

## **eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, April 25, 2010**

A Ministry of Christ the Redeemer Church, San Marcos, Texas  
Forth Sunday of Easter

### **Who do YOU say that I am?**

This discussion is the opinion of Bert Cobb and is not necessarily the opinion of anyone else. Do not interpret these reflections to mean anything other than what Bert Cobb thinks and feels. They are for the exhortation, encouragement, and edification of the Saints and may be used freely for that purpose.

This week's Lectionary readings:

[Acts 9:36-43](#)

[Psalm 23](#)

[Revelation 7:9-17](#)

[John 10:22-30](#)

Please pardon my rambling diatribes for the past several weeks as I am still “not up to snuff.” Some may know and some may not care that I recently had my fourth back surgery in which the surgeon went “diggy-diggy” in my spine to try to relieve the excruciating pain that has returned and has not relented. So far, it is better but not relieved. What usually takes me minutes to write now takes an hour or more. A misspent youth has adult complications. The combination of spinal stenosis and chronic arachnoiditis are having their way with my spine. It is not a good sign when the back surgeon's parting words are “see you NEXT time.” You can only guess just how impatient I am with myself and how much I hate being dependent on anyone or anything. I have a new appreciation for those with physical afflictions. One of the most difficult things to do while using a cane is to receive or give hugs. I find it much harder (but more fun) to teach class while inebriated by pain medications. The class is now truly “spirit led”. I have trouble lying because I cannot remember what I said last week. It looks as though I will be utilizing a cane to steady my gait for the rest of my life. Believing that God never gives us anything from which we cannot learn and make a ministry, I have made a decision. Since I will need a cane for some time, I have chosen to start a “cane ministry”. I will accept used or new canes for personal use and to give a cane to those who need a cane but cannot afford to buy their own. No cane is too ugly or too used. I can refinish canes while sitting down. I have been studying and now know how to properly “fit” a cane for all users. If you wish to participate by sending in those unused or unneeded canes, please do so and I will get them into the hands of those who can best use and appreciate them. I can only use one at a time so they are not for me alone. God willing, I will not always need a cane but, I am not counting on it. Thank you to all who want to be part of this new ministry. Little things do matter: If the sky rains lemons, make lemonade. What will be YOUR ministry in life? It all depends on your ATTITUDE.

### **Acts 9:36-43**

***Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.***

Many churches have "Dorcas Societies" which do charitable work making blankets and clothing for the needy of their communities. This is the passage from which the idea springs fully formed. Dorcas, a "good woman" of many "good deeds" died. The body was washed and laid out in respect while her friends mourned her death. Peter was staying nearby in Joppa and was summoned to "preach her funeral"? Peter prayed and Dorcas was revived to life. Was Peter any more "special" than any other Apostle? The New Testament has many instances of people being "resurrected" besides Lazarus and Jesus. Were these "parlor tricks" or real "miracles"? If God is no respecter of persons, why cannot you and I "raise the dead"? I, as a physician, have resuscitated lots of people but not after they had been dead, washed and lain out as dead. Does this mean that Peter was "God"? Does this mean that "doing good things" will assure our resurrection? Why is this story in the Book of Acts? Was it to show that Jesus had left his Spirit as a gift to the Apostles to prove the divinity to his "best friends"? Do you think that Peter was as surprised as was Dorcas? Was the "power to perform miracles" just another way to "preach" the divinity of Jesus to those who had not witnessed his lifetime ministry of healing? The Book of Acts is filled with instances in which the Apostles supposedly performed many miracles. Did Peter "take the credit" or did he give "God the glory"? In this case, the "power of the Shepherd" was passed to the sheep to glorify the Shepherd?

### **Psalm 23 Page 612, BCP**

*Dominus regit me*

1

***The LORD is my shepherd; \****  
***I shall not be in want.***

2

***He makes me lie down in green pastures \****  
***and leads me beside still waters.***

3

2

- He revives my soul \*  
and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.***
- 4**
- Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear  
no evil; for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.***
- 5**
- You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble  
me; \* you have anointed my head with oil,  
and my cup is running over.***
- 6**
- Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my  
life, \*  
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.***

These six verses are the most memorized words of the Book of Psalms. They are often discussed but, seldom really understood. Let me try to elucidate them for you in my PERSONAL way. They speak to people of all races and in all states of life. Who is not in need of a 'shepherd' for comfort, support and healing at some point in our miserable lives? Being just six verses, they speak volumes about the eternal relationship between sheep and shepherd. I have been through this passage so many times that I have to work to see something new with each visitation. UNLESS the "Shepherd" is BOTH MY LORD and MY SHEPHERD, they are empty words that I say from rote and nothing comes from their recitation. BUT, IF these six verses TIE me as sheep to shepherd, dependent to savior and human to the divine, they have profound comfort and meaning. These words tie us to God, to each other and to eternity. I suggest that the reader read this psalm ALOUD and replace the pronouns (my, I, me, etc.) with YOUR NAME. That may allow us to personalize the psalm and connect us to the divine in a real and personal way that refreshes and encourages. The original "author" obviously felt this unity with the Creator. Try it. You may learn something new.

