

Bible Study for May 3rd, 2020 (Easter 4)

John 10:1-10 . . . the parable of the sheepfold and the gate.

“I am the gate!” . . . note John’s famous “I am” being used once again. This is a motif within John’s Gospel which identifies Jesus in various ways: Light, Word, Wine, Sheep Way, Truth, Resurrection, Life!

Raymond Brown’s commentary on JOHN: “there is an argument among scholars as to whether we should speak of parable or allegory (or both) in John 10.

My thought: An argument among scholars; say it isn’t so!

Parable: a simple illustrative story with a single point;

Allegory: an expanded series of metaphors where the various details and persons involved all have a figurative meaning.

Acts 2:42-47 “*Life in the Growing Church*”

Munck, Albright, and Mann’s translation, revision, editing:

They sold both lands and other property, and distributed the money to all according to need. They continued to meet every day in the temple and, breaking bread at home, they ate their meals with joy and simplicity.

1 Peter 2:19-25

John Elliot’s translation: For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. . . . For you “were straying like sheep” but now “have been returned” to the Shepherd and Overseer of your lives.

Psalm 23 . . . The Lord is my Shepherd!

My Reflections . . .

The phrase that comes to mind when I contemplate these readings is “Radical Christianity” . . . a concept somewhat in vogue in the late 1970’s when I was studying at Queen’s Theological College. It is, in some ways, the “starry-eyed” approach to Christian Faith: to be a Christian means to live like Jesus and the Disciples lived (and possibly also to die like they died!).

I have come to accept that while I try my best to live the former, I certainly have no desire to experience the latter.

That being acknowledged, these readings do challenge us! What does it mean for us to say that we choose to be “followers” of Jesus? How do we live an “authentic faith” in this complex and complicated world of ours? Do we see ourselves as “individuals” or as part of a “community”, or as both? What strengthens our faith? What diminishes it? What lessons has this era of self-isolation” taught us about community? How have we remained part of a “flock” while living quite separately physically from each other?

May we echo the words of the Psalmist: The Lord is my Shepherd!

(Rev. Dr. Tony Thompson)