

HEARERS OF THE WORD



Acts 13:14, 43-52; Psalm 100 [99]; Rev 7:9, 14b-17; John 10:27-30

I know my sheep and they follow me

John 10:22 *At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, 23 and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. 24 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." 25 Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; 26 but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep.*

27 My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. 30 The Father and I are one."

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

This reading (vv. 27-30) bids fair to be shortest Gospel reading on any Sunday. Nevertheless, it is deeply resonant, especially when read in the light of the same words and images elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel. As a result, it repays close and careful reading.

The rather controversial setting is apparent from the introductory verses, added here to give the context. This is not unimportant because the controversy over the identity of Jesus leads to his death, precisely as the shepherd who lays down life for the sheep. V. 30 is a key, therefore.

KIND OF WRITING

The passage comes from a new section in the Gospel. Jesus is in Jerusalem for the feast of Dedication (*Hanukkah*), which occurs in late November or in December. The imagery of shepherd, however, takes us back to the previous Good Shepherd discourse from 10:1ff. and should be read in light of that. The question asked in v. 24 is the core question of the whole Gospel: who is Jesus. The answer given in v. 30 is, in this Gospel, the cause of Jesus' death.



OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

Across the Ancient Near East, rulers were regularly called shepherds, on account of the pivotal role of the pastor in the care of the sheep. It was the shepherd's responsibility to protect, guide and feed, as it was that of a monarch. It is no surprise that likewise people called their "god" a shepherd, well before and outside of the biblical use of the metaphor. That said, the biblical tradition makes very rich use of this imagery.

(i) A Psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long. (Ps 23:0-6)

(ii) For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep.

Thought for the day

The cultural dismissal of faith as illusory consolation or opium has left its mark on us all. Is it all projection? Has God truly spoken and revealed God's self? In Christian faith, our response is a resounding yes and, while we should be wary of facile solace, at the same time we should not deny ourselves the good and wholesome reassurance of faith. After all, one of the most repeated phrases throughout the Bible is "Do not be afraid" (though not in John, curiously). There *are* grounds for fear; but we, of all people, should not be overwhelmed by the negative.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, risen from the dead, guide us to listen deeply to your voice, your word, that we may know you and, that knowing you, we may enjoy life in abundance, now and into eternity with you. Amen.

I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. (Ezek 34:11-16)

NEW TESTAMENT FOREGROUND

The Fourth Gospel often builds its distinctive reflections on foundations taken from the Synoptic tradition. This is the case here.

(i) As he went ashore, Jesus saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them,

because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. (Mark 6:34)

(ii) ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’” (Matt 2:6)

(iii) So he told them this parable: “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15:3–7)

(iv) “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd.

I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.” (John 10:11–18)

(v) When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

(John 21:15–17)

ST PAUL

The life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. (1 Cor 5:7)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verses 22-23 The feast of Dedication governs the rest of John 10. After the destruction of the Temple, all Jewish traditions, including the Nazarene sect, wondered about the place of encounter with God. Christians did not locate it in a place but in a person. See John 4:23.

Verse 24 This question is both odd and typical. It is odd in John’s Gospel because throughout Jesus has been open about his identity. Typical because Jesus is the total focus of this Gospel.

Verses 25-26 This is markedly robust and reflects conflicts at the time of writing between the Johannine community and the synagogue “across the road.” To believe is huge in this Gospel: the verb occurs no fewer than ninety-eight times.

Verse 27 The Good Shepherd is speaking. Voice: *When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”* (John 11:43). *Jesus said to her, “Mary!”* (John 20:16). *Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep”* (John 21:17). “Follow” takes us back to the earliest call of Jesus in the Gospels (John 1:37–38, 40, 43), echoed in John 21: “*After this he said to him, ‘Follow me’*” (John 21:19).

Verse 28 In the Fourth Gospel, eternal life does not mean only or even primarily life *after* death. It means instead that quality of authentic life, which the believer already has now through faith in Jesus. “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life* (John 3:16). *Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life* (John 5:24). *Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.* (John 6:47). *And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent* (John 17:3). The followers of Jesus are protected: *While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me.* (John 17:12)

Verse 29 Given: *Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me* (John 17:7–8). *And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God ...* (John 13:2–4).

Verse 30 That oneness between the Father and the Son is offered to all believers as well: “*I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*” (John 17:20–24)

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus tells us that we can rely on his relationship with us. Think of the relationships you have in which you feel safe and secure because there is mutual understanding and the relationship has stood the test of time.

2. Jesus says that the disciple is one who listens. What is your experience of listening to the word of God in the Scriptures? To what other voices have you listened and found guidance?

3. The faithful disciple is also one who follows the path of love that Jesus preached and practiced. Although it may be difficult at times, it is in following it we find life. Where have you had the experience of listening, responding, loving, and finding life?

PRAYER

Safe in your hand, O God, is the flock you shepherd through Jesus your Son. Lead us always to the living waters where you promise respite and refreshment, that we may be counted among those who know and follow you.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life, who lies and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit God for ever and ever. Amen.

The Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd

Rev 7:9 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. 10 *They cried out in a loud voice, saying,*

“Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

11 *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, 12 singing,*

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Rev 7:13 *Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?” 14 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. 15 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. 16 They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; 17 for the Lamb at the centre 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.”

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Fortunately, the lectionary offers us some of the less forbidding scenes from the Apocalypse. Today’s reading, to some degree, uses images and metaphors not too remote or esoteric. A good link with today’s Gospel is found in v. 17: *for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life.* In the end, the writer is basing everything on Jesus’ death and resurrection and, at the same time, proclaiming the future salvation of all who believe and hold fast.

KIND OF WRITING

Where are we in the Apocalypse?

Prologue 1:1-3
Epistolary prescript 1:4-6
Prophetic sayings 1:7-8

Visionary report 1:9-22:5

I. Epiphany of the risen Christ 1:9-3:22
The seven messages 2:1-3:22

II. Vision in the spirit 4:1-22:5

The scroll with seven seals 6:1-11:19

The first six seals 6:1-17

The 144,000 7:1-17

The seventh seal 8:1-11:19

The open scroll 12:1-22:5

The woman 12:1-18

Chaos unleashed 13:1-18

End time vision 14:1-20

The seven bowls 15:1-16:20

Vision of Babylon 17:1-19:10

The last things 19:11-20:21

Vision of Jerusalem 21:9-22:5

Prophetic sayings 22:6-20

Epistolary concluding blessing 22:21

Our reading comes from second major section, precisely from the section devoted to the one hundred and forty-four thousand in vv. 7:1-17. This is a consoling vision *before the Seventh Seal is opened*, unleashing the forces of evil. It is designed to bolster or buttress the faith of the persecuted.

ORIGIN OF THE READING

The setting in the community is the need to strengthen and sustain believers are a time of immense pressure. No doubt many departed from the community and some are wondering why or even how they can remain. Not at all unlike our own times, really. The preceding vv. 1-8 give greater detail about this vast multitude.

Again, the inclusion of hymns familiar to the community (v. 10, 12) promotes identification with the message.

RELATED PASSAGES

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind could blow on earth or sea or against any tree. I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea, saying, “Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees, until

we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads.”

And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel: *etc. listing the tribes.* (Revelation 7:1-4)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verse 9 From the number that no one could count, it is clear that one hundred and forty-four thousand is symbolic (12²x1000). The four-fold designation indicates all of creation. The throne indicates God’s power while the Lamb emphasises God’s paradoxical rule through vulnerability. White is the colour of resurrection and palms are a symbol of victory.

Verse 10-14a The hymn (not in our reading) is the clue to the status of these people, already singing of victory.

Verse 14bc An interpretative word is required. These are the victorious believers, who have survived the end-time upheaval. Washing in blood (not a known detergent) illustrates the use of clashing symbolism. The robes indicate the inner person, rendered pure by faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Verse 15 *Because* they have come through, these saints stand eternally before God. See Ezekiel 37:27.

Verse 16 Cf. *They shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them.* (Isaiah 49:10) Also: John 4, throughout.

Verse 17 Cf. *Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.* (Isaiah 25:8)

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Perhaps we hesitate these days to inhabit fully the reassurance of faith—but why not?

2. Are you experiencing some “great ordeal” right now? Or even in the past? Where is *your* source of strength?

PRAYER

Mysterious God, we call you by many names: love, mercy, compassion, kindness and hope. Draw us ever more closely into the circle of your life that our faith may be strong and our hope a source of well-being and vigour. Amen.

