



Grain

“We must be like the sheep sacrificed in the wind, accepting the fate that takes us, the death that chooses us and in between, the miracles that sustain us.”

Atencio DeJesus

Submitted by Rev. Peter Heidi, Albany, WI

Field

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. St. John 10:11-16

Thoughts

About a year ago, I listened in on a conference call organized by an interfaith group that invited John Gallagher, presidential personnel advisor on the Trump Transition Team, to be our guest speaker. Gallagher commented that in the last 50 years we have not had a president whose administration served more than 50% of the people, and then went on to say that Christians want to have more of a voice. What he said about our divisions was thought provoking. The second part was truly disturbing. Which Christians was he talking about? As we approach Good Shepherd Sunday, what kind of shepherd do Christians embrace?

In John's Gospel, good shepherds are portrayed as the ones who will lay down their lives for those under their care. The quote from DeJesus reminds us of how fragile we are in the universe and our need to surrender to God. Yet the image of sheep as dependent, obedient creatures and the notion of sacrifice have been misused throughout history. Many of us have heard stories about victims of abuse saying their abusers used scripture to tell them to be obedient, self-sacrificial and forgiving. People have used scripture to maintain an illusion of superiority and material advantage over entire groups. Do we manipulate the good shepherd image to serve ourselves, or do we lay down our lives, releasing temptations to manipulate scripture or to only supporting public policies that benefit people like us?

To lay down our lives requires mercy and grace since we are all mixed bags. Laying down our lives also means not being defined by how any parts of our government or society would designate a Christian voice. Rather, we are focused on our Good Shepherd in God through Jesus. We ask for grace to be alert to the miracles that broaden our vision and help us to welcome others into the fold. Maybe this will someday, if not already, make us part of a minority or holy remnant surrounded by the noise of religion conflated with the manipulative powers of the world. So be it. Happy Monday!

Prayer

Highly Recommended

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy