

“I am the vine, you are the branches; abide in me and you will bear much fruit.” John 15:5

Vine & Branches

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Weekly Edition
April 28, 2021

The Good Shepherd



It was an eventful week for our nation and particularly for our urgent need to at long last face up to and remedy four hundred years of ingrained racism.

The guilty verdict of Mr Chauvin for the killing of Mr Floyd was met, remarkably, not with dancing in the street by people of color, but by a quiet sense of relief.

The morning paper on Wednesday seemed to sum it up so well with its front page picture of an African American woman, eyes downcast, hand over her heart. You could almost hear her finally able to exhale.

Here at home, a teenage Chuukese boy, who was an acolyte at our own Cathedral, was shot multiple times by our own police.

A South African man, just weeks later, unarmed like the boy, also shot dead. And here we sit on the feast day of the Good Shepherd. Perhaps you are wondering, what does the Good Shepherd have to say to us today, in the midst of so much fear, misunderstanding and even hate?

The story of Jesus as the Good Shepherd usually fills us with feelings of sweetness and joy. A touching, consoling image.

We find Jesus the good shepherd on lovely Hallmark cards. And we often recall this image at funerals, when we really do need to feel some comfort, some consolation.

But John's gospel doesn't see the Good Shepherd that way. Jesus calls himself the good shepherd right in the midst of his blow up with the Pharisees, in his razor sharp critique of the status-quo (Latin for "don't bother me, I like everything just the way it is!").

Jesus says he's the good shepherd right after confronting the religious bosses with the fact that their love affair with good and evil is all messed up.

The morality police, who insist they know right from wrong, are, according to the good shepherd, nothing more than blind guides.

"I came into this world for judgment so that those who don't see may see, and those who do see may become blind."

That's where Jesus is immediately before today's action. As he heals a man born blind. The religious big shots go nuts. They put the healed man, then his parents, then Jesus himself, under the bare light bulb of the interrogation room.

"The healed man is a fraud," they say, as they boot him from the temple. "Because," they say, "everyone knows that God is punishing those who are differently abled."

"God rewards the rich and powerful," they say. "God is angry with those who are sick or poor or black." And Jesus says, to their chagrin and ours, "None of that is true."

In fact, that entire world-view is a sin. It's the sin of self-contented navel gazing, where the good, the right and the just, just happen to look like "us."

While the bad, the evil, the corrupt, why, that looks like "them." And the question for us today is whether anything has changed in the last 2,000 years?

The Right Reverend
Robert L. Fitzpatrick
V Bishop of Hawaii

The Reverend
David J. Gierlach
Rector

The Reverend
Imelda S. Padasdao,
Priest Associate

The Reverend Peter S. M. Fan,
Cantonese Language Priest

Fr. Mafi Vakameilalo,
Priest Associate

The Reverend Deacon
Viliami Langi, Deacon

Hsiao Ying "Ajaon" Chen
Choir Director

Marie Wang
Organist

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The Christian establishment often looks very much like the Pharisees Jesus so roundly criticizes.

By drawing lines between people. Getting into bed with the powers that be.

Making judgments based on privilege and politics rather than on mercy and justice.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran pastor who was executed by the Nazis, says that:

“Christianity stands or falls with its revolutionary protest against violence, arbitrariness and pride of power and with its plea for the weak.

Christians do too little to drive these truths home. Instead, the institutional church bends over backwards in its worship of power.

Christians need to give far more offense, to shake up the world far more often, than they do now.

Christians ought to favor the weak rather than engage in pitiful handwringing over the so-called ‘rights’ of the strong.”

To belong to the Good Shepherd is to reject the way things are. As Martin Luther King says: “There was a time when the church was very powerful. When the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for their beliefs.

In those days the church was not like a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion.

It was like a thermostat that transformed the values of society. Whenever the early Christians entered a town, the people in power went wild, accusing the Christians of being ‘disturbers of the peace’ and ‘outside agitators.’

But the Christians pressed on, in the conviction that they were ‘a colony of heaven,’ called to obey God rather than man. Small in number, they were big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be intimidated.

They brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiator contests. My how things have changed!

Today’s church is too often a weak, ineffective, nervous voice. So often it is an arch-defender of the status-quo.

Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure in the average community is consoled by the church’s silent -- and often even vocal — blessing of things as they are.” Letter from a Birmingham Jail, modified.

