

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time – August 23, 2026 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 22:19-23

Thus says the Lord to Shebna, master of the palace: "I will thrust you from your office and pull you down from your station. On that day I will summon my servant Eliakim, son of Hilkiah; I will clothe him with your robe, and gird him with your sash, and give over to him your authority. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. I will place the key of the House of David on Eliakim's shoulder; when he opens, no one shall shut, when he shuts, no one shall open. I will fix him like a peg in a sure spot, to be a place of honor for his family."

Psalm: Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

R. (8bc) Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,
for you have heard the words of my mouth;
in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;
I will worship at your holy temple.

R. Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

I will give thanks to your name,
because of your kindness and your truth:
When I called, you answered me;
you built up strength within me.

R. Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

The LORD is exalted, yet the lowly he sees,
and the proud he knows from afar.
Your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;
forsake not the work of your hands.

R. Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

Scripture Reading: Romans 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor? Or who has given the Lord anything that he may be repaid? For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20

Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi and he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

On previous Sundays Jesus has been curing people. Yet an odd thing happens in each case. He tells them, “Your faith has saved you.” That creates a mystery. Quite obviously Jesus does the healing, so why does he say their faith did it? Why didn’t he just say “Go in peace, I have healed you”? Let us seek the answer in Sunday’s Gospel. This will be a roundabout way to get at an answer, so I ask you to wait for it. Jesus is in Caesarea Philippi and the disciples are just back from their mission of preaching. He asks them who people think he is. The disciples laugh boyishly and repeat some answers they have heard. Obviously they regard these guesses as absurd. Something like this: Believe it or not, some think you are John the Baptist returned from the dead! The ones I talked to said you were the prophet Elijah! It was hilarious! A few of them said you are Jeremiah or one of the other prophets! They just don’t know what to make of you. Laughter all around. But Jesus’ question was a curve ball and now it crosses the plate. He says abruptly, “And what about you? Who do you say I am?” Eyes wander, feet scuff, laughter turns into a cough. The disciples’ faith is still young and perhaps they are confused about it, not to mention the fact that up to this point they have not been required to profess anything out loud. Red faces. Peter is bold, awkwardly walking on water again, figuratively this time. He stammers out his best answer. You ... you are ... the, uh, ... yes, uh, the ... the Son of ... you are the Christ, the Son of the living God! Silence and then nods and relief all around. “Simon, how great is your faith,” Jesus says. “Whatever you open with this faith will stay open. Whatever your faith shuts will remain shut, not only here but in heaven.” A high compliment to Peter’s tottering belief status.

But does this help with the contradiction we began with? Is it Jesus’ action or an act of their faith? Jesus is always seeking a two-way liaison between himself and us, not just one-way. He wants us to have a relationship to the fullness of who he is. Besides being a charismatic leader or a good friend, he is the very reality of God’s love, present in the world, wide open to loving each of us—and being loved in return. He wants a mutual love-relationship with you and me, one in which we open up our hearts and let Godly love in—and return it. The name of that openness to God’s love on the part of a person is “faith.”

Faith. So the answer is truly, “your faith has saved you.” But it is faith in Jesus’ cures. These are never just a matter of him acting on his own, like a mechanic replacing spark plugs. They are love being given and love being received. The ones who were cured must have opened themselves and have at least a beginning relationship with Jesus as the loving Messiah. Healing is then at last able to take root.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. “I will place the key of the House of David on Eliakim’s shoulder. ...” In the Gospel Jesus tells Peter he will give him the keys to the kingdom of heaven. What might these keys unlock? Love? The depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God?
2. “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! ... For from him and through him and for him are all things.” Every person, every race, every part of our environment comes from God. How can we thank or “give glory” to God for gifts such as these? By loving? By protecting?
3. To answer Jesus’ question, “Who do you say I am,” you have to know him. Which of the following could help you know Jesus: music by Vivaldi, Michelangelo’s David, a good homily, a good book, good friends, suffering, joy, successes, weaknesses, family, flowers, homeless people? Can you find (and get to know) God in all things?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful to unite in a single purpose, grant your people to love what you command and to desire what you promise, that, amid the uncertainties of this world, our hearts may be fixed on that place where true gladness is found. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

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Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen