

Prophet
Jeremiah 23:1-6

Woe to the shepherds
who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!
says the LORD.

²Therefore,
thus says the LORD,
the God of Israel,
concerning the shepherds
who shepherd my people:

It is you who have scattered my flock,
and have driven them away,
and you have not attended to them.

So I will attend to you for your evil doings,
says the LORD.

³Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock
out of all the lands where I have driven them,
and I will bring them back to their fold,
and they shall be fruitful and multiply.

⁴I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them,
and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed,
nor shall any be missing,
says the LORD.

⁵The days are surely coming, says the LORD,
when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch,
and he shall reign as king and deal wisely,
and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

⁶In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety.
And this is the name by which he will be called:
'The LORD is our righteousness.'

Reading the Prophet This Week

The lectionary takes us back to mid-Jeremiah
To frame our vision or Reign of Christ Sunday
The anticipation of a messianic, Davidic figure

The contrast of the bad shepherds we've had
with promised good one(s) we anticipate
is the central metaphor of this oracle.

Do we identify as helpless foolish victims
or as foragers helped by the flock or herd
with specific occasional need for shepherds?

We've heard from Jeremiah in summer and fall
Harsh judgment of cracked cisterns, failed religious leaders
And it's easier to blame than to confess

Are we to simply wait and watch for replacement shepherds,
A consumer version of religious life, waiting for novelty,
Or are we anticipating our own call to forage or shepherd?

The days are coming
And the messianic agent is coming
Distinct from the bad shepherds

David is the model
But the more you know about David,
The more complex that promise becomes

How triumphal is this vision
And how this-worldly or idealized
Zionist, or Christian Empire, or Moral Majority?

As we observe Memorial Sunday, *momento mori*,
what do we 'save' a sheep life from and for?
what is their purpose in right relations?
(first covenants in Genesis were vegan!)

Gospel
Luke 23:32-43

32 Two others also,
who were criminals,
were led away
to be put to death
with him.

33 When they came
to the place that is called The Skull,
they crucified Jesus there
with the criminals,
one on his right
and one on his left.

34 Then Jesus said,
'Father, forgive them;
for they do not know
what they are doing.'

And they cast lots
to divide his clothing.

35 And the people stood by,
watching;
but the leaders scoffed at him,
saying,
'He saved others;
let him save himself
if he is the Messiah of God,
his chosen one!'

36 The soldiers also mocked him,
coming up and offering him sour wine,
37 and saying,
'If you are the King of the Jews,
save yourself!'

38 There was also an inscription over him,
'This is the King of the Jews.'

39 One of the criminals
who were hanged there
kept deriding him
and saying,
'Are you not the Messiah?
Save yourself and us!'

40 But the other rebuked him,
saying,
'Do you not fear God,
since you are under the same sentence
of condemnation?

41 And we indeed
have been condemned justly,
for we are getting
what we deserve
for our deeds,
but this man
has done nothing wrong.'

42 Then he said,
'Jesus, remember me
when you come
into your kingdom.'

43 He replied,
'Truly I tell you,
today you will be with me
in Paradise.'

Reading the Gospel This Week

Reign of Christ often takes us back to the cross:
If Christ is King, he's hardly a triumphal success –
at his crucifixion, or since – is he?

Luke's version varies from Matt 27 and Mark 15
They call the other 2 'bandits', Luke 'criminals'
lēstas translates as 'robbers' or 'thieves'
Luke knows the word, uses it for the Good Sam story

Luke 22:37 quotes Isaiah 53:12 – not paralleled in M/M
the 'suffering servant' numbered among 'outlaws'
to frame our understanding of Jesus
kakourgoi less pejorative than *lestas*

Our Luke 23:34 – again not paralleled in M/M
develops that allusion to Isaiah 53, amplified in many MSS
so what if the 'authorities' punish wrongly?

The scoffing taunt about 'save yourself'
sōs root about 'safe, rescued' 'from danger to safety'
invites reflection about 'saving/losing' our lives

Only Luke adds 'the repentant criminal' exchange,
'our condemnation is just, but he did nothing wrong'
Jesus is the 'suffering servant' of Isaiah

'Jesus, remember me' *mnēsthēti*
is the same word Abraham said in Luke 16:25
to the rich man seeing Lazarus

'today you will be with me in Paradise'
'truly' is *amen, paradeisō* rare
so again: saved from what, for what?

any links in all this to *momento mori*?