

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin R. Eden

Easter 4
Sunday, May 3, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

“The Good Shepherd”

John 10:1-10

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is historically celebrated as Good Shepherd Sunday. Last Sunday after church, I had a dose of reality as I had a couple of messages from some “good shepherds” serving in Uganda. We are concerned with when we can get a haircut and resume eating out in restaurants. In Uganda, and many other places in the world, they are concerned with where they can find anything to eat.

My friend Ronald, who is a Vicar and studies at the same Seminary as my friend Waidha who died last Christmas informed me that many people are dying of starvation and lack of medicine. Then I saw where a pastor from Waidha’s hometown posted a picture of a girl who had killed herself rather than slowly dying of starvation. These men are good shepherds. Pray for them.

For many years I have been thankful that my daughters did not grow up seeing the images of the bloated bellied children like many of us witnessed in the pictures coming out of Ethiopia back in the 70’s and 80’s. That famine was caused

by a food supply disruption due to civil war. Our current food supply disruption is going to cause starvation in far more places than just East Africa.

Pray for wisdom. Pray that our leaders think beyond only what is good for their constituents or their political career. The words of our Epistle reading are appropriate, “This is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly” [1 Pt. 2:19]. The people of East Africa are suffering through no fault of their own. Waidha’s five orphaned children are not the only children who will be in need. Looking at his Facebook page, it seems my friend Ronald has five children also and he has been lying in bed in great pain (I am sure it is not just all physical pain. I can’t imagine the emotions of the moment).

Pray for them and be thankful that the Lord has sent good shepherds into their midst. I so enjoy conversing with them as they speak so freely and confidently of the grace and mercy they have received from God in the face of terrible conditions.

I just want to give you a little taste of what I get to experience interacting with these men. I had sent Ronald a message on April 19. He got back to me April 25 (last Saturday). He wrote, “Greetings to you brother in the Lord’s name. It has been a week without communication with one another. Surely am very glad with your great message (he has internet access and can watch our worship or at least read the PDF of the sermon, but very few of his people have internet or are able to read). We are very worried here also for the churches to be closed. People are

not getting the chance to hear the Gospel and attending the church worship service since our community people lack Bibles and Catechism in their homes and some of them can not afford to access money to buy Bibles due to the excessive poverty in the remote areas where we administer. So now we are confused what to do for the body of Christ. Previous we used to move in the villages walking on the legs praying for them but the government initiated more restriction governing people. However we are praying for the Lord continue showing the mercy and grace for the world. Right now here people are dying because of lack of food and medicine.”

What is Ronald’s greatest concern? He says, “We are very worried for the churches to be closed. People are not getting the chance to hear the Gospel” because these good shepherds can’t “walk on the legs” and bring them the Word of God. “As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” [Rom. 10:15]. Paul quotes Isaiah. The sheep need to hear the voice of the shepherd.

These men I am privileged to know through the Internet are the living embodiment of what St. Paul means when he says, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me” [Phil. 1:21-22]. And again Paul says in Romans, “For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living” [Rom. 14:7-9].

We focus today on Christ the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep and has called us by name and led us to where we are. I have reread Ronald’s words at least a dozen times and I look at myself with disgust. I am such a whiner. He addresses the physical needs, the physical starvation almost as an afterthought. His concern is for the spiritual starvation that these people are enduring.

They need to hear the words of their Good Shepherd – the Lord Jesus Christ. And they need their good shepherds with the beautiful feet which carry that Good News.

The Good Shepherd, Christ our Lord, guards and protects you. The Good Shepherd feeds you that you may have life and have it abundantly. We join with David and confidently say, “The Lord is my Shepherd . . . Ye though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil . . . My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Amen.

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.