And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit

Acts 13:13 *Then Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. John, however, left them and returned to Jerusalem;* 14 but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

43 When the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

44 The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy; and blaspheming, they contradicted what was spoken by Paul. 46 Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles. 47 For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

Acts 13:48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the word of the Lord; and as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers. 49 Thus the word of the Lord spread throughout the region. 50 But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their region. 51 So they shook the dust off their feet in protest against them, and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

For our notes, v.13 has been added to give the immediate context. The story told today is typical of the Acts, where, upon rejection by the Jews, the missionaries of The Way turn to the Gentiles. The reading has a fairly large gap in it (we jumped from v.14 to 43!), so it would be good to read the intervening verses to make sense of the excerpt. The speech is a substantial presentation of The Way. It is programmatic in the same way as Peter's speech on Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41) and Jesus' sermon in Nazareth (4:16-30).

KIND OF WRITING

The main burden of the excerpt is given over to reactions to the speech of Paul, both positive and negative. This is also programmatic, as we can see in many other passages, such as: 16;14, 17:4, 17; 18:7 etc.

ORIGIN OF THE READING

Luke groups the missionary activities in three blocks, traditionally known as the Missionary Journeys:

I	13:1-14:28
II	15:36-18:22
III	18:23-21:16.

As there is no confirmation of the first Missionary Journey in the letters of Paul, some scholars think it is a complete invention by Luke. In any case, our reading reflects this first missionary journey, of evidently limited scope.

RELATED PASSAGES

The pattern of speaking "the word of God" first in the synagogues is found throughout the Acts: Antioch (13:14), Iconium (14:1); Thessalonica (17:1); Berea (17:10); Athens 17:17; Corinth (18:4); Ephesus (18:19; 19:8) in the case of Paul. Apollos likewise in Ephesus (18:26).

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verse 14 This takes place, naturally, in Antioch in Pisidia, on a Sabbath. The great speech of Paul follows here. The missing speech is heard on Thursday and Friday this coming week.

Verse 43 The devout converts are, of course, Gentiles, most likely taken from the god-fearers. On the grace of God, see 2:47.

Verse 44 The word of God is a key expression in the Acts (Acts 4:31; 6:2, 7; 8:14; 11:1; 12:24; 13:5, 7, 46; 17:13; 18:11). Luke has a tendency to overstate, so the whole city might be taken with a pinch of salt.

Verse 45 This highly negative reaction is also found elsewhere: the priests in Jerusalem (5:17); the Jews in Thessalonica (17:5); the Jews in Rome (28:19, 22).

Verse 46 Speaking frankly or boldly is typical of Paul in Acts: 28:31. The ne-

cessity of speaking in the synagogues first is interpreted as a divine necessity. The turning to the Gentiles marks subsequent episodes in Acts: Corinth (18:6); Ephesus (19:9) and Rome (28:28). "Judging yourselves unworthy" is highly ironic in the context.

Verse 47 The turning to the Gentiles is by no means a second best, but follows the command of the Lord. The citation which follows has already been spoken elsewhere. Light to the Gentiles: spoken by Simeon in Lk 2:32. Salvation to the ends of the earth: spoken by the risen Lord in Acts 1:8. It is not, however, to take the place of a mission to the Jews, because the rest of the citation on Simeon's lips reads and for glory to your people Israel (Luke 2:32).

Verse 48 Rejoicing is typical of believers in Acts (13:53; 15:3; 5:41) as is praising the word of the Lord (11:18).

Verse 49 A summary statement, based on previous experiences in Caesarea (10;45) and Jerusalem (11:18).

Verse 50 This is a very different reaction, perhaps based on the demanding citizenship oaths undertaken by inhabitants of the Empire.

Verse 51 Shaking the dust: cf. Iconium (14:2) and Corinth (18:6). In the OT, dust is a signal of divine punishment.

Verse 52 In some contrast (!), the disciple head away full of joy (5:41; 8:8; 11:23) and the Holy Spirit (4:8 and many other places).

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. It can happen, when we do our best, that people react in different ways. Have I had such experiences? What was it like? How did I react to that?

2. Negative situations sometimes turn out to be new opportunities, as in this reading. Can I recall any situation which looked like an unmitigated disaster, but which in retrospect turned out to be a grace?

3. Reacting in knee-jerk fashion, with jealousy etc. is not unknown and may well be part of my own experience. What have I learned?

PRAYER

O God, it is your word we bear. Help us to learn from every experience, both good and bad and let us put our joyful trust in your Holy Spirit.

THE LITURGY

Acts 13:14, 43-52; Psalm 100 [99]; Rev 7:9, 14b-17; John 10:27-30

READINGS 1 AND 3

In our first reading the conviction and commitment of the apostles are under threat—something also in the second reading. Both readings point to Jesus and faith in him, the great topic of the Gospel today. Key words: *salvation* (Acts), *living water* (Apoc) and *eternal life* (John).

THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM

The Psalm is a general invitation to all the nations to worship God and so it matches the reading well. The response, in particular, looks forward to the Gospel.

SUNDAY INTRODUCTIONS

First Reading

Acts 13:14, 43-52

In its very earliest stage, the Christian movement was really a sect of Judaism. Gradually, however, the acceptance of Jesus as Messiah led to a break with the mother religion. Today's reading portrays something of what was at stake.

Second Reading

Rev 7:9, 14b-17

The Book of Revelation was written for people under pressure for their faith, probably local harassment rather than full-blown persecution. Nevertheless, it was very challenging and this symbolic reading is meant to encourage the wavering.

Gospel

John 10:27-30

Can anything separate us from the love of God in Jesus? According to this short Gospel, no! Why? Because the Good Shepherd holds all the flock in his care.

WEEKDAY INTRODUCTIONS

Monday 12 May

St Pancras, martyr

Acts 11:1-18

Should followers of Jesus follow all the Jewish Law, including circumcision, Sabbath and food regulations? It was an important question for the first generation. The answer, given three times in a

vision, shaped the future of Christianity.

John 10:1-10

We encounter another of the seven I AM sentences of this Gospel, perhaps one of the less remembered ones: I am the gate. We need to think of point of access or encounter, as in "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

Tuesday 13 May

Our Lady of Fátima

Acts 11:19-26

This is a summary statement, letting us know about the expansion of The Way after the decision not to impose Jewish regulations on Gentiles.

John 10:22-30

The feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) is mentioned: this feast celebrated the rededication of the Temple in the previous century. At the time of writing that restored Temple was also in ruins, causing consternation for both Jews and Christians. The Christian response was to name Jesus as our shepherd, who would lead us both to God and to eternal life.

Wednesday 14 May

St Matthias, apostle

Acts 1:15-17, 20-26

The writer of the Acts has great esteem for the Twelve and, as part of the continuity between the two Testaments, the "college" of the apostles is restored after the betrayal and death of Judas. The prayer of discernment shows confidence in God's presence and inspiration.

John 15:9-17

What would you choose to represent the heart of the Christian proclamation? Following Jesus' own example, our Gospel places at the heart of the Christian project the command to love. We may put "command" in inverted commas: really we are dealing with loving and being loved.

Thursday 15 May

St Carthage, bishop

Acts 13:13-25

The continuing story of Paul takes us

rather breathlessly to Antioch in Pisidia (Turkey today). We hear the first part of a sermon, outlining the story of salvation until the ministry of John the Baptist. You may notice the emphasis on David—great symbol of God's faithfulness *through time*, fulfilled in Jesus. Tomorrow we get to hear the second part of the sermon, when Paul challenges the hearers directly.

John 13:16-20

Our reading from John takes place at the Last Supper and follows the washing of the feet. As it draws out some of the meaning of the foot washing it also looks ahead to Jesus betrayal.

Friday 16 May

St Brendan the Navigator, abbot

Acts 13:26-33

For this scene, we have moved to Antioch in Pisidia. In a typical speech, Paul started yesterday reviewing the history of salvation; today Paul gives an account of the death and resurrection of Jesus, in the light of the Holy Scriptures.

John 14:7-14

Today we hear a reading familiar from funerals. However, it is really about Jesus own departure / death first of all. NB: one of the great I AM sentences from this Gospel.

Saturday 17 May

Acts 13:44-52

The switch to the Gentiles is signalled yet again in this brief story. Most likely, the Gentiles were the so-called God-fearers, that is, people already attracted to Judaism because of its pure doctrine of God, high moral code and its antiquity.

John 14:7-14

Our reading from John is very rich again today. It does contain a startling line: *whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works*. What could that possible mean? Somehow it means that after the great event of Jesus' death and resurrection, our task is to offer salvation, the salvation not yet achieved or somehow not available before Good Friday and Easter Sunday.