

The Adopted Life

Fourth Sunday of Easter ~ 05.15.2011

Now You Have Returned

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is also known as “Good Shepherd Sunday” and the lectionary this week emphasizes Jesus as our Shepherd. Our first instinct may be to see ourselves as the sheep who follow Jesus the Shepherd. That is a wonderful truth, and one of the most significant ways to experience God the Trinity in these passages, but I think there is a deeper truth that I've often missed. This Truth is wholly related to our adoption into the Life of the Trinity and it has to do with the phrase in 1 Peter 2:25, which says "...now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls."

If we'll ask "Who is Jesus and how is it that we have returned to Him (and His Father in the Spirit)?" it will clue us in to the deeper truth. Can you see it??? That exciting truth is that we (the human race) have returned to God the Trinity IN JESUS, and in His literal Humanity, which makes Jesus not only the Shepherd (John 10:2) and the Gate (John 10:7), but also the Sheep! 1 Peter 2:19-24 intimates at Jesus' "Sheepness" on our behalf in the imagery given, which sounds to me a lot like a lamb going silently to slaughter. We can also come to this deeper truth by acknowledging the two central truths of the Gospel: 1). God the Trinity only ever planned for our adoption into His Life through Jesus Christ—or the Son of God made human on our behalf and in our place, and 2). If we could have gotten ourselves adopted and saved, God would have never planned for His Son to do it!

Yes, when perceived by the Spirit and through the Gospel, all of the lectionary scriptures for this week actually point to Jesus taking our place in every way, including as sheep, and sharing His response to His Father and our fellow human beings with us in the grace of the Triune God. So no matter where you are in your journey of Inclusion—whether in struggle, doubt, celebration or joy—Jesus shares with you His embracing of the fact that IN HIMSELF, THE RESURRECTED JESUS, you have, even now, returned to the shepherd and guardian of your soul!

~ Tim Brassell