

Cornerstone.

“There is NO salvation through anyone else.”

“When it is revealed we shall be like him.”

“I AM the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me.”

First off, Peter is feeling his oats. FILLED with the Holy Spirit, emboldened, no longer fearful for his own wellbeing, he stands up to the leaders and elders of the people and preaches Jesus Christ to their faces. Speaking of how they rejected him, the Son of God, and crucified a good, holy, and righteous man, who has become the cornerstone of salvation.

Peter is aware that the signs he performs and the powerful preaching he gives are not of his own accord but are gifted to him through the Holy Spirit and are done in the name of Jesus. He knows that he is a tool in the hands of a master craftsman to bring out the wonder and the beauty and the love of God in all who will hear him, who will LISTEN to him.

In the first letter of John he recollects the transfiguration of Jesus, which John himself, along with Peter and James, were present. And John reminds us that WE are children of God, every one of us, but what we will become hasn't been revealed. What we become is up to US, by our free will, by our choices in life, by our following in the footsteps of Jesus, or turning our backs to him to follow the road to damnation. John saw the glorification of Jesus at the transfiguration, a glimpse of what heaven has in store for ALL, if we choose it, eternal life in the splendor and glory of God the Father.

And why would one NOT want to follow Jesus, to listen to his words, to be humble and unafraid. In John's gospel today, Jesus describes himself as a shepherd, the GOOD SHEPHERD, the shepherd who is willing to lay down his own life for his flock. And not just lay down his life, but to offer it FREELY, WILLINGLY, into the hands of others, because that's what his Father has commanded of him.

It should go without saying, but Jesus IS pretty radical. Looking at our own society here in the United States radicals are seen as either someone to be avoided or held up as a new trend, but in most all cases they are the loud and obnoxious, wanting or needing to be heard, mostly by themselves.

Not so for Jesus. He quietly, unassumingly, offers the blessings and forgiveness and healing of God the Father to all who would accept it, NOT in his name or for his OWN sake, but for the glory of God. That in itself would be pretty radical by today's standards.

And the flock Jesus is sent to gather, those who know his voice, the voice of God speaking in their hearts, were the Jews of his time, EVEN the leaders, priests, and elders of the peoples. Yet he knew that many of their hearts had turned to stone and could not, would not, hear his voice and follow. And the OTHER sheep, not belonging to the fold of the Jews, are the lost sheep of Israel, scattered amongst the various conquering nations, and the Gentiles.

Over the past two millennium MANY have heard the words of Jesus, have heard the Gospel, the Good News, and have followed the Good Shepherd. Many MORE have heard and turned away. Even today society tells us we can get along just fine, even get along BETTER, if we don't let God, RELIGION, get in our way of having a good life, a good time. All that Jesus and God stuff is for the old folk, is just superstition, and has no place in modern society. Science tells me all the truth I need to know, and I can find my own way to heaven, if there really is such a place. Know this, the road to hell is lined with good intentioned and feeble-minded souls. Even Jesus proclaimed that "Many are invited, but few are chosen." (Mt 22:14)

May we here today who have HEARD the call of the Good Shepherd to share in his Pascal blessing, to feast on his words, and eat his flesh and drink his blood, be enlightened and emboldened as Peter by the Holy Spirit to share our life in Christ with others and gather them in to the flock of our Lord.