# I will Shepherd my people

Last week we heard that after the death of King Solomon, there was a split in the Kingdom of David because of Solomon’s sin of unfaithfulness to God. Today, we find out about God’s plan to shepherd His own people and bring His people back to Himself.

In our first reading, God sent Prophet Jeremiah to the people of Judah in the south. At that time the Northern kingdom, Israel, was already destroyed by the Assyrians who were people from modern day Northern Iraq. The Southern kingdom Judah ruled by David’s descendants had a series of bad kings who were not loyal to God and His laws. Zedekiah was the last one of these kings before the Assyrians were conquered by the Babylonians who were from modern day southern Iraq.

God speaks through Jeremiah **“Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the flock of my pasture.”** God said He Himself would take over shepherding His people. It took 600 years before God thought the world was ready for this Shepherd who would reign and govern wisely. This Shepherd, Jesus Christ, came through the announcement of an angel and was born of a Virgin.

In the Gospel, the Apostles after coming back from their solo mission of evangelizing, preaching, curing the sick, and driving out demons, were debriefed by Jesus the promised good Shepherd. They were tired, hungry, and probably wanted to be alone with their Master to share a meal. Jesus, also wanted them to leave His neighborhood of Nazareth and go off to a deserted place to eat and rest for a while.

All meals in the Mediterranean provided an opportunity for strengthening personal bonds between people at table. Meal time is a special time for bonding. This is similar to what we do here at St. Francis after the 9:30 Mass. After bonding by receiving the Eucharist, either physically or spiritually, we then gather in the dining Hall to fellowship.

For the Jews, meal time was the time to talk to your daughter or your son about their day, to talk to them about their fears and joy. Since the disciples had been away for a couple of days, Jesus the good Shepherd wanted them to again bond together privately.

You might say, Jesus wanted them to go on a retreat. As anybody who as gone on a retreat would know, you come back energized, refreshed, ready to tackle the next assignment. However, the crowd probably out of the need to know more about their God and how He relates to them, kept coming from all directions to listen to Jesus whom they could not get enough of. Put another way, the nosey people were probably suspicious and wanted to know what Jesus and His disciples were going to do in secret. They wanted to know what they had to hide. Mind you in those days, people did not go to picnics like we do today.

Instead of getting upset for lack of privacy, Jesus the good shepherd, unselfishly responded to the crowd with compassion, sympathy, and love. The Pharisees and Sadducees who were supposed to shepherd them, were not good shepherds. They did not know their sheep because they did not love them. If they did, they would have led them to obey the commandments of God instead of human precepts.

Jesus wants us to know Him by obeying His commandments. We have to ask ourselves, do we really know Jesus? Is His light of truth shining in our hearts? When we know Him, it is not by faith alone or mere conviction that we know we know Him. Instead, it would be by love and by our actions in obeying His commandments that we will know that we know Him.

As a good shepherd, Jesus saw His food as taking care of the crowd spiritually as He did the woman at the well in the Gospel of John. He put aside the physical hunger of His Apostles and Himself and probably waited to eat until the feeding of the five thousand which we will hear about next week.

Jesus is still shepherding and feeding His people today in our liturgy. The liturgy of the Church calls us to an unselfish spirit like that of Jesus. In the first part of the liturgy, Christ teaches His flock through His words. In the second half which is both a sacrifice and a wedding feast, Jesus prepares a banquet for His flock through the human vehicle the priest.

As we come to the table of the Lord, let us remember that the good Shepherd who feeds us with His flesh and His blood loves us infinitely.