

Second Sunday of Easter
April 8, 2018

Text: 1 John 2:1-2:2

Theme: “Sharing”

“Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?” We know the answer for we know the rhyme:

Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?
Yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full.
One for the master, one for the dame,
One for the little boy who lives down the lane.
Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?
Yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full.

But what does it mean? I found the following to be interesting. It’s from a Website that promotes British tourism among other things:

In the previous article we attempted to provide some background as to the likely content of Little Jack Horner’s pie, the possible association of Ring a Ring O’Roses with the horrors of the 1665 Great Plague, why hush a-bye baby was rocked in the tree-tops and who the quite contrary Mary was.

We now attempt to shed light on why they couldn’t put Humpty together again, the tax implications surrounding that Baa Baa Black Sheep, and suggestions as to why ‘when the boys came out to play’, Georgie Porgie ran away.

(www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/More-Nursery-Rhymes/)

All that being said, or read, you’ll have to do your own research and reach your own conclusions. I’ll use the rhyme in a different way, as a segue into our theme of sharing. Webster tells me share comes from the Old English ‘scieran,’ meaning shear, which is also the etymological route of shear. “Shear—share,” what’s up with that? This is really speculation on my part, but if you shear the sheep, you certainly have something to share. Sheared wool was something very valuable in societies that heavily utilized woolen clothes.

So the black sheep, we assume the recently sheared black sheep, did indeed have something of value to share. It would have been great if I could have tied this in with the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Good Shepherd Sunday, but I think a chicken may come into play on that day. But back to our sharing.

The apostles certainly had something to share, something of great value. They thought they were sheared of all hope, actually they had been shorn of false hope. Suddenly good news, the very Word of Life stood before them. We too have much to share. Some of that is worthless or even harmful, but also have valuable, even priceless gifts to share.

The Apostles had the words of eternal life to share, the message of the One who is life. They knew this all to be fact. They had heard, seen, and touched. Jesus had been betrayed, arrested, condemned, crucified, pierced, dead and buried. Yes, they were eye witnesses. Peter and John had been at the courtyard of the High Priest. We know at least John was at the cross. There was no wiggle room from this gruesome and devastating reality. But now they were witnesses to the unbelievable. What Jesus had told them would happen, had happened.

Jesus was alive, resurrected as we see in our Gospel lesson today. They were hanging out, actually hiding out behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. Suddenly Jesus was there, right there in the middle of them all. "Peace be with you," He says. Then He showed to them His hands and His side, the nail marks and the lance piercing. 'Peace be with you, as the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you...receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone, their sins they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.' They were there. They saw, they heard, they touched. Ghosts didn't have bone and flesh as they saw Jesus having. It was a full sensory perception.

But, of course, Thomas was not there. Just where he was we are not told, only told where he was not. So we get to remember his absence and his doubting every year on the second Sunday of Easter. He wasn't ready to believe what his ears were hearing from the others. 'I don't know what your guys were seeing and hearing and touching, but it couldn't be Jesus. He's dead, remember, in the tomb. There's no way it could be as you are saying. I'll have to see and touch for myself.' Then one week later he is bowing down to Jesus confessing, "My Lord and my God." (John 20:28)

Yes, they had good news to share, the Gospel of life in the Lord of Life. John is sharing from his bags full of good news in our text for today. He tells his hearers, his readers, yes, a part: 'You have a part in us, fellowship, a part in what we have in the body of Christ. The words are for you, "peace be with you; your sins are forgiven." Now there is more fellowship, the same as we have, fellowship with God. God is with us. 'I am with you always,' Jesus said. He also said, 'Where two or three of you are gathered together, there I am in your midst.' This brings us joy, completes it, knowing what we know to be true, you now believe. One day we will be with Him in the new Jerusalem, the place of all day, and no night, no darkness at all.'

