

JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD!

Misericordias Domini (Third Sunday in Easter) – Sunday, April 26th, 2020

Texts: John 10:11-18 (Sermon); Ezekiel 34:11-16; 1 Peter 2:21-25

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+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. +

Fellow redeemed, again and again we read in the Old Testament that many of the holy patriarchs and prophets were shepherds, and they were not ashamed of it. Abel was a keeper of sheep, and he offered up to God the firstborn of his flock (Gen. 4:2-4). Jacob herded the sheep of his father-in-law, Laban (Gen 30). Moses kept the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro (Ex. 3:1). David tended the sheep of his father before he was chosen to become king (1 Sam. 17:15). The Prophet Amos was among the shepherds at Tekoa (Amos 1:1).

All of these together are a types of the Good Shepherd who was to come, the Shepherd the Prophet Ezekiel wrote of, **“I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares 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, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice” (Ezekiel 34:15-16).** In our Gospel this day, Jesus reveals to us that He is the Good Shepherd.

Our Gospel places us in Jerusalem at the Festival of Booths, six months before Jesus’ crucifixion and death. The growing tension between Jesus and the Jewish authorities is reaching a climax. The Lord Christ thoroughly exposed the Pharisees: that they were blind and leaders of the blind; that they were not properly grazing the lambs

committed to their care. Instead, they were worthless hirelings because they shut people out of the kingdom of heaven. Christ reveals to these evil shepherds, along with His disciples that He is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11). In Him, God's promise revealed through the Prophet Ezekiel is fulfilled.

Yet, Christ doesn't say this without guidance. Instead, He sets forth the means by which He has shown Himself to be the Good Shepherd, namely: The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

The picture Jesus paints for those who gathered around Him and for us today is dark. There's no green pasture and still water. There's no Jesus carrying the lost lamb on His shoulders. We hear of fleeing danger. We hear of chasing and snatching and scattering - bringing chaos. We hear of death. The picture that begins to form in our mind is one of a battle – where there's danger – where there's blood – where there's death.

Yet, in the midst of this danger, blood, and death, there's comfort. The Good Shepherd Jesus lays down His life on behalf of the sheep! He does so because they've wandered away from Him. Initially, God created man as His people and as the sheep of His pasture (Psalm 100:3). God created the human race as one flock, as one Church, so that man were one flock and Christ the one Shepherd. However, man didn't stay in this flock. He jumped over the fence and confinement of the divine commandments with which God had enclosed this flock. On account of sin, He's strayed away from God. He wandered off and got lost. He falls into the clutches of the hellish 'wolf' as a result.

Apart from God and His Word and His Sacraments, we like sheep blindly follow the cares of the world. None of us are above peer-pressure. To think we're above being influenced by this sinful world is wrong. To think that the gathered church isn't essential, that you're strong enough to go it alone and are indifferent to being feed with God's Word and His Sacraments is wrong. Repent! **"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way..." (Isaiah 53:6).** Along with our sinful flesh, the devil is hard at work during this time. He's using every trick, every play, every situation as a means, to snatch and destroy you.

Yet, **"The good shepherd lays down his life on behalf of sheep" (John 10:11).** As true God, the great I AM, Jesus laid down his life for the errant sheep, that is all mankind so that they would be ripped away from the clutches of the raging devil and once more be brought into the flock of Church. Jesus stepped forward, **"Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7).** He didn't run or fight, but willingly went to the cross. He says, **"No one takes it [His life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (John 10:18).** He was seized and ripped up by those teeth which are the sins which He bore in His own body. The Shepherd over all the universe was killed on the cross to take sin's wages for the sheep. As St. Peter wrote, **"He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24).**

Yet, we don't have a dead shepherd, for what good is a dead shepherd? Jesus says, **"...I lay down my life that I may take it up again" (John 10:17).** Risen from the grave His voice goes out through His Word – the pure preaching of the Gospel and the

right administration of the Sacraments. His voice goes out for, **“The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Lk. 19:10)**. His voice goes out to gather those who were scattered, **“...I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16)**.

Fellow redeemed, do you know you’ve sinned against the Good Shepherd? Do you know that you were in of the devilish wolf? The Good Shepherd says to you today, **“I laid down my life on the cross for you.”** He says, **“I know my own...” (John 10:14)**. Knowing here doesn’t, imply recognition, but an intimate knowing. As the heavenly Father knows His Son and the Son His Father, so Christ knows and loves His beloved sheep. He knows His own. He called you by name in the waters of Holy Baptism. There, he washed away the dirty stains of your sin. He rescued you from death and the devil, and brought you into the flock of His church.

It’s in the pasture of His church that your beloved Shepherd feeds you and nourishes you with His body and blood, the same body and blood that He sacrificed for you on the tree of the cross.

In the pasture of His church, not only does your Good Shepherd protect you from the ravenous wolves, but He also guards you from the heat of anxious doubt and worry in the same way a faithful shepherd drives the beloved sheep under a cool shade (Isaiah 4:5-6). The Lord is a mighty shelter, a great strength, and umbrella against the heat... (Song of Sol. 2:16-17).

Fellow redeemed, Christ is the Good Shepherd. He purchased His sheep at great expense – His death on the cross. He gloriously feeds and nourishes them. He leads

them with great care and brings them safely home. Since the Lord who has everything – forgiveness, eternal life and salvation – we his sheep lack nothing.

“Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! ... Behold the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, that he may deliver their soul from death” (Introit).

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in
Christ Jesus. Amen.