

In Nomine Iesu

Misericordias Domini, the Second Sunday after Easter 2024 Sheep need a Good Shepherd - John 10:11-16

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father, and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

Last week we saw that the risen Christ came to His disciples in a manner they did not expect. He came to them as the Good Shepherd, seeking His lost sheep. He appeared among them. He forgave them, brought them the peace of God, and then gave them authority to bring the same forgiveness and peace to others. He gave them the Holy Spirit. Today’s gospel places before us a continuation of those things

Remember how they had sung a hymn in the upper room that night and then gone out to the Mount of Olives? As they went Jesus told them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I have been raised I will go before you to Galilee.” (Matthew 26:31-32) Instead of going to Galilee to find Him, as Jesus told them both in the upper room and then again on Easter morning through the women who came to the tomb, the twelve hid in fear, shame, and confusion in the same upper room in Jerusalem. But, as He had done from the beginning, the Good Shepherd came to them, seeking His lost and straying sheep. After all, on the night He was betrayed He reminded them of the truth of the matter: “You did not choose Me, but I chose you.” (John 15:16) This is the voice, the word of truth, we the Good Shepherd’s sheep need to hear again and again.

I

Jesus spoke the words of our text to His disciples a few weeks before they gathered in the upper room for that last Passover meal together. He warned them of false shepherds, false teachers, whom He called wolves. He warned them also of hirelings. He told them a hireling “sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.” (v. 12) But He added, “I am the good shepherd.” The Good Shepherd stands in contrast to the wolf and the hireling, one who is paid just to do a job and does not love the sheep like the Good Shepherd. A hireling flees and abandons the sheep in the face of danger, the Good Shepherd never will. He will not flee when death and sin threaten us. He did not abandon us at Calvary. No, there our Good Shepherd laid down His life for us, as He said He would. He did not abandon us to the powers of hell. He laid down His life for the sheep of Israel and for those whom His disciples would go into the world to find in order to save them from sin, death and hell, the great enemies of man. Three days later He rose from the dead. Since then He has never abandoned His

sheep, never retreated in the face of threat, whether of this world or the next. He still seeks and feeds and leads His sheep. How does He do this?

It is certainly true that Jesus' appearance to His disciples on that first Easter evening was unexpected. He appeared as the Shepherd seeking His lost sheep. But it is also true that the Good Shepherd had clearly told them where they could and surely would be able to find Him, even when Satan stalked them as a roaring and ravaging lion. Jesus' disciples were lost that Easter evening because they forgot His word and followed the leading of their own feelings, their own wisdom. They listened to themselves, to their own voice, not His. They looked for Jesus where He could not be found. They looked for Him in the last place they had been with Him when all had been well, much as we will keep returning to the same place we last remember having something when we cannot find it. They sought Him in guilt and fear rather than in Spirit and truth.

So, the Good Shepherd, who so loved His sheep, came seeking that which was lost once again. He found them. And then He taught them these things again, opening their hearts and minds to understand His word. From there they would go out into the whole world and teach all nations about Christ, and where to find Him.

II

It is a common belief on the part of many who call themselves Christian that they can be and remain Christians without going to church. What they really mean by saying that is that they are confident that they are Christians because they identify as Christians. Does that sound like anything similar today? They believe that they are the sheep of the Good Shepherd because they call themselves His sheep. But hear how Jesus speaks of these things: "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd." They will hear My voice, He says. He does not say they will be His sheep because they listen to their own inner voice, but to His.

In our text Jesus identifies Himself as the Good Shepherd, and will go on to prove it. He is the one who knows His sheep, whose voice the sheep know, trust, and follow. This image of the Good Shepherd is not something He presents here for the first time in John. No, we meet the Shepherd of Israel in the very first book of the Bible, Genesis. (49:24) He would appear many times after that. He was present in the midst of His people in the person of Moses, whom God chose to lead Israel like a flock through the wilderness to the Promised Land. As encamped by the Jordan, Moses told Israel to look for Another One, like him, whom God would raise up among them. His voice they were to heed, as sheep follow the voice of their shepherd. (Deuteronomy 18:15ff.) He would give them a promised land that, unlike Canaan, would be theirs forever and ever. King David spoke so beautifully of the coming Shepherd in the psalms. (Psalm 23 and others) The great prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel all described this Shepherd and His work so that believers would know Him when He appeared among them. Then at long last, when the time was right, the promised Savior was born in a stable in Bethlehem. The first ones who came to worship Him were, fittingly, shepherds. Having seen the Child they went out from there telling the world that in this Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Good Shepherd had finally come to dwell among His people, even as the Scriptures promised.

The word of God pointed to Bethlehem as the place where He would be born. The same word of God spoke of, and predicted, all His saving words and deeds. God's word led the shepherds to Him on that first Christmas. The same word guided the wise men to

Him. The word preached by John the Baptist and the baptism with which he cleansed Israel of sin one person at a time led directly to the Shepherd of Israel, the One Moses said would walk among them. The Supper Jesus instituted on the night of His betrayal was, He said, His very body and blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins. Here I am, He said. Here I am for you, bringing you forgiveness, life, and salvation. Here am I, the Good Shepherd. Here am I to feed, nurture, comfort, and defend you.

Jesus promised, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20) Jesus told His original disciples to go to Galilee after His resurrection, promising that there they would find Him waiting. They did not listen. So, Good Shepherd that He is, **He came to them** in that upper room on that first Easter evening. He told them again to go to Galilee, go to the place He first chose them to be His. And now they went; and they found Him waiting.

The Good Shepherd, can always be found where He said He will be. There He feeds us. There He leads us through the valley of the shadow of death. There His voice calls us His own. There He calls us by name and leads us to heaven. Now it may be in the future that you hide yourself away in an upper room of your own making, whether by burying yourself in your work, surrounding yourself with your amusements, nursing resentments against others that you use as an excuse not to come and hear the Good Shepherd or are just overwhelmed by what life gives you. In any such case you might see the pastor or some other Christian at the door of your chosen "upper room." He or she will not come through walls as Jesus once did. No, he will knock on your door, hoping and praying that you will open it and listen, listen once more not to him but to Jesus. For it really is He who comes to you in the person of that one who speaks. It is His voice, spoken by another, that calls you back to the sheepfold, because you do need a Shepherd. You need the Good Shepherd to guide you and keep you on the path to life everlasting, just as your brothers and sisters in Christ also need to gather regularly in His name.

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King David once hid in an upper room of his making, until the prophet Nathan came to him and called him back to the Shepherd he so badly needed. And he did come back, saying: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will 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 runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Psalm 23) David listened to the voice of the Good Shepherd. He pleads with us to do the same. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria