LECTIONARY FOR 2ND WEEK OF EASTERTIDE

 Morning Evening

1st SUNDAY AFTER EASTER (LOW SUNDAY), Apr 11

1st Lesson Isaiah 52:1--12 Isaiah 54

2nd Lesson Luke 24:13–35 John 20:24—end

Monday, Apr. 12

1st Lesson Deuteronomy 1:3–18 Deut. 1:19--end

2nd Lesson Acts 1:1–14 Acts 1:15--end

Tuesday, Apr. 13

1st Lesson Deut. 2:1–25 Deut. 2:26–3:5

2nd Lesson Acts 2:1–21 Acts 2:22--end

Wednesday, Apr. 14

1st Lesson Deut. 3:18—end Deut. 4: 1--24

2nd Lesson Acts 3:1–4:4 Acts 4: 5--31

Thursday, Apr 15

1st Lesson Deut. 4:25–40 Deut. 5:1--21

2nd Lesson Acts 4:32–5:11 Acts 5:12–6:7

Friday, Apr. 16

1st Lesson Deut. 5: 22—end Deut. 6

2nd Lesson Acts 6:8–7:16 Acts 7:17--34

Saturdsy. Apr. 17

1st Lesson Deut 7:1–11 Deut. 7:12--end

2nd Lesson Acts 7:35–8:4 Acts 8:4--25

Sunday, Apr 17, Easter II

1st Lesson Exodus 16:2–15 Exodus 32

2nd Lesson John 5:19–29 John 21

**EASTER I**

Easter Day and the Sunday following both have Gospels taken out of John 20. That monumental chapter also records two appearances of our risen Lord Jesus which we need to reflect on. These are (1) the appearance to Mary Magdalene, and (2) the appearance to the skeptical Thomas the following Sunday. (Today's Gospel records an appearance to the whole group of the disciples on the evening of Easter Day itself, sandwiched between the two appearances to individuals a week apart.)

Jesus commanded Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believing.” In these words our dear Lord submitted Himself to scientific investigation. He was not a disembodied spirit floating around, but a tangible body. Because His body was now glorified, it was no longer bound or limited by things like doors and locks. But it was still a flesh-and-blood body, which even a non-believer could see and touch.

So we might be puzzled by the command which Jesus gave to Mary Magdalene, the very first human to see the Risen Saviour. He had said to her, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.” There have indeed been those who compared these two texts (exactly ten verses apart) and concluded that poor John could not get his story straight. At first, they falsely conclude, Jesus is intangible and a week later He is tangible. Surefire proof, it would seem, that the Resurrection was only a tale.

We can quickly resolve the apparent discrepancy by examining both stories in the original Greek. The command “touch me not” is more accurately translated “Do not continue touching me,” or even better, “Do not cling to me.” For Mary as truly as for Thomas, Jesus is tangible.

Mary has already touched Jesus, without invitation, and who can blame her for that? The point of Jesus' command, “do not cling to me,” is that from that moment on, He has been made glorious. The former patterns of friendship and companionship between the Lord and His disciples will never be the same. He will not resume the same old life of the carpenter shop; He will no longer trudge the dusty roads around Galilee.

This is no loss to Mary, to the other disciples, nor to us. He had already promised, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” Jesus' resurrection will be our resurrection also. As He was snd is tangible and solid, we will be tangible and solid as well. That is the promise of Eastertide. His command to us, as to Thomas, is “Be not faithless but believing.” LKW

**EASTER II**

Today's Gospel has caused this Sunday to be informally dubbed “Good Shepherd Sunday.” and it is easy to select hymns appropriate to this theme. We all love the image of the Lord Jesus as the gentle and kindly shepherd. In the history of Christian art, this picture of the Saviour goes right back to the catacombs. It is clearly more ancient than other ways of visualizing Him, such as the criminal dying on a cross.

John 10 is the great “Good Shepherd” chapter of the Bible, but this theme is rooted deeply in the Old Testament. Remember that the boy David, when found by the prophet Samuel and anointed king, was keeping his father's sheep. This reminds us that the shepherd in the Bible is a kingly figure, one who rules over his sheep.

In John 10 we have all the elements of a parable. We see there the Shepherd Himself, the sheep, the fold, the door, the hirelings, the wolf, the thieves. But when John relates a parable, unlike Matthew, Mark and Luke, he does not tell a story; he simply gives us the various images for us to reflect on. The negative elements (hirelings, wolves, thieves) speak for themselves and need not detain us. John stresses for us the Shepherd Himself.

Contrary to popular impressions, it is not the gentleness of the Shepherd which John emphasizes, but rather the danger in which the Shepherd operates. The Shepherd has serious and life-threatening enemies: the wolf, the thieves and the hirelings. (Once again, we know who they are!) The Shepherd's life is in danger; the Gospels tell us more than once that they picked up stones to throw at Jesus and He knew early on in His ministry that He was destined for the Cross.

Today's Gospel, like so many, becomes clearer when we continue reading from our Bibles the following verses: “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.” Here is the word which brings the picture of the Shepherd into focus: authority. A shepherd is one who holds authority. Which brings us around to the question, what kind of sheep are we? Sheep are notoriously silly animals. Isaiah wrote (in a verse quoted in today's Epistle), "All we like sheep have gone astray, but the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." When we call Christ our Good Shepherd, let us remember that grand old hymn,

 But none of the ransomed ever knew

 How deep were the waters crossed;

 Nor how dark was the night the Lord passed through

 Ere He found His sheep that was lost.

 Out in the desert He heard its cry,

 Sick and helpless and ready to die;

 Sick and helpless and ready to die. LKW