



Friday's Formation Note

Reflections on Shepherds and Hired Hands

"A hired hand does not care for the sheep."

We all have run into people in businesses or the service sector that just don't seem to care for the people they are supposed to help. And we all know people who bring the light, whose mere appearance lifts our mood and brightens our day - people who really do care.

Some "go through the motions," but others make the exchanges we have with them easy.

I remember, back when I worked at the State Department, fielding the occasional phone call from someone needing guidance on some issue or other, someone who had called office after office, only to be told, repeatedly, that their issue was not handled by the office they had reached. So when they got to me, I made every effort to help them find a person who could assist them.

I don't say this to brag; just to say that pointing them in the right direction might have taken me all of 5 minutes, but it really made their whole day.

Isn't one of the best things in life being able to help others?

So, what about those hired hands Jesus was talking about? I guess they just weren't "feeling it" when those wolves showed up. Or maybe the wolves promised to share a few lamb chops with them.

We, people, human beings, depend on other people for so much, yet sometimes they (or we) just don't want to be depended upon. We (or they) simply want to be able to depend on others without letting others depend on us.

The hired hand does not care...

The hired hand is no true shepherd. The hired hand runs at the first sign of trouble. His

(her, their) welfare does not depend on the welfare of the sheep.

The good shepherd, however, does depend on the sheep - they are his (her) livelihood, and her (his) purpose.

We know the difference between businesses that put the customer first and businesses that put the shareholders first.

We know the difference between people who are selfish and people who are generous, not just financially, but spiritually.

The central issue Jesus is addressing with his talk about hired hands and good shepherds is this:

In our lives, who matters more?

"Me" or "you"?

"Me" or "others"?

"Me" or God?

In Jesus' life and work, the answer is clear. He's not in it for himself; he's not in it for power; he's not in it for glory. He's in it for humanity, for human beings, for old and young, sick and well, the hungry, the poor, the lonely, the oppressed, for all who need someone in their corner, for all who need someone who cares, in short, for all who are in need of a good shepherd.

He lays down his life for the world, for all of us in our need.

The Rev Evelyn Wheeler

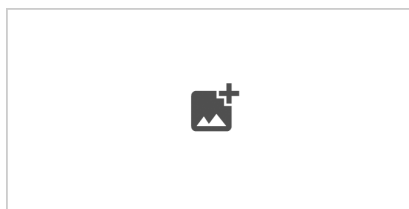
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