

# Easter II

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[ 0 : 00 ] A metaphor is simply a figure of speech where an image or an object is used to describe someone in a non-literal manner.

An example is William Shakespeare's famous quote, all the world's a stage and all the men and women are merely players or actors.

Now it's obvious that the world is not a literal stage and we are not all actors. If Shakespeare's not your thing, then maybe you can relate to the king of rock and roll, Elvis.

Who said, you ain't nothing but a hound dog crying all the time. Hound dog in this song is a metaphor for one who constantly complains.

But let's switch here from Elvis to the Bible. Admittedly a big jump, but the Bible is full of metaphors. And more specifically, Scripture has many metaphors for God and our relationship to God.

[ 1 : 18 ] God is referred to as a rock or fortress depicting his immovability. The Bible depicts the Lord as a shelter in the time of a storm.

God is described as an all-consuming fire. Speaking of his holiness. Our Lord is called a door that leads to eternal life.

Our Lord is referred to as the bread of life, the lamb of God and the bridegroom. And the list goes on and on. But here in our gospel reading this morning, we heard that our Lord is our good shepherd.

Good shepherd. This is one of the most comforting metaphors and is depicted even on the icon as you came into the nave this morning.

In John chapter 10, verse 11, we read, Jesus said, I am the good shepherd and the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

[ 2 : 27 ] In other words, the God who has come in human flesh is the shepherd who sacrifices his own life for the life of the sheep, for the life of you.

John contrasts this good shepherd with a hireling. That is, one who does not own the sheep but is simply a hired hand.

Hired to look after the sheep. When the hired hand is confronted with an enemy, say a wolf, he flees.

Why? Because the sheep are not his. They are merely the property of another. And that's why Jesus reiterates here in verse 15 that he lays down his life for the sheep.

He gives all for the sake of his sheep. The sheep belong to him.

[ 3 : 35 ] The God and creator of all things is the one who has now come to this earth in order to give the ultimate sacrifice, his own life.

And he did this out of love. Out of love. Our God carries with him a rod to protect the sheep and a staff to gently prod or guide them back onto the path in the fold.

But Jesus concludes our reading from John chapter 10 by saying, And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring in, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

This morning, we witnessed three of our Lord's little lambs enter into the fold of the church.

And if you heard my voice crackling a little bit at the beginning, it wasn't really nerves. It was thinking about this.

[ 4 : 56 ] B, Jack, and little Ada were made children of God. They received the light and grace of God through the waters of holy baptism.

And now they can confidently say with all of us what we heard earlier from Psalm 23. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord in the flock forever.

That promise is true. It's true for them, and it's true for us as we walk in the path of the good shepherd.

In faith, remembering that they and all of us who have been baptized into Christ have passed from death to life, and now we belong to our God and King, Jesus, the Christ, the shepherd.

But anybody that has studied English will tell you that there's a limit in using analogies and metaphors, metaphors, especially when speaking of God.

[ 6 : 21 ] Metaphors are never meant to speak exhaustively. They paint a portrait, if you will, and they're simply that. They're an illustration put into a word picture that we can identify with and we can relate with.

It is true. Jesus is the good shepherd and he leads his people. But our Lord does not force the sheep into submission against their will.

God is love. And true love is never coerced or forced because by definition, it's no longer love. Love is a matter of the will.

And after baptism, we are called now to listen to our shepherd's voice in the Holy Scriptures. We are called to partake of his table that he has prepared for us, even in the midst of being surrounded by our enemies, meaning those who oppose our faith and oppose Christ.

But we can choose to ignore our shepherd. We can resist his gentle prodding. We can listen to the many hirelings that care nothing for us, who promise us a life of comfort, a life of ease and pleasure.

[ 7 : 55 ] If only we will abandon our good shepherd. If only we will leave the flock, the church. And if we choose to follow such hirelings, we end up trapped by a vicious wolf that spares no one.

And that's Satan. He is an infamous liar and a deceiver of many. I believe that that's why today is not merely about B, Jack, and little Ada, although we rejoice and we celebrate and our hearts are full for them today.

But today is about remembering that we are all sheep as well. And as sheep, we are called to follow Christ by remembering that as baptized Christians, we are to stay the course.

we are not to leave the fold, the church. We are to listen to the voice of God in Holy Scripture.

We are to run from the hirelings who twist truth in order to appeal to our flesh and to trap us like helpless lambs.

[ 9 : 22 ] So on this Good Shepherd Sunday, may we remember the words that we're going to sing here in just a few minutes, again from that great hymn, The King of Love My Shepherd Is, which says the following.

In death's dark veil, I fear no ill. With thee, dear Lord, beside me. Thy rod and staff my comfort still. Thy cross before to guide me. In the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Ghost. Amen.