**Lives in Transition**

Jeremiah 23: 1-6 Ephesians 2: 11-22 Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56

Psalm 23

**Summary: Our Shepherd becomes the Lamb of God and His sheep, each of us, become shepherds.**

 In my reflection at the Cobblestone Church, I said that God cobbles people together in freedom. People of diverse nations, races, colors, tongues, customs, and ideas are made one group, fitted together on purpose and with purpose. The mortar God uses is love, made of nothing less than the blood of Jesus. Because He holds us together, Jesus is our true President, whatever leader may be in office. Jesus is our shepherd.

 I want to expand on that theme. Jesus brings us together; Jeremiah prophesies woe to shepherds who scatter God’s people even as he promised that Jesus, yet unborn, was coming. Paul speaks of how God’s people have been newly formed from Gentiles and Jew, young and old, male and female. No more separation. And, Mark shows us this cobbling process as he saw it happen: as the crowds flocked to Jesus like lost sheep needing a shepherd.

 I can imagine those crowds: so many people that Jesus had almost no time to himself once His ministry was established. Remember the rock opera, “Jesus Christ, Superstar?” We know crowds follow superstars. We see Deadheads, Blockheads, Trekkies, Trihards, Trumpsters, Bernie’s Army, Clinton’s Cohort, and so on. People gather where their leaders are, and they are changed, cobbled into one social force.

 People expected that of Jesus, hoping for him to be a conquering leader like King David who would usurp the occupying Romans and establish a holy nation. Most saw a man inspired, a leader, a shepherd. Before the Cross, only two people, Peter and Martha, saw the Messiah, the Lamb of God. This transition of their shepherd into the Lamb of God deeply offended many. Yet, the transition is not limited to Jesus. After His death and Resurrection, Jesus asks Peter, three times, if he loved Him, and – three times – tells him: “Feed my sheep.” Peter, and the other sheep of Jesus’ flock, become shepherds.

 I’m familiar, too familiar, with transition: having everyone see one thing while being something else. My first steps toward being real involved God giving me courage to become visible: looking, speaking, acting as I truly am. Jesus first modeled that courage as He let others see that the shepherd they all saw was really the Lamb.

 My own transition is superficial compared to this, but I’m not done with transitioning yet. The Lamb of God calls me to leave off being a sheep and to become what He has been to me, a shepherd!

 A lump of coal, under intense pressure and heat, transitions into a diamond. In this world, we have immense pressure; in Jesus, we experience the divine, Pentecostal fire of the Holy Spirit. We, also, are in transition. Thanks to Jesus, what is mortal is becoming immortal, what is sinful is becoming holy. And, if this is our transition, we need to find the courage to make that visible: to appear, speak, and behave more as shepherds than as sheep.

 We can see this transition into active children of God as it starts to shape others around us. I’ve seen it in Danny, in Lynn Gedratis, in Wanda, in Pastor Don, in Pastor Jim, in Marcy, in each one of you. Yes, we are diamonds in the rough, but we are still diamonds, and getting more refined, more visible, each day.

 So, go forth, no longer lost sheep needing direction, but shepherds formed in the likeness of the Lamb of God! Take this net week as an opportunity to invite and arrange to bring someone to our church who don’t usually join us. Go forth, not only healed but healers, not only forgiven, but forgiving, and no longer merely following Jesus but taking Him with you wherever you go. And, surely, goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!