

IN NOMINE JESU

JESUS KNOWS HIM AND HE KNOWS JESUS

Our sermon for the sixth Sunday of the resurrection Season, this day the Church in this place has chosen to remember the Faith that God gave His servant Carl Edward Reblin, is taken from the Gospel of St. John. Hear the Word of the Messiah:

I, I AM the Shepherd, the Good One, and I know Mine and Mine know Me; just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father, and the soul of Me I place for the sheep.¹

Phyllis, Betsy, Stuart, Christie, Cindy, Daniel, David, D.J., Carol, family and friends of Carl Reblin:

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

The narrative of the Good Shepherd, in particular as He is revealed in the Psalm we number 23, is one of the last biblical accounts Saint Carl Edward Reblin heard and responded to while in his mortal body. At that time, Carl's voice had grown so weak, his words so difficult to hear and understand. Yet Carl was given a gift that day. The Holy Spirit, working through the Word of God, granted our brother in Christ the strength to confess the Faith in the Apostles' Creed and pray with us the prayer our Lord has given to His people. Before four witnesses, Carl received from God that day the ability to clearly sing with us, without seeing the hymnal, words found in this afternoon's second hymn. That one, you may recall, was based upon Psalm 23 and the 10th chapter of the Good News as its God-breathed words were recorded by St. John.

That Mr. Reblin could sing should be no surprise to anyone who has known him for any length of time. You who are his close friends and family well understand that he was given to lead a singing family. You have evidence of that today, as their voices join ours in this service of the Lord to those who would be called His people.

¹ John 10:14-15.

So, as strength for this life was leaving his body, as his words became so difficult to discern, at the time the Word of God came into his bedroom, God gave Carl, Phyllis and others with us, all that was needed. That was done, we may understand, so that those of us who were present in the last few days of his mortal life can testify that the Faith of the Messiah, the Anointed One of God, Jesus the Ideal Shepherd, was dwelling in Carl Reblin. We are ear-witnesses, if anyone needs them, who will testify that the incarnate, enfleshed Son of God's words apply to Carl:

I, I AM the Shepherd, the Good One, and I know Mine and Mine know Me; just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father, and the soul of Me I place for the sheep.²

Jesus, in repeating His self-revelation that He is the Good, or Ideal or Beautiful Shepherd of God's people, does so that His followers might hear, know and believe that He alone is the fulfillment of God's Word given in the Old Covenant. Behind Jesus' words which you have heard repeated today lie the inspired Word of God first given in the canonical books of the Old Testament. For centuries, until God in the Person of Jesus revealed their fulfillment in Him, the words of God declared from the books of Ezekiel and Exodus were part of the only infallible rule of faith and practice for those who were being saved from sin, death and eternal separation from God. For about six centuries, the faithful of the Old Covenant waited for God to complete His Promise to Shepherd His people as it was given through the prophet Ezekiel.

As you have heard today, Jesus declared Himself to be the Shepherd of the promise. In doing so, Jesus revealed that the Name of God which He gave to answer Moses' request some 1,500 years beforehand was His Name. St. John records that Jesus said of Himself, "εγω ειμι," which we translate, "I, I AM." The Greek-speaking Israelites of the last centuries of the Old Covenant era and the first centuries of the

² John 10:14-15.

New Covenant age used those words to translate the Hebrew Name by which God had revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush.³ This afternoon's Good News text began with words like these, as Jesus, the Son of God, declares of Himself:

*Εγω ειμι the Shepherd, the Good One. The Shepherd, the Good One, the soul of Him He places (down) concerning the sheep.*⁴

In the text which Carl believed by the grace of God, behind which lies the Psalm which our brother sang, is God the Beautiful Shepherd. He is revealed to be Jesus, the Great I AM. In these precious texts, so often heard at funerals, is the proclamation that Jesus alone is God the I AM Who, of His own will, in accord with the will of the Father and the Holy Spirit, dies for His sheep, His people.

