

The Fourth Sunday of Easter (2021)

John 10:11–18 *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.*

In the Name of Jesus.

Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.

Wonderful King! Never seen before or since. Laying down His Life for His own people; the Shepherd dies for sheep who love to wander. And then there's the wolves. To THEM—back then, and until the Judgment—it looks to the WOLVES that THEY have had their way:

³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” ³⁴ Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” ³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” ³⁶ Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” ³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him. ³⁹ But you have a

custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?”⁴⁰ They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.¹

There was a time that Israel had no shepherd, no king born of men. Instead, Moses had revealed to them—Wonderful kingdom! Wonderful King!—Moses had revealed the will of the Lord God, His ways, His love. Nothing simpler than to find LIFE in them: ‘Do this, and you shall live.’

But the world was full of wolves, then as now. And the people—the sheep of THAT Good Shepherd—became sick and fascinated with the wolves and the leaders of the wolf packs. ‘Samuel! Yes, yes! The Commandments and the Torah and blah, blah, blah; God and His Love. Not enough! GIVE...US...A...KING! WE...MUST...be like the other nations of the world!’

Oh! Wonderful reading—if the wolves howl and make you watch the news and then your faith falters! First Samuel, and chapter eight; Israel’s influencers confront the prophet Samuel:

“Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.”⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the LORD.⁷ And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.”⁸ According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.⁹ Now then, obey their voice; only you shall

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 18:33–40). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.”

¹⁰ So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. ¹¹ He said, “These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. ¹² And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. ¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. ¹⁵ He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. ¹⁶ He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. ¹⁷ He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. ¹⁸ And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.”

¹⁹ But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, “No! But there shall be a king over us, ²⁰ that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.” ²¹ And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. ²² And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey their voice and make them a king.”²

By the way, this is the way Saint John describes Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Palm Sunday, on a donkey and all that.

¹² The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Sa 8:5–22). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

¹⁵ “Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.³

These things had been ‘done to Him.’ And they favored Jesus.

For a week! Jesus’ poll numbers could not be higher! Six days He lasted as King; six days He did—as He said!—His work, the Father’s work, the Father’s love. It ended with this:

So they took Jesus,¹⁷ and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”⁴

I was educated a bit when I learned that Doctor Luther preferred the Gospel according to Saint John, of all four. The reason has something to do with his breaking free from a church of superstition and a world soaking with magic and wonders at every turn: a shrine of miracles on every corner. The other three Gospels are loaded with signs and

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jn 12:12–19). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jn 19:16–19). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

wonders and lots of Jesus' travelogue. John, over the others, teaches and teaches. A few signs. Not a parable hardly. But lots of God in our flesh; and happy to be there.

This is what your poor pastor knows; and yearns to do: the teaching. I have very little signs and wonders and social clubbing to give you. But I lose sleep over failures to teach.

Your world is full of wolves, dear sheep of the Good Shepherd. Some in the clothing of sheep. Our gods in Washington, D.C., our betters, our lords and masters: they are our 'servants,' are they not?! It's nice to know that they rise dreaming of wonders to shower on our little lives and end the day assuring us, their masters, of sweet dreams.

Pray for those poor people. Pray mightily for them—BY...NAME; WITH...FERVOR—these fan favorites of a week or so. Pray for them, for the sake of the flock of God, that you and I may live peaceable and quiet lives in the Kingdom of Christ, until He comes again and all the wolves will be scattered for good.

But pray nothing for the wolves. Those who would take your conscience —take, take, take—and leave your confidence with heaven teetering on YOUR work, YOUR service, YOUR mastery of sin IN...THIS...WORLD.

Your King amused Pilate, being at Pilate's mercy. But WHO was receiving mercy that day? Pilate; Jesus' own people; the world.

You: rise each day confident that you have a King that amuses the wolves, makes them lick their lips and fangs. 'Get HIM first; then the flock is ours.'

What the wolves will never know is Who He is and what you, the baptized, are now too. Children of our Heavenly Father. Luther taught: the church is hidden, the saints not seen.

The wolves, the world and the will of man can see our sins; but they will never see that our sins have been carried away. It is finished.

Eat and drink His Body and His Blood—of this King of yours. For in His Holy Sacrament, all that is Divine serves all that is not.

So that you and I may leave this place, again this time, raised to life; raised to say in confidence, ‘What a King. Just what I needed. He lives and serves and rules, not for Himself! But: for me!’

In the Name of Jesus.