

# Homily For Tuesday of the 2nd Week of Advent - Year II

## St Peter's 8:30AM/7:00PM Masses - Dec 10, 2019

**Isaiah 40:1-11** "A voice cries ... make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

**Psalm 96** "Tell of his salvation from day to day.... All the trees of the forest sing for joy."

**Mt 18:12-14** "It is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should be lost."

### Lost and Found

#### Introduction

I have heard it explained that the question Jesus asked the disciples was much harder than it sounds to us. The shepherd would actually have had a serious dilemma. He was already in big trouble for losing one sheep. He would have had to decide whether to risk losing even more by leaving the others alone in an attempt to save face and go find his master's property.

#### Matthew

The parable Jesus tells looks back to the messianic prophecy of Ezekiel, who had foretold that God himself would assume the role of a shepherd to seek out and rescue the lost sheep of Israel. Unlike the shepherds of Israel at the time, who were looking out for their own interests and ignoring those in need, God himself would become Israel's shepherd, seeking the sheep who have gone astray.

One strongly held interpretation of this parable is that the lost sheep represent all of humankind, because we have all gone astray in sin. In Scripture, the mountains or hills always represent closeness to God. So, the ninety nine on the hills are the angels and saints in heaven. At the incarnation, Jesus came down from heaven to seek the lost souls of people. That is the story of our redemption by the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who restores people to grace and raises us again to the company of the angels. Just before today's passage, Jesus is discussing the 'little ones', the disciples, who have guardian angels in heaven. So this understanding makes sense from that point of view.

It is not the will of the Father that one of these should be lost. He rejoices when even that one is found. Each of us is precious and not to be lost. The problem is, we are always lost, or at least continuing to go back and forth between being lost and being in relationship with the shepherd and the rest of the sheep.

The question many have is that, If God really is the ultimate Good Shepherd, can I trust that he does care enough look for us? At the beginning of the human story, Adam and Eve sinned and were lost. They hid themselves. It tells us that God went looking. He called out: "Adam where are you?" Now this is very interesting because it appears that God didn't know where they were

hiding. Of course, we know that wasn't the case. God is the shepherd who knows where all the sheep are, even the ones who are 'lost'.

Like a shepherd, God was calling out so the lost sheep, Adam, could hear the voice of his creator and come running. The real meaning of God's question was not so much literally Where are you, but more like, where are you in our relationship? What has happened to the intimacy we shared?

Who moved away from that relationship? Not God, but us. It is we who have rejected God's love and compassion and have left the sheep fold. Since Adam, "all we like sheep have gone astray," All of us have fallen under a kind of spell cast on us by the attractions of this world.

### **Isaiah**

This part of Book of the prophet Isaiah is called the Book of Consolation. "Comfort O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term. Your penalty is paid." Judah was lost. They had wandered far from God with worship of idols. They had stopped been just towards those in need. They were lost but not doomed to die there. They suffered in exile before God led them back. "O Jerusalem, say to the cities of Judah, Here is your God. He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep."

### **Call To Action**

The reason we invite Catholics to celebrate Advent as a time of quiet reflection, of slowly building up to Christmas, is that we are **waiting** to celebrate the glory of the Lord which will be revealed to all the nations at Jesus' birth. There are no Christmas trees or bright lights here yet. We are allowing the anticipation to build in us until that time when we might receive the fullness of the message of consolation God had for Israel. We are looking forward to the day that we might "sing for joy" with the trees of the forest, as the psalmist describes all of creation rejoicing at the presence of God.

The question for Adam, for the lost sheep of Israel, and for us who are lost and praying to be found again, is about God's will being fulfilled in us. And what is that will? It is that none should be lost - not us, not those whom we know of in our lives who are lost and like sheep without a shepherd.

Our God is a shepherd, whose voice cries out in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all people shall see it together. Let us commit today to spending the rest of Advent preparing a way through the deserts wherein we are lost. Let us prepare our hearts to receive the one who was born into this world to come looking for us.