



Fourth Sunday of Easter

† Sunday 12th May 2019

England & Wales Cycle of Prayer

World Day of Prayer for Vocations

Keynote: We are God's People

Acts of the Apostles 13: 14, 43–52

Paul and Barnabas reach Antioch in Asia Minor and entering the local synagogue urge the community to remain faithful to the grace given them by God. In what is probably the first missionary journey undertaken by Paul, he and Barnabas speak out boldly to the assembled Jews: *'We had to proclaim the word of God to you first but since you have rejected it, since you do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life, we must turn to the pagans. For this is what the Lord commanded... when he said: "I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth" ...it made the pagans very happy to hear this.'* But at the synagogue the message, and their words did not find acceptance and Paul and Barnabas are expelled from the territory. This message may make us happy too! But we can so easily just take it all for granted and become complacent. We need to listen attentively to the word of God, and then act upon it in the world in which we live now. In Paul's day, *'it made the pagans very happy to hear this and they thanked the Lord for his message – all who were destined for eternal life became believers. Thus it was that the Word of the Lord spread though the whole countryside'*.

Responsorial Psalm 99 (100) — A song of praise to God: Creator and Shepherd. Alleluia!

Book of Revelation 7: 9, 14–17

John the Apostle gives another of his great visions of the church in heaven gathered in worship around the throne of the Lamb. In this vision John sees the faithful *'standing in front of the throne... dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands.'* The robes symbolise the inner spiritual state of the faithful, and the palm is the traditional sign of martyrdom – for these are the witnesses who are saved by the power of God that shelters them like a tent. *'These are the people who have been through the great persecution... they now stand in front of God's throne and serve God day and night... they will never hunger and thirst again.'* The Lord who is at the throne *'will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.'*

Gospel according to John 10: 27–30

At one level the reader of this gospel passage may understand that Jesus speaks of himself as the Good Shepherd, the shepherd who knows his sheep leads them and keeps them safe from harm or loss. *'The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice, I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life; they will never be lost, and no one will ever steal them from me.'* At another level the key sentence is, *'The Father and I are one.'* One of the constant themes in this gospel is the intimate union between the Father and Jesus who is the Son of God, and this union is one that Jesus shares with the disciple: *'I give them eternal life.'* We may learn from this short passage just how secure we are. This union with Christ is the pledge of God's protection – our guarantee, our surety of salvation.

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