

Cherished-Chosen-Challenged – April 18, 2010

The Divine Shepherd

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Psalm 23:1

King David was intimately familiar with the life and duties of a shepherd. His family was in the business of raising sheep. It had been his duty as a young man and it aptly prepared him for the life of a warrior and king. David knew, as any shepherd does, that sheep are not the brightest of animals. They wander aimlessly and get into all kinds of difficulty. In some instances this makes them very easy targets for those predators that want to “score” an easy meal. It must have been difficult for any shepherd in the time of King David to take care of the sheep. In the land in which they lived green pastures were sparse and it surely was hard to find ample water for the flock. Add to those challenges the binding up of wounds, the searching for the lost, and the constant concern for the safety of the sheep and it portrays the life of the shepherd as one of constant vigilance and sacrifice.

Being compared to sheep is hardly being given a compliment. It is like being called stinky and stupid! That is our spiritual state apart from the grace of God. An evaluation of our own merits and inherent qualities according to the measurements of Holy Scripture reveals the ugly truth about our condition. We are filthy with the stink of sin and well satisfied, if not downright prideful, with the stupidity of our own self-righteousness. There is no point in trying to dress it up or deny it. Apart from Christ, that’s what we are!

Even so Christ, our Savior, plainly says that He is the “good Shepherd”. He is the only One who lays down His life for the sheep. For Christ alone is the one who can deal with our sinful condition. He alone comes looking for us poor, lost sinners, in order that He might bring us to the safety of His sheepfold. He alone binds up our wounds with the soothing balm of the Gospel that we might be made whole and healthy, for we are His dear ones. He alone feeds us with the pure Word and Sacraments which sustain us. He alone provides the peace and safety of the shelter from our

adversary the devil. He alone provides all that we need. Yes, He alone is the true, noble, good, divine Shepherd.

Psalms 23 is a favorite psalm for many Christians because it describes in terms they can understand all that Christ does for us. It is a psalm that portrays in beautiful language the relationship between Christ Jesus and His cherished and chosen people. David closes that psalm with words of sure and certain comfort: "And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." How blessed we are to have that promise of God too. Because of Christ's death and resurrection we are His forever.

- Remember: The wandering loner sheep is an easy target for the wolf. Safety is in the sheepfold. Come to church and know the safekeeping of the divine Shepherd who hems us in by Word and Sacrament.
- Remember: There is always room for more. Christ is searching for those who continue to be lost in this world of sin. Invite someone to church in order that they might be found by the "good shepherd" as we have been!

How blessed we are to be the people of God. He has chosen us to be in this place. He has prepared us for this time. He has equipped us for service to Him. **Don't wait for someone else to do it. If you wait on someone else to do it...it will never get done!** God bless you in the growth of your faith and in service to Him and His people, for your labor in the Lord is never in vain.

Pastor Jacobs

Cherished-Chosen-Challenged 2010