

# Fourth Sunday of Easter – Good Shepherd Sunday – May 6/7, 2017 – Reflection

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Nature has an almost infinite variety of creatures, but with all those differences floatin' around, it always surprises me how often like sticks with like. Sheep roam in a flock, geese waddle in a gaggle, cows graze in a herd, and little fish swim in a school. I guess that for these, who could easily turn up in something's teeth or claws for a snack, there's safety in numbers. But even the alpha predators kinda hang together: orcas and dolphins hunt in pods; wolves prowl in packs; lions stalk in prides; and vultures flock to pick up the leftovers.

It seems like most species in nature bond together with their own and drive off, hunt, or fear what is strange and different.

The human animal is no different. The mob is frenzied and destructive. The political party pursues its agenda and is deaf to other ideas. A white face fears a black one. A Christian fears a Moslem. An English speaker makes no effort to understand feelings expressed in Spanish. A patriot shouts USA, USA and sees the rest of the world as some lesser form of life called "THEM".

Maybe that's why one of the earliest images the Church had for Jesus the Savior was the Good Shepherd. I mean, who could possibly object to that? A shepherd protects his flock from the wolf like we want God to protect us and ours. A shepherd leads his lambs to green pastures where they can be filled and grow just like God leads us in ways that

give us joy. A shepherd searches for a sheep that has wandered off like we don't want God to forget us even when we stray from Him. What a nice image for God: a tender, loving shepherd. How could anyone possibly take offence at Jesus calling Himself our Good Shepherd?

Well here's something to think about: what does a shepherd take care of? Sheep, of course ... soft, wooly, cuddly, gentle sheep. So, if Jesus calls Himself our Good Shepherd, that must mean that, at least in some ways, God thinks of us as sheep. Now, before ya get a swelled head, think about it. Sheep ain't none too bright. Sheep'll follow one another over a cliff. Sheep are scared of anything and can get spooked by their own shadow. Sheep smell. And, sheep are pretty darned pessimistic ... they think everything and everyone but themselves is BAAAAAAD!!!!

And here's somethin' else for ya to mull over. Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd, I know my sheep, and mine know me." He doesn't say I know my white sheep, but anything else is no good. He doesn't say I love Irish wool but anything else is rags. He doesn't say only dyed in the wool conservatives have the truth and the rest are all idiots.

"I am the Good Shepherd. My sheep hear my voice and they follow me." The next time you look with disgust at someone you call a black sheep; the next time you run carelessly with a flock of unthinking, like-minded sheep; the next time you exalt yourself and those like you and humble the rest of the world, maybe you're not what you think you are. Maybe you're not that bright, cute, cuddly, loveable little lamb of God. Maybe if ya took a good, long, hard look at yourself in the mirror, all you'd see lookin' back is a stupid ole goat!!