For most of us, living in the wealthiest nation on earth, we are enraptured with the way things are. We are scared to death to up-end the delicious apple cart that keeps so many of us fat and happy.

Yet here comes Jesus, who delights in tossing over apple carts!

And the first apple cart to go is found in the answer to

this question: Who owns me?

The question about “who owns me” is a lot like the question of “who do I worship?”

The issue isn’t whether I’ll worship, it’s only what or who do I worship?

Just so, it isn’t whether I’m owned. Only by what or by whom am I owned?

We don’t have to dig too deep to see that our owners are the usual suspects. Money. Power. Fame. Dysfunctional relationships. These things diminish who we are as human beings.

Reducing our lives to financial security or to freedom from danger or to society’s totally boring definitions of beauty or success, sell us far short of the miracle that is every human being.

Our obsession with safety leads to \$700 billion military budgets while our schools struggle to buy books and desks.

The epidemic of homelessness, something rare in the US 40 years ago, is a direct consequence of failing to build low income housing — while creating an economy that depletes the poor as more and more gold is shoveled into the pockets of the rich.

Whenever we lower our gaze from the vastness of God’s dream for all creation, and seek satisfaction in the cheap baubles of power, fame and money, we are diminished.

We are called to become, we are destined to become, not only lovers, but unconditional lovers.

Our destiny is to be like God. To be one with God. To love like God.

And to know what it is to be loved by God. But if we’re to reach that place of sublime beauty, we need to submit to our true owner. This beautiful shepherd who stops at nothing, not even death, even death on the cross, to have us all.

Because, if Jesus owns me, I get a fresh set of eyes when it comes to what truly matters in this life.

If Jesus owns me, status and security and safety can be released. And being open-hearted, self-examining, vulnerable, finding the courage, the willingness to speak up for justice, to speak up on behalf of the least among us, why, these begin to shine as the truly urgent tasks in life!

If Jesus owns me, the way things are begins to melt away into the way things can and might become. So dear friends, “let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.” 1 Jn. 3:17.

For such is the life of those who love the good shepherd.

WALLYHOUSE Update

Camille Manzana



Hello! From what I know about service and community, the first step is to try to understand. And to understand, you gotta listen. And in order to listen, someone has to open up. And while I am excited to learn more about all of you at Wallyhouse and St. Elizabeth's, here's a little about myself.

I was born and raised in Southern California, in a relatively safe and financially comfortable area. While there, I used to spend my time with programs for students and adults with disabilities, doing school, exploring, growing, being a kid, all of those things that I felt were valuable. Come 2016, I moved out to Saint Louis for school, which was in a much more urban area. I wasn't in my suburban bubble anymore, and, for the first time, I was really exposed to the unhoused population on a daily basis. I saw the same people regularly in the same places, wearing the same clothes as I went about my classes and errands. I was so unsure of how to go about doing something to mitigate the circumstances there and slowly began making little changes in my life. Carrying a stash of Hot Hands and blankets in my car, sitting with the lone regulars at Starbucks who were unhoused while I studied. Eventually, I called up Karen House Catholic Worker (after quite literally googling "homeless shelters in my area) and asked if they needed volunteers and, lucky enough, they did. There, I learned how much more powerful a team of differently minded people with the same goal could be than just the Lone Ranger I convinced myself to be.

I got a little taste of how necessary it was to be considerate through all of your actions. Fast forward to 2020, I moved out to the San Jose Catholic Worker, and stayed with them for six months. We ran a mobile shower program, door ministry, rental assistance program, whatever we could do, and I was submerged deep into the world of consideration.

A mutual one at that, with our guests being considerate for us, as well. With that being said, I still have a lot to learn, and I'm excited to be here at Wallyhouse and learn about a whole new community and how to take action. Come August, the plan is to go back to Saint Louis University, as I've been taking a year off, and finish my Master's in occupational therapy. We'll see you all soon!

Jeremy Castro

Hi there everyone, my name is Jeremy. I'd like to say thank you for welcoming me into your community. I look forward to getting to work with you all.

