

John 16:23-33
"Victory is Ours"
Sixth Sunday of Easter

April 30/May 1, 2016
Our Redeemer Lutheran
Vicar Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

It is in the nature of sheep to stray and get into harm's way, whether from hungry wolves or steep canyons.

For centuries, shepherds have used various methods – from staff to dog – to keep sheep from straying from the safety of their care.

In recent years, shepherds have tried more sophisticated methods.

One is a metal, hoof-proofed grid that is built into the ground around the sheep's territory. The sheep cannot walk over the grid, which is eight feet wide. This works well in keeping sheep in the protection of the pen.

But in 2006, shepherds in Yorkshire, England, found that their sheep were not only stubbornly prone to stray, but also crafty. So what did these sheep do?

One of the sheep – presumably the leader of the herd – simply laid down and rolled over the grid. Can you imagine that?

The other sheep then simply followed that sheep's lead – laying down and rolling over the grid. Soon, the entire flock had spread over the countryside to neighborhood gardens, where they ate the food and flowers of local residents.

Although these sheep seemed to have an exciting adventure, it actually placed each and every one of them into harm's way. They had left the protection of the pen and of the shepherd.

You see, those sheep could have been devoured by the world.

[We Scatter]

We, as followers of Christ – the Good Shepherd – are often identified as being sheep in Scripture. As sheep, we are just as likely as those in the illustration to scatter away from God.

We may think that straying away from God's inerrant Word is "freedom."

Or, we scatter away from God, because we fear what others would think of ourselves.

Or, we scatter away from God, because we see ourselves as unworthy of God's gifts, because of what we have done – in thought, word and deed.

So, instead of clinging to Jesus, we scatter.

[Understand]

Jesus' disciples more oftentimes than not did not truly understand what Jesus said. Just last week, the disciples didn't understand what Jesus had told them. Some of the disciples said to one another, ***“What is this when he says to us, ‘A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, you will see me?’”*** (John 16:17)

Just minutes after Jesus spoke that riddle, we have arrived at this week's Gospel lesson.

Now, Jesus is not speaking riddles or speaking in figures of speech – He is speaking plainly.

He says, ***“I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”*** (John 16:28)

His disciples then said they understood, but Jesus knows what is in their hearts.

Jesus knows that even when His disciples understood who He is – the Son of God – that they would scatter and abandon Him – but only for a while.

Jesus said, ***“Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone.”*** (John 16:32a)

You see, the disciples had faith, but Jesus knew that his disciples would temporarily abandon Him in the crisis to come. That crisis would be Jesus nailed upon the cross and His death. His disciples would be scared. They would believe that they have nothing left to cling on to.

Jesus knew that they would scatter, but His church is not built on our own strength. If the church was built on our own strength, it would crumble. It would have crumbled centuries ago.

Instead, the church is built on God's ability to use people even after they have failed. Jesus lifts up all those who have failed and uses them for His will.

Even though His disciples may desert Him in times of crisis, Jesus knows that He will never truly be alone. He said, ***“Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.”*** (John 16:32b)

Even though everyone on earth could abandon Jesus, the Father in heaven remains faithful to His Son and His mission. As Jesus is nailed upon the cross for our sins, He is not alone.

Jesus said all of these things to His disciples to bring them the peace that this world could never give.

[The World]

The world devours sinners into believing that what God calls “sin” is actually a “virtue.” The world deceives sinners.

(Jesus) was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him (John 1:10).

The world did not know Jesus, because the world naturally rejects the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus warns us that ***“in the world you will have tribulation”*** (John 16:33b).

Jesus said that if you follow Him, you will face persecution for His sake.

Every so often, the general idea of “world peace” comes up. Will there ever be world peace?

For those who reject the Triune God, there will never be peace. You see, the world believes there is always something that needs to be corrected – and these corrections often disagree with God’s Law and Natural Law. Today, Natural Law – which is agreed upon moral behavior – can’t even be agreed upon, because we can’t even agree on the meaning of truth. According to the world, truth today is all relative.

And, who is the ruler of the world? Satan – the great deceiver. He wants us to follow the world, rather than Jesus. He wants us to think of ourselves, rather than thinking of others. He wants us to trust in worldly desires, rather than trusting in God.

[Peace in Jesus Christ]

Although, we may face persecution for trusting in Jesus Christ, we have an eternal reward – peace.

Thanks be to Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven to live a perfect life, die and rise.

Take heart; Jesus has overcome the world!

Through your Baptism, Absolution, hearing the Word of God and Holy Communion, you have been forgiven of all of your sins! Through the Means of Grace – the gifts of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit – you have forgiveness of sins, everlasting life and eternal salvation – and not by your own doing – but by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd.

Victory is ours!

The world would like you to think that Jesus is still inside the sealed tomb and that the battle is still on going, but the fight is over. Jesus has burst from the sealed tomb and He lives!

He has destroyed the power of sin, death and the devil upon all who put their trust in Him. The world cannot devour us sheep, since the Good Shepherd has overcome the threats of this world! He keeps us safe! For He is our peace!

Jesus has conquered in the fight. He has brought us life and light! Alleluia! Amen!

Now, let us make a joyful noise unto the Lord! Amen!