

LENT DEVOTIONAL APRIL 5, 2017

The Rev. Jon Draskovic '12, Pastor, Whidbey Presbyterian Church, Oak Harbor, Wa.

SCRIPTURE

JOHN 10:1-18

1 “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” 6 Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. 7 So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. 11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away — and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

DEVOTIONAL

Confession: I know nothing about shepherding. In his novel *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, Ivan Doig writes about two Scottish immigrants who homesteaded the front range of the Montana Rockies in the 1890s as sheep ranchers. As it turns out, sheep are not smart. Doig writes, “fleecies are a garden that wanders around looking for its own extinction . . . right now they are out there searching for ways to die, and there are many sources willing to oblige their mortal urge.”

This less romantic but maybe more accurate understanding of shepherding puts this passage in a new light for me. Being a shepherd of people is a difficult business to be in: We sheep need great care in order not to get lost, much tending in order not to be snatched by wolves and scattered, much prodding in order to see the gate to safety. Thank God that He is the Good Shepherd who cares for his sheep.

PRAYER

Thank you, Father for Jesus, our Good Shepherd, the One who shows us the gate and leads us through it; who tends us and keeps us from getting lost; who lays down his life on our behalf when the wolves come to snatch us. Amen.

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