

# BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

April 21, 2024 • 4th Sunday of Easter • John 10:11-18

## The Good Shepherd

*Jesus tells us he is the good shepherd, an image familiar to the people to whom he spoke. A good shepherd stayed in the fields with his flock. He was there when they slept and when they woke. He went out to find them when they were lost and he protected them from harm.*

**T**he message of the good shepherd is so clear; Jesus is there for us, ready to carry us through the hard times, ready to lay down his life for us. It isn't difficult for parents to understand this message. We would certainly lay down our lives for our children. We would gladly help shoulder their burdens. Sometimes it is so difficult to watch them struggle through a problem, waiting patiently to be asked for help.

I remember how frustrating it was to have an overly confident youngster stubbornly refuse help with problems way over his head. And I wonder if Jesus feels that way when I'm too stubborn or unaware to ask him for help when I need it. Self-determination is a great virtue, but like many virtues, when taken to an extreme, it can become a burdensome stumbling block.

When I was in my mid-thirties I remember going to confession and afterward asking God to be patient with me. "I will change," I told him, "I will change." In a graced moment, I saw myself as a fourteen-year-old kneeling in my old parish church confessing the same sin, and asking God to be patient with me. In that instant, I became aware that I could not overcome this deeply rooted transgres-

sion on my own. If I wanted to change I had to have God's help.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, doesn't want to stand patiently by while I try to overcome sin or less-than-lovely habits on my own. He isn't just willing to be our crutch to get through hard times, he is willing to pick us up and carry us. In this reading, Jesus tells us, "You are mine." We just have to let go of our need to go it alone, and respond by telling Jesus, "I am yours."

### FAMILY RESPONSE

See if your family can come up with a modern day person who would have the same qualities as a shepherd did in Jesus' time.

### PERSONAL RESPONSE

Imagine you hear very clearly God's voice saying, "You are mine." How would you respond? What do you want to remember from last week? What are you looking forward to next week? What are your concerns?