My story starts in the Church. My folks raised me in Harvest Christian Fellowship with pastor Greg Laurie. As I grew up, I knew I wanted to be more involved and pretty early on, I started training to become a youth leader, where I would be volunteering to assist in classes and programs the church had to offer. I realized at a young age that the Lord was going to be using me—I just wasn't sure how quite yet. But I was always eager to help and lend a hand wherever need be. My folks had split when I was around ten and the following month, my mother asked me how I felt about having my three cousins join our family. They were going through some tough times and were arranged to be put into the foster system. We didn't have much but we had enough so, naturally, we accepted and made it work. That's a single mother with five boys and a girl. It was there that I realized the importance of being there for someone in a time of need. It takes a village! We faced a lot of adversity in my family, but seeing my mother's strong faith in the Lord truly set the tone in our household. My grandparents helped us along the way while Mom was at work. There we helped take care of the farm— there was always plenty to do. Animals to feed and water, property to maintain, it kept us pretty busy. It's also where I developed my work ethic.

On top of that my grandparents also have an unconditional love for the Lord. I'm blessed in that way, lots of support in every direction. I went on to move to San Francisco for about eight years. Until the great Exodus. COVID-19 hit us pretty hard and the city cleared out. I found myself without a job and needing to find a new home. I was working at The Westin St. Francis which is a Marriott property but due to travel restrictions I have been laid-off for a year now.

While away I started looking into other fields and ended up working at Tesla. I wanted to help the world go green. Putting myself in the position to do good and render myself of service. I mean, that's what it's all about right. Romans 12 tells us we are to devote our bodies to the Lord. That we may be living testaments of his glory. Today, I find myself on a new journey. My partner Camille and I will be working in your community with Wallyhouse for the summer and I am very pleased to see what God has in store for us all. I look forward to sharing his blessing with you all. If you'd like to eat or run or read the word together. Please, reach out I'm all for it!



Garrison Keillor on Episcopalians ... An essay:

We make fun of Episcopalians for their blandness, their excessive calm, their fear of giving offense, their lack of speed and also for their secret fondness for macaroni and cheese. But nobody sings like them.

If you were to ask an audience in Des Moines, a relatively Episcopalianless place, to sing along on the chorus of "Michael Row the Boat Ashore," they will look daggers at you as if you had asked them to strip to their underwear. But if you do this among Episcopalians, they'd smile and row that boat ashore and up on the beach!And down the road!

Many Episcopalians are bred from childhood to sing in four-part harmony, a talent that comes from sitting on the lap of someone singing alto or tenor or bass and hearing the harmonic intervals by putting your little head against that person's rib cage. It's natural for Episcopalians to sing in harmony. We are too modest to be soloists, too worldly to sing in unison.

When you're singing in the key of C and you slide into the A7th and D7th chords, all two hundred of you, it's an emotionally fulfilling moment. By our joining in harmony, we somehow promise that we will not forsake each other.

I do believe this, people: Episcopalians, who love to sing in four-part harmony are the sort of people you could call up when you're in deep distress. If you are dying, they will comfort you. If you are lonely, they'll talk to you. And if you are hungry, they'll give you tuna salad!

Episcopalians believe in prayer, but would practically die if asked to pray out loud. Episcopalians like to sing, except when confronted with a new hymn or a hymn with more than four stanzas.

Episcopalians believe their Rectors will visit them in the hospital, even if they don't notify them that they are there. Episcopalians usually follow the official liturgy and will feel it is their way of suffering for their sins.

Episcopalians believe in miracles and even expect miracles, especially during their stewardship visitation programs or when passing the plate.

Episcopalians feel that applauding for their children's choirs will not make the kids too proud and conceited.

Episcopalians think that the Bible forbids them from crossing the aisle while passing the peace. Episcopalians drink coffee as if it were the Third Sacrament.

Episcopalians feel guilty for not staying to clean up after their own wedding reception in the Fellowship Hall.

Episcopalians are willing to pay up to one dollar for a meal at church. Episcopalians still serve Jell-O in the proper liturgical color of the season and Episcopalians believe that it is OK to poke fun at themselves and never take themselves too seriously.

And finally, you know you are a Episcopalian when:

- It's 100 degrees, with 90% humidity, and you still have coffee after the service.
- You hear something really funny during the sermon and smile as loudly as you can.
- Donuts are a line item in the church budget, just like coffee.
- When you watch a Star Wars movie and they say, "May the Force be with you," and you respond, "and also with you."
- And lastly, it takes ten minutes to say good-bye

(NOTE: Garrison Keillor attends

St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church, St. Paul, Minnesota)

