

Like Sheep without a Shepherd (16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

Jeremiah 23:1-6—The Shepherd Messiah

1. Old Shepherds: the leaders of Israel
 - a. 722 B.C., Assyrian Exile: 10 Northern Tribes (Israel) (2 Kings 15-17)
 - b. 587 B.C., Babylonian Exile: 2 Southern Tribes (Judah) (2 Kings 24-25)
2. Divine Shepherd: “I will gather the remnant of my flock” (23:3)
3. New Shepherds: “I will set shepherds over them who will care for them” (23:4)
4. The Messiah: “a righteous Branch” of David (23:5)
 - a. Judah = 2 Tribes, will be saved
 - b. Israel = 10 Tribes, will dwell in the land

Psalm 23—The Lord is my Shepherd

1. The LORD (Hb *Yhwh*) = “my shepherd” (v. 1)
2. Rod: used as a *weapon* to kill predators of sheep (cf. Ps 2:9; Exod 21:20) (v. 4)
3. Staff: walking stick; used to herd sheep and knock down olives (cf. Zech 8:4) (v. 4)
4. Oil: anointing of the head (v. 5)
5. Banquet: wine (in the “cup”) and food (on the “table”) (v. 5)

Ephesians 2:13-18—Christ Tore Down the Dividing Wall between Peoples

1. Christ is “our peace” (2:14): he tears down the “wall” b/w Jews and Gentiles (2:17)

Mark 6:30-34—Like Sheep without a Shepherd

1. Post-Mission: the “apostles” return to Jesus (6:30)
2. Rest: “come away and *rest* awhile” (6:31)
3. Great Crowd: Jesus saw them and had “compassion” (Greek *splangnizomai*) (6:34)
4. Shepherd Messiah: “like sheep without a shepherd” (6:34)
5. Teaching: so he “taught” (Greek *didaskō*) them (6:34)

The Living Tradition

Venerable Bede: [P]eople of whom the word of faith and the saving ministry is demanded in season and out of season have an incentive to meditate on heavenly things so as not to contradict what they teach by what they do. (Bede, *Commentary on Mark's Gospel*; trans. E. Barneclott, p. 100)

Saint Ambrose: “How often have you heard Psalm 23 and not understood it! See how it is applicable to the heavenly sacraments” (*On the Sacraments* 5.3.13; trans. R. J. Deferrari 1963, p. 312).

Eusebius of Caesarea: As we have received a memorial of this offering that we celebrate on a *table* by means of symbols of his body and saving blood according to the laws of the

new covenant, *we are taught again by the prophet David to say, “You have prepared a table before me...”* (Psalm 23:5) *Here plainly the mystic chrism and the holy sacrifices of Christ’s table are meant...* (Eusebius, *Proof of the Gospel*, 1.10.39; trans. W. J. Ferrar 1920, pp. 60-61)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. Why did Jeremiah speak against the “shepherds” of Israel? Who were these shepherds, and what did their neglect of the people lead to?

2. What is the difference between the “rod” and the “staff” of the divine Shepherd in Psalm 23? What aspects of our relationship with God do these symbolize?

3. How does Jesus respond to the people’s lack of guidance? How exactly does he act as their “pastor” or “shepherd”?

For Further Study

1. John Bergsma, *Psalm Basics for Catholics* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 2017). A great introduction to reading the Psalms for Catholics. Will change the way you understand the book of Psalms for the better.
2. Eckhard J. Schnabel. *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic 2004). An almost 900-page study of the mission of the Twelve disciples by one of the premier contemporary missiologists. Although written from a Protestant perspective, the volume is filled with valuable information about the nature and shape of early Christian missionary activity.

