

# Scripture Study

Fourth Sunday of Easter– Cycle C



## Opening prayer

Acts 13:14, 43-52

(Ps 100:1-3,5)

Revelation 7:9,14b-17

**John 10:27-30**

## Overview of the Gospel:

- The setting for this Sunday's Gospel is the city of Jerusalem during the Jewish Feast of the dedication, also known as Hanukkah. This feast celebrated the deliverance of the Jews from the Greek tyrant, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, during the Maccabean Revolt (168—165 B.C. See 1 Maccabees 4:36-39). Antiochus had attempted the Hellenization (forced adoption of Greek culture) of Israel and had ordered the committing of sacrilege in the Jewish temple.
- During this festival, there was sure to be strong nationalistic feelings against the Roman occupation of Israel, and a heightened longing for the coming of Messiah.
- At this time Jesus is within the Temple precincts amidst the crowds. He is challenged to proclaim outright whether or not he is the promised Messiah.
- Jesus tells them in effect that it is because of their refusal to believe, that they cannot recognize who he is (verses 25-26). He then goes on to make two other remarkable claims that scandalize and infuriate them.

## Questions:

- In the First Reading we see how the preaching of the Apostles had both successes and resulted in persecution. How has your witness to Christ seen its share of both of these? How do the promises of the Second Reading encourage you in both the joys and sorrows of your Christian walk?
- Given the social conditions at the time of this event (see above), what might be the real intent of the Pharisee's questions in verse 24?
- How do the Jewish leaders interpret Jesus' claim to be one with God (verses 31-33)? What is their reaction? Do you think they are misinterpreting Jesus' words?
- What difference does it make that Jesus is God and not just a man? Would the promise of verse 28 mean much otherwise?
- Do these verses imply "once saved, always saved? Why or why not (see Matthew 10:32-33; Colossians 1:22-23; Hebrews 12:14; John 15:2-6; CCC 161-162)? What, then do these verses imply? If no one can *take* Jesus' sheep out of his hand, what power does the world or the devil have over you? How then can a sheep of his be lost?
- What has convinced you that Jesus is the Messiah? What "old ways" of looking at Jesus must you overcome by faith?

**Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 754, 458, 706, 590**

## Closing Prayer

*Let me hold fast You, Lord, Whom the Angels themselves yearn to look upon. Wherever you go, I will follow you. If you pass through fire, I will not flinch; I fear no evil when you are with me. You carry my griefs, because you grieve for my sake. You passed through the narrow doorway from death to life, to make it wide enough for all to follow. Nothing can ever separate me from your love. -St. Bernard of Clairvaux*

**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!**

# “My sheep hear my voice, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand”

**Scripture:** *John 10:27-30*

**Meditation:** Do you know the peace and security of the Good Shepherd who watches over his own? The Old Testament often speaks of God as shepherd of his people, Israel. *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want* (Psalm 23:1). *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!* (Psalm 80:1) *We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture* (Psalm 100:3). The Messiah is also pictured as the shepherd of God's people: He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms (Isaiah 40:11). Jesus says he is the *Good Shepherd* who will risk his life to seek out and save the stray sheep (Matthew 18:12, Luke 15:4). He is the *Shepherd and Guardian of our souls* (1 Peter 2:25).

Jesus made three promises to his followers. He promised them everlasting life. If they accept him and follow him, they will have the life of God in them. Jesus also promised them a life that would know no end. Death would not be the end but the beginning; they would know the glory of indestructible life. Jesus promised a life that was secure. Jesus said that nothing would snatch them out of his hand, not even sorrow and death, since he is everlasting life itself. Our lives are safe in his hands. The security Jesus offers is an abiding relationship with the living God, and membership with his flock, the people of God. Jesus also promises the security of peace and protection from evil and the greatest harm that could befall us – eternal destruction. The Lord does not spare us from all trouble. In



this life we will experience pain, suffering, sickness, and death. But through these the Lord will lead us to ultimate victory and safety in his everlasting home. Even in the midst of our sufferings we can find a peace and security which no one can give except God alone. We can confidently follow the Lord wherever he leads, trusting that nothing can keep us from God if we surrender our lives to him. Have you placed your life securely in God where it belongs?

Cyril of Alexander, a 5th century church father comments on Jesus as our Good Shepherd:

*“He shows in what manner a shepherd may be proved good; and He teaches that he must be prepared to give up his life fighting in defense of his sheep, which was fulfilled in Christ. For man has departed from the love of God, and fallen into sin, and because of this was, I say, excluded from the divine abode of paradise, and when he was weakened by that disaster, he yielded to the devil tempting him to sin, and death following that sin he became the prey of fierce and ravenous*

*wolves. But after Christ was announced as the True Shepherd of all men, He laid down his life for us (1 John 3:16), fighting for us against that pack of inhuman beasts. He bore the Cross for us, that by His own death he might destroy death. He was condemned for us, that He might deliver all of us from the sentence of punishment: the tyranny of sin being overthrown by our faith: fastening to the Cross the decree that stood against us, as it is written (Colossians 2:14). Therefore as the father of sin had as it were shut up the sheep in hell, giving them to death to feed on, as it is written in the psalms (Ps. Xlviii.16), He died for us as truly Good, and truly our Shepherd, so that the dark shadow of death driven away He might join us to the company of the blessed in heaven; and in exchange for abodes that lie far in the depths of the pit, and in the hidden places of the sea, grant us mansions in His Father's House above. Because of this he says to us in another place: Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom (Luke 12:32).*

Do you listen attentively to the voice of the Good Shepherd and obey his word?

*"Lord Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd. In you I place all my hope and I entrust myself to you completely. Increase my confidence in your saving grace and in your abiding presence."*

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