With profound apologies to the psalmist, now, read MY PERSONAL VERSION of Psalm 23 and substitute YOUR NAME for MINE:

***The Lord is Bert's shepherd;  
Bert shall not be in want.  
He makes Bert lie down in green pastures  
And leads Bert beside still waters.  
He revives Bert's soul  
And guides Bert along right pathways for his Name's sake.  
Though Bert walks (crawls, limps or with a cane) through the valley of the shadow of death,***

***Bert shall fear no evil; for you are with Bert;  
your rod and your staff, they comfort Bert.  
You spread a table before Bert in the presence of those who trouble Bert;  
You have anointed Bert's head with oil,  
And Bert's cup is running over.  
Surely God's goodness and mercy shall follow Bert all the days of Bert's  
life,  
And Bert will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.***

Take special note of the underlined 'action words' in this short poem. They convey DEEP meaning. They are POWERFUL WORDS OF HOPE AND HEALING. This is but one example of how we can make scripture PERSONAL and PRACTICAL as we study to show ourselves approved unto God.

### **Revelation 7:9-17**

***After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying,  
"Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!"***

***And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing,  
"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom  
and thanksgiving and honor  
and power and might  
be to our God forever and ever! Amen."***

***Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.***

***For this reason they are before the throne of God,  
and worship him day and night within his temple,  
and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.***

***They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;  
the sun will not strike them,  
nor any scorching heat;***

***for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."***

Obviously, IF you don't LIKE worshipping God, Heaven is not going to be very

enjoyable for you since the ‘inhabitants worship him day and night’. The underlined words are reflexive of the words of Psalms 23 in that the “Good Shepherd” will care for his sheep. Perhaps this is the “tie” that binds these passages together?

### **John 10:22-30**

***At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."***

Jesus was the master of the understatement. I once challenged a class member to show me in scripture where Jesus said “I AM THE SON OF GOD.” (I also asked for him to point to the scripture that described the “Triune God”, The Trinity.) Can you find me the passage that states the obvious? Jesus always alluded to his being the Messiah, the Son of God but, he allowed the hearer to form their own opinion. The best “evidence” for his being “the Son of God” were NOT his words but, his ACTIONS and ATTITUDE. This was the ultimate test that he even gave Simon Peter. (“And who do YOU say that I, the son of Man, am?”) The BELIEVER’S opinion is what matters, is it not? Jesus was all about demonstrating the power and love of his Father as prima facie evidence of his being God’s Son. Your faith and my faith MAY encourage and engender faith in another person BUT, what really matters in the end is the INDIVIDUAL’S faith which can only be attained PERSONALLY. (This is why “conversion stories” are as individual as anything in life.) This dialogue from the Book of John is about such a discussion of the SIGNS and WONDERS that should have convinced each witness that Jesus was the Messiah but, they were blinded by their doubts and personal expectations. Are we any different than they? What is YOUR description of what the “perfect Jesus might be FOR YOU?” From what you and I have studied of Jesus Christ, can we say conclusively that Jesus IS the Christ, the Son of the Living God? Recall that the four “gospels” were written long after the Ascension to people who were not witnesses to the events of Christ’s life. What stories did they omit from the narrative? Do you ever wonder about such things? We know little of the “early years” of Christ’s life. Is there a reason for this omission? Was it because not much happened or was it because little happened that POINTED to the divinity of Jesus? Sheep are basically STUPID animals. Once a shepherd purchases sheep, they have to be taught to follow, obey and listen to his voice. Being a “good sheep” is not natural. A sheep has to “learn” the shepherd’s voice and to rely on the shepherd for protection, pasture and food. You and I spend our lives learning to trust, rely upon and to

listen to the “Shepherd’s voice”, don’t we? Why do I believe in Jesus? Is it based on the faith of my family, my church, my political party, my friends, my spouse or my country? Any “faith” that is congenital or based on anything other than a PERSONAL relationship with the “Shepherd” is ethereal and will not last any longer than the time spent in the protection of the Shepherd. We are SHEEP in a very literal sense. Each must confess that “I believe that Jesus is the Christ and I want him to be Lord of MY LIFE.” I cannot confess or believe for you and you cannot confess or believe for me. IF I believe God and I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who “told” me? What Billy Graham, Joel Osteen, Max Lucado or Bert Cobb think is immaterial. Get your OWN FAITH that will sustain and be “always ready to give a reason for the HOPE that lies within YOU.” Can you give a reason for why you believe that Jesus is the Christ? If not, I suggest you find one or quit saying that you believe something of which you are not convinced. Otherwise, the statement “My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father’s hand. The Father and I are ONE” means nothing and we are of all people most miserable. So, do you REALLY believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God?