If you believe that which the Word of God is revealing, you have the gift of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit always points the one to whom He is given to Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah. Those who know Jesus as the Ideal Shepherd Who has gone into death in His people's sins, you who believe that Jesus is leading you through death into life even now, are His own people. That means, like our now fully-sainted brother, you are part of the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy when He said:

*I, I AM the Shepherd, the Good One, and I know Mine and Mine know Me; just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father, and the soul of Me I place for the sheep.*⁵

Those words declare the Good News that those who belong to Jesus are already known by Him and know Him by His Word. It has become a sad custom in churches that wish to be part of the sheepfolds of the Good Shepherd to permit, or even encourage, eulogies at Christian funerals. Eulogies are, literally, "good words," spoken about someone who has died. Such words are parts of attempts to somehow show that the one who has passed out of this life somehow merits something good in an afterlife.

³ LXX Exodus 3:14; MT Exodus 3:14 אהיה אשר אהיה

⁴ John 10:11.

⁵ John 10:14-15.

Yet, when the Lord assembles people into His sheepfold – the places we call church buildings – He does so that they might truly hear the Good Word. It is the Word of the Good Shepherd – the eternal Truth that He paid the price demanded by the Holy God to save sinners from sin and all its effects – that is the true eulogy.

Carl Reblin knows that to be the truth. For more than eight decades – closer to nine – God drew our sainted brother into Christian congregations to hear God’s Word. He believed, even as he confessed, that Jesus knew him and he knew Jesus.

Carl did not attend the Lord’s services to him to hear good words about Carl. He came to hear of his Good Shepherd, His Savior Who died and rose from the dead for him. In particular, in these last few years, Carl truly came into the Divine Services to see Jesus. The man who could not in his waning years even see Jesus’ Sheepdog (his pastor), still came into God’s House to behold his Lord.

Mr. Reblin learned to see Jesus in things his eyes would no longer let him see. He depended upon his ears more – though they seemed to be failing him too. He leaned then on the sense of touch. He placed his open, empty hand out to receive the true Body of his Savior. He tasted the fruits of the Cross and received forgiveness and strengthening to life eternal.

Touch became very important for him, even as it can be for all of us, in receiving God’s gifts. The man had an iron grip. He rejoiced when it was responded to in kind. It was our weekly greeting as he stretched forth his hand in greeting, to say, “Is this my pastor?” With the firm grip returned, he would say, “Yes, it is my pastor, and someday, I will get to see him.”

As he was recovering from his latest surgery, we shared the Word of God in the recovery room. As with everyone, the anesthesia had clouded his senses. When, in front of a nurse who happens to be in the diaconate of another confession of faith, he could not figure out who was speaking to him, we grasped hands in our traditional manner of greeting, and he exclaimed, “Oh, it’s my pastor!”

Carl knew his Sheepdog, because he believed his Sheepdog was given to the Lord's flock keep him, and all in this sheepfold, close to our Good Shepherd. The man who had recognized who was before him through the firm grasp of friendship, now sees Him Who has held him fast to Himself through His Word and Sacraments. He whose eyes had failed him in this mortal life, now beholds the marks of the nails in the Good Shepherd's hands.

Someday, on the Last Day, when that Good Shepherd returns as victorious Lord of all, Carl's body will be raised from the dust of death. For now, his remains are covered with the white pall reserved in this Church for those who fall asleep in the Faith. The presence which you see means that we believe, by the Word of God, that the immortal soul of our now fully sainted brother will be joined to his body – perfect, glorified, reflecting the light of Jesus.

That means with his own eyes Carl will behold the One who laid down His life for him, and for all who He calls by His Name. Because Christ Jesus has been raised from the dead, so too will Carl Edward Reblin be resurrected from death's grasp. He will live with the Good Shepherd in blessedness and purity forever. May this declaration lead you to the eternal reality as it is even now for Carl:

Christ is risen!

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Easter VI

Funeral Service for Carl E. Reblin

Psalms 23, 116; Job 5:7-11; Romans 8:31-39; John 10:11-16

May 25, 2014

Pastor Michael H. Morehouse

Soli Deo Gloria