

Wednesday 29th July

John 10:11-21

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'

Again the Jews were divided because of these words. Many of them were saying, 'He has a demon and is out of his mind. Why listen to him?' Others were saying, 'These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'

Here we find Jesus telling those around him about himself using imagery to do so, imagery that works like a parable or an allegory. We know who Jesus is in the story, for he tells us quite clearly that he is the Good Shepherd but we are left to wonder whom the hired hand, the wolf and the others are.

To read a passage as for the first time, putting ourselves in the context of the first telling, can be a worthwhile experience though not easy. Try to do that for yourself, in 1st Century context what is Jesus saying and how does it sound to you? It might sound different to another person.

What we see is that the words of Jesus divided the 1st Century listeners. Some saw him as possessed by a demon and others have seen the miracles Jesus has performed and could not then see him as possessed by a demon.

It was one particular type of miracle that the Jews spoke of "open the eyes of the blind." John was careful in his construction of the Gospel and I am certain there is good reason for him including this comment at this point and as I shall say in a moment it is relevant to us.

The main message running through this passage is that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is going to lay down his life for the sheep – the sheep of Israel and the sheep in another fold – the Gentiles?

Jesus is in control of his life, his purpose and his destiny. Whatever may happen to him he is in control and fulfilling the purpose of his Father.

Sometimes our 21st Century experience and mind set do not help us to fully get into what Jesus was saying for we are living in a very different culture and we have Church historical explanation underpinning our reading and listening to the words. We can easily place our context onto the passage. Is that a bad thing?

When we read the scriptures what should our prayer be? That Jesus might open our eyes to the truth he wants us to see within the written words before us, the miracle the Jews referred to. The words of Scripture speak into the past and the present and will speak truth in the future too.

Jesus also said "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and **they will listen to my voice.**" Are we listening to the voice of the Good Shepherd?

In your today what is Jesus saying to you through this passage? What is he saying to your life in your current experience? May he open your eyes to see, your ears to hear and then your heart to take action.