handed Jesus over to the Romans to be crucified. So when he says whom you crucified, there's a historical context there, he's actually talking to the men who did in fact hand Jesus over to be put to death. And, yet notice this Peter is no longer afraid of these men. This is the same Peter whom, when he was in Ca'iaphas' courtyard, denied that he even knew Jesus three times, because he was afraid, because he was weak. Well after Pentecost that fear is gone, now Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit, we see it in that verse there. And, what does the Holy Spirit do, what does that grace of Pentecost do? It gives him the courage to bear witness to the gospel, even if it cost him his life, which it may well do, I mean he doesn't know at this point what's going to happen as a result of these hearings. He too could be dragged off, handed over to the Romans and crucified, but he's not afraid of that, he's not worried about that anymore, because he's filled with the Holy Spirit and with the proclamation of the good news.

Another element of this is that Peter affirms, answers their question by saying it is through Jesus Christ of Nazareth we perform this miracle, and it's by his authority and in his name that we proclaim this good news to you today, right. That he whom you killed has been raised from the dead, that God has raised him up, and that in doing so, number three, he's fulfilled a prophecy. Now you might not see it too

clearly, but when Peter says, “this is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the head of the corner,” he's alluding there to Psalm 118. Psalm 118, by the time you got to the First Century A.D., was interpreted as a Psalm about the Messiah. It's a Psalm of David, who was considered the anointed one, but it's seen as being prophetically fulfilled in the Messiah, and Peter says that Psalm was fulfilled in so far as you rejected him and put him to death. An analogy that he is using here of a stone and a cornerstone and the builders is a temple analogy. In other words, the Jerusalem leaders, the high priests were supposed to be the guardians and the builders of the temple. Well Jesus comes along as the anointed one, as the Messiah, and one of the things the Messiah was supposed to do was to build a new temple, right. But instead of accepting the Messiah and instead of accepting the new temple that the Messiah would bring, and the Scripture said it would bring, the high priests and the leaders in Jerusalem rejected him, right. They rejected the cornerstone of the new temple itself, and in that sense kind of put themselves outside of the new temple. So Peter here is quoting Psalms and showing that Christ has fulfilled this particular prophecy.

And, then fourth and finally, and this is something I think is very significant for us especially in our day and time, notice what Peter says. He doesn't just identify Jesus as the Messiah, he goes further and says that from now on salvation will take place only through Christ. He says, “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Now in our day and time again, not only of multi-denominationalism, but also religious pluralism, of a proliferation of world religions, so many religions around the world, and so much exposure to the global reality of human life and human religion and the vast diversity of peoples and cultures, one of the things that people can struggle with is, is Christianity the only way, right. Is Christ the only way of salvation or are all the religions of the world, you know, basically just different paths to God? Are they all different ways of achieving the same end? And in our day and time, it's very tempting, and in fact very popular, to say that all religions are basically, in a sense, created equal so to speak, they're just different ways to the one same God. That's not the biblical view and that's certainly not what Peter's saying here. In Acts 4 he's very clear, there is salvation in no one else, and there's no other name under heaven by which we may be saved, whether it be Buddha or Mohammed or whatever other name there might be of a founder of a world religion or even a mi-

nor religion. Christ and Christ alone is the source of all salvation, and that's a particularly scandalous dimension of the Christian good news. For my part, I think one of the most radical things Jesus says in the gospels is from the Gospel of John, when he says I am the way and the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through me, right. Basically Peter here is making the same kind of statement to the Jerusalem temple leaders in the city.

Okay, so that's the first reading for today and if you look at the Psalm you'll see very quickly why it was chosen. Today the Responsorial Psalm that bridges the old, well not the Old Testament, it's not the Old Testament, the Responsorial Psalm that bridges the first reading from Acts and the gospel from St. John is Psalm 118, the very Psalm that Peter alludes to in verses 22 through 26. Psalm 118 says:

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the head of the corner.
This is the LORD's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

And then it goes on to say:

Blessed be he who enters in the name of the LORD!
We bless you from the house of the LORD.

Notice that, again the temple imagery. So salvation is being described here not just as the family of God but as the temple of God. And, if you want access to God, if you want to enter into his presence, you have to go to the temple. And, this new temple is built out of, so to speak, the body of Christ himself, who is the cornerstone that was rejected by the builders but has become the head of this new temple.

So today I'd like to close with you from a quotation from the Catechism of the Catholic Church. I think it's important given the controversial nature of this teaching that there is salvation in anyone else except Christ, that we hear very clearly what the church has said about this topic. There's a section in the Catechism entitled *No Salvation Outside the Church*, and it raises this frequently stated maxim of the church fathers that there is no salvation outside the church, and it tells us how

to interpret that and apply it correctly. So this is the church's official explanation of this. In the Catechism, paragraphs 846 and 47, this is what we read:

“Outside the Church there is no salvation.” How are we to understand this affirmation, often repeated by the Church Fathers? Re-formulated positively, it means that *all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body*: “Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council [Vatican II] teaches that *the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation*; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door.

And here's the key line:

Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it. This affirmation is not aimed at those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ and his Church...²

And we're going to come back to that later, we're going to look at the second part of the church's teaching in a future Sunday because another quote from the Acts of the Apostles is going to be relevant to this whole question of salvation outside the church.

For now I just want you to look at the first part of it, the positive part of it, which is that the church is saying that all salvation comes to us through Christ. There is no salvation apart from Christ because salvation in its essence is union with the Holy Trinity, union with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, and spending eternity in the life and the love of the most blessed Trinity. And, the way to that life is Christ and Christ alone. That's why Peter can say there is salvation in no other name, because Christ is the one mediator, he is the way of salvation, he is the only one who can give us access to the Father through the Holy Spirit in the glory of his

² CCC 846-47

passion, death, and resurrection. That's why he comes into the world. So what the church is saying here is, positively speaking, the ancient expression, no salvation outside the church, what it means is that if anyone is saved it's always through Christ. And even more, that if someone knows that the church was founded by Christ, and that the church is necessary for salvation, and yet they refused to enter it or refuse to remain in the church, they would not be able to be saved, because they would be rejecting the way, the truth, and the life that Christ himself came to give us. Remember we just saw Christ is the good shepherd who is the guardian of a flock, of a sheep fold. And, if you want to be protected by the shepherd, if you want to be saved, you have to enter into his one fold, which is of course the church. So in future weeks we'll come and look at the other side of that teaching, but for now I want you to ponder that. It's a great truth and it's something that we always need to proclaim, which is that all salvation comes through Jesus Christ, the good shepherd.