It is only because of Jesus there is this wonderful news to share. We were all black sheep, sinners. He is God's pleasing sacrifice for all, even the God pleasing sacrifice. He is the atoning sacrifice, the propitiation that appeases God so He now sees us not as sinners, but saints, His holy ones. Jesus is the sacrifice that has the whole world covered. He is the propitiation, not only for our sins, but the sins of the whole world. He cleanses us. His blood cleanses us from every sin. Sins just don't go away, poof, no, they went on Jesus.

But not all believe this or understand this. Some walk in darkness, in sin, no fellowship with God. They may respond, "What do you mean, darkness, sinner? I'm not

so bad. I may have done bad things, but basically, I'm a good person, decent enough. So who are you to call me a black sheep? Others have been cleansed, but are dirty again. Actually, we are all getting dirty again. It is part of what happens in this dusty world. We don't have to be looking for it temptation is suddenly there. We are not planning on it, but it happens, happened. There are sins I don't even know about. There are plenty I do and I think, 'no, not again!' Others could be more thought about. That fruit, that forbidden, sure did look appealing, struggled with it and then the plunge.

We all have sin to be forgiven of. But there are those, times, when a person thinks maybe it's not so bad. 'I can just hobble along on my own. Maybe God will be okay with it. I really don't want to think about confessing it, or put myself in a place to hear God's law where I would hear about it.' Of course, no hearing, no repentance, no forgiveness. It's a dangerous path to go on.

And then there may that person that say, "I love the dirt. It's fun. Yes, it's dirt; it's sin; it's wrong, but there's always forgiveness. I'll just take the dirt dive and then the forgiveness splash. Is there not Christian freedom after all? All sin has been atoned for; there are no limits on grace, so why should I try to limit myself? I will indulge to the full. Don't you just love it!" No, God doesn't love it all, in fact, hates it.

God did not redeem us from sin to run back to it. Look what God shared in that we might be redeemed. He shares in our humanity. Remember, Thomas cries out before Jesus, "My Lord and my God." It was not just a man, but God on the cross. And it was just a human, but the divine in the tomb. This is the all sufficient and only sufficient payment for sin, God Himself, God for us.

In Him we do have a share in a blessed eternity, not a damned one. We have been cleansed of what would keep us away, that which is abhorrent and disgusting to God.

Now we have fellowship with the Father and His Son, one day in the full light of their brilliance in the new Jerusalem (Revelation 22:4-5). That's what awaits us.

We have a share in sonship right now, even now sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. We also have a share in our Lord's humility and serving. We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared beforehand for us to do. The born again nature has that mind like that of Christ Jesus, that which considers not only one's own needs, but also the needs of others. This results in serving not for show but from care. This new life we have does include some unpleasantries that come with faithfulness, maybe such unpleasantries as ridicule for not indulging, or a contempt experienced for showing sin to be sin.

We have not been made new to run back to the darkness; we repent of it. If we say sin is not a problem, then we have a whole new problem. Let me paraphrase part of our text, "If we say, 'I don't need that; I have no sin,' we are only fooling ourselves; that's just not true...If we want to keep insisting that we have not sinned, then we are making God out to be a liar and His Word has no place in us." (vss 8, 10).

If we are always stumbling around in the darkness instead of walking in the light, we have not really understood. John will tell us later in chapter 3, "No one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him....Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil." (vs 3, 6). Thus says the Apostle whom Jesus loved, one was there on the first day of the week when Jesus appeared, the week after, and during those 40 days when Jesus continued to appear to His apostles and more.

They have a message to share. Those who hear and believe are changed to share from the shearings, like the black sheep, even bags full. We see this in our lesson from Acts 4. Of the infant church as we read, "the full number of those who believed were of

one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.” (vs 32) No one was crying, “Hey, that’s my stuff!” That word “in common,” “koinos,” is the root for the fellowship word in our text. The apostle does direct us to share. He tell us that we don’t love our brother, whom we have seen, how can we love God, whom if we have not seen, and even says that if we don’t help our brother when he has need and we have means, how can the love of God remain in us (1 John 4:20; 3:17).

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every unrighteousness.” Now we go forth to live righteously. For Jesus’ sake. Amen