

## 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time –

By: *Father Dave*

(Jeremiah 23: 1 – 6; Ephesians 2: 13 – 18; Mark 6: 30 – 34)

The image of God as the Good Shepherd is abundant in the Old Testament – from the Book of Genesis, to the Book Numbers, and including the Psalms, the prophets Jeremiah, & Ezekiel, as well in the Books of Samuel & Chronicles).

In today's Scriptural selection from the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, Jeremiah speaks God's vengeance upon the misguided leadership of Judah, which led to the Babylonian exile. A worthy ruler will be appointed from the roots of David. Unlike the current poor shepherd, King Zedekiah, whose name meant "The Lord is justice," this New Shepherd will "govern wisely," and thus rightfully be called "The Lord our justice."

We pick up in Paul's letter to the Church in Ephesus where we left off last week. In today's selection, we are hearing of the unifying effect of Christ's blood. The Gentiles "who once were far off have become near". Lacking the covenant and therefore access to salvation, the Gentiles were without hope prior to Christ's sacrifice. But through the blood of Christ, both Jew and Gentile are made one. The walls that had separated them – the commandments and legal claims – are abolished, so that now both have access to God.

And in today's Gospel selection, no sooner had the Apostles returned from the mission journey, they and Jesus are beset by the crowd. They are not even able to eat because of the crowds pressing on them. Following Jesus' own first hectic day of healings, He went off to a deserted place, and invites the apostles to do the same. Fortunately, or unfortunately, – depending on how one views it – the people see where they are headed and arrive before them. Mark concludes this section by recording: "When He [Jesus] had disembarked and saw the vast crowd, His heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.

By the time Jesus was walking the Earth in His incarnate body, an invisible wall had separated the people of Israel from all the other peoples of the world. Paul makes reference to this in the selection we hear today in his letter to Ephesus. The Scribes and Pharisees had so interpreted The Law that the Covenant and the Commandments were that "wall." The point of the Covenant and the Commandments was not to divide Jews from the Gentiles, but to create a space in which God's will could be lived out with such fidelity and respect that Israel would become a shining beacon, drawing all people into right relationship with God.

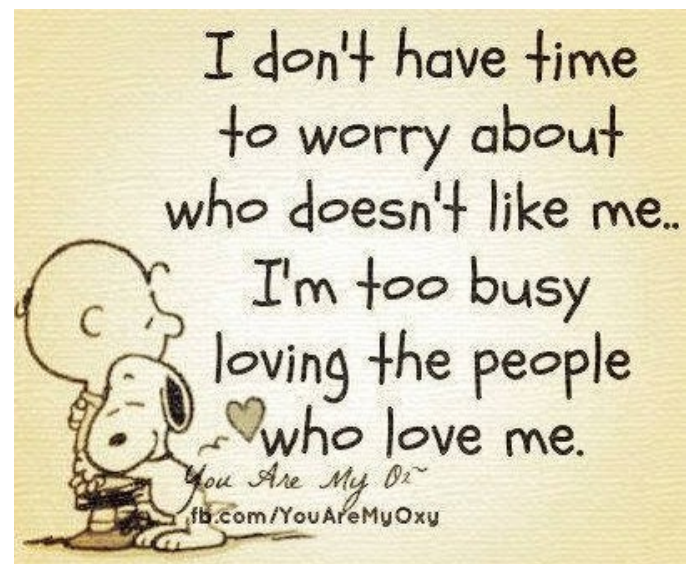
But in Jesus' day many had come to see the Covenant as a wall separating them from other people. Jesus shows us by His example that all are welcome! No matter the color of our skin, or our ethnic background, or our socio-

economic background – all are welcome. Today's Gospel shows us Jesus showing His welcome and mercy to those

who followed Him and the apostles and interrupted their time alone. Eventually, we know, that because Jesus lived in such a way – challenging the Temple leaders while comforting the afflicted and marginalized – this would all lead Him to the Cross as He, Himself, would fall victim to the "dividing wall of enmity." Yet – it would be through that same cross and ultimate Resurrection that all people would come to share in the blessings of God's Spirit.

Let us pray for the Conversion of the World  
& for Peace.

Every now and then I receive an email from a good friend with bits of wisdom or humor. I share with you another one I received.



## **16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – Seminarian Craig**

(Jeremiah 23:1-6; Ephesians 2:13-18; Mark 6:30-34)

### **Shepherds**

We have all had many shepherds in our lives, starting with our parents, then teachers, scout masters, mentors, and priests, just to name a few. What is a shepherd? What is a shepherd called to do? Merriam-Webster informs us that a shepherd is a person who tends sheep, a pastor, one who guides or guards. Saint Augustine in his sermon on Pastors says that true shepherds take care of their sheep, not themselves. Those who do put themselves above the care of their flock will have to give an accounting of their stewardship and will be condemned by God.

In our reading from Jeremiah the shepherds that have not stayed faithful to their duties are judged. Jeremiah is speaking of the kings and leaders of the people of Judah, and Israel and how they have failed because the people are now in exile from the promised land, which is evident as we read, “You have scattered my sheep and driven them away”. God will not trust the leaders, the shepherds to bring his people back. Rather, He will shepherd His people as Jeremiah tells us, “I Myself will gather the remnant of my flock”. God will then no longer rely on the kings, but “will raise up a righteous shoot” to save Judah and Israel. This righteous shoot is Jesus, He is the promised shoot of David, the ultimate shepherd.

In our reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians, Paul is speaking of the Gentiles when he speaks of those who were once far off but have become near by the blood of Christ. The sacrifice of Jesus was for all, Jew and Gentile alike. His sacrifice brings a peace of the spirit accomplished by our reconciliation with the Father. When Paul speaks of a dividing wall, he is referring to the wall in the temple that divided the outer court of the Gentiles from the inner court of Israel. The sacrifice of Jesus destroyed this wall of division, for He has fulfilled the Law, that law which had separated the Gentiles from the Jews. Now all nations will be united, united in Jesus.

In our Gospel reading we continue from where we left off last week. We see that the apostles who had been sent out by Jesus have now returned to report their

accomplishments. Jesus being a good shepherd first wishes them to rest and nourish themselves. As they arrive at that place they are greeted by a large crowd. Jesus is moved by the crowd for they are like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus being the ultimate shepherd is not only concerned with their physical hunger, but also with their spiritual hunger for He starts by teaching them many things.

In our readings we have had examples of both good and bad shepherds. There could be times in our lives when we are given the privilege to be a shepherd to someone, or to many. How can we be shepherds, what example could we use, could we follow? As always, our Lord is the perfect example for us in all things. We should not only care for the physical needs but also the spiritual needs of those entrusted to our care. If we ensure the physical needs of those entrusted to us, but ignore or lead our sheep astray in their spiritual needs we will have to answer for this. As stated earlier from Saint Augustine these shepherds will have to give an accounting of their stewardship and will be condemned by God. Let us always be good stewards of those entrusted to us, no matter whom they may be.