

Jesus Christ, The Good Shepherd.

Text: John 10:11-16

1) Gives His Life For The Sheep

Suggested Hymns:

2) Knows His Sheep

387, 184, 604, 391, 602

3) Constantly Adds To His Fold

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 10:11-16, ¹¹ ***“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ¹² “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. ¹³ “The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.***

¹⁴ ***“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. ¹⁵ “As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ “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.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

This Sunday is called The Sunday of the Good Shepherd. This name was given to this Sunday because the ancient church set apart our text as the Gospel Lesson for this day.

The title of “shepherd” is one of great antiquity and honour. Abel, the first martyr, was a shepherd; so were the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; so were Moses and David.

Yes, God Himself did not hesitate to assume the office and character of a shepherd. He says in Ezekiel 34:11 & 15, ***“Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.” ... ¹⁵ “I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord GOD.***

And when God spoke of the person and work of the promised Messiah, He said in Isaiah 40:11, ¹¹ ***He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the***

lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.

The title of “Shepherd” Jesus of Nazareth applied to Himself in our text. Let us, then, consider Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Jesus Is Indeed The Good Shepherd, For He Gives His Life For The Sheep

“I am the Good Shepherd,” says Jesus in our text. He is telling us: I am that Shepherd whose coming was foretold in the Old Testament. I am that Shepherd of whom David said: *“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.”* I am that Shepherd who was to come that His sheep might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. That is a distinguishing characteristic of the good shepherd. A hireling, whose own the sheep are not, flees at the first sign of danger. Not so the good shepherd. He gives his life for the sheep.

Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, gave His life for the sheep. It is written 1 Timothy 2:5-6, *“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”*

And in Hebrews 2:9, *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”* Jesus gave His life, His own soul, as the complete sacrifice for the guilt of all sinners. He became their Substitute. He died in their stead, and in their place.

What induced Jesus to do this? Were the sheep deserving of this? Certainly not. For Isaiah says, *“All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way.”*¹

The sheep had turned away from the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. They did not want this Shepherd to rule over them. His guiding and protecting was a burden to them. And so they turned away from Him and ran into the thickets of sin and found themselves in the power of Satan.

As a wolf preys upon the sheep, so Satan preyed upon men. He ruined the flock, He corrupted everyone of the sheep, and so there was nothing good in them on account of which the Shepherd should give His life for them. No, they were all transgressors, guilty wretched sinners, lost and condemned creatures.

What, then, induced the Shepherd to lay down His life for them? The Bible answers in 1 John 3:16, ***16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us.*** God's love was the cause of His sacrifice, nothing in man. We read in John 3:16 ***16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."***

And in Ephesians 2:4-5, ***4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).*** This is the foundation upon which our salvation rests. God's love, grace, and mercy impelled Christ to meet and conquer Satan and overcome sin and death.

Another trait of this Good Shepherd is that He gave His life of His own accord. He said in John 10:17-18, ***17 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.*** Men could not have taken it from Jesus if He had not consented, for He was omnipotent. But Jesus laid it down freely, of His own accord. His loving heart, filled with sincere compassion for His fold, moved Him to do so.

And the blessed result of this voluntary death is help and deliverance. By fighting with death and the devil and by giving His life for the sheep, Jesus conquered these enemies. We read in Hebrews 2:14-15, ***14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.***

By His vicarious suffering and death He has bought, redeemed, and saved the sheep. He has prepared a way by which they can return to the fold from which they had strayed. Are you going this way? Or are you still walking your own way that leads away from God?

2. Jesus Is Indeed The Good Shepherd, For He Knows His Sheep

In the second place, Jesus is the Good Shepherd, for He knows His sheep. A good and faithful herdsman in the East was expected to know his flock as a whole and individually, so that he might be sure which sheep belonged to his fold and which did not. Jesus is such a good shepherd.

We have strayed from the right path, we had lost our way, we would have walked into everlasting ruin had not the Good Shepherd gone after us, opened our eyes to see our helpless condition, and invited us to receive His Gospel, by which we have returned to our Father's house.

Yes, He has led us into His fold. We were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. It is not our work, not our willing and doing, but *“it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”*²

Jesus knows His flock, for He knows who belongs to it, and He acknowledges them as His members. *“The solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His.”*³ The world may despise them, their enemies may laugh them to scorn, their friends may frown upon them, but Jesus knows them. In spite of the weaknesses and frailties, in spite of their many transgressions, He is with them.

And though at times they are troubled and annoyed on all sides; fightings and fears within, without; trampled upon by the enemies of the Cross and seemingly forsaken by God, Jesus knows them, knows them as His own, and acknowledges them as His members by being with them in all their sorrows and comforting them with His rod and His staff.

He knows them with unspeakable and eternal love, for He feeds their souls with His Word and Sacraments. He makes them to lie down in the green and sweet pastures of His Gospel, which assures them that their sins are blotted out and that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

He restores their soul, He strengthens their faith, He points out the path of righteousness which they should walk. He preserves them from error and unbelief and wickedness, and comforts them in all their afflictions and distresses. Hence they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand.

Thy hymnist writes,⁴

I am Jesus' little lamb,
Ever glad at heart I am;
Jesus loves me, Jesus knows me,
All things fair and good He shows me,
Even calls me by my name:
Every day He is the same.

A consequence of Christ's knowing His sheep is that they also know Him. Do you know Him? Do you know Him as your Prophet, Priest, and King? As your Shepherd, Guardian, Friend? As your God and Saviour and Redeemer?

He says, ¹⁴ ***"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.*** The sheep know the shepherd; he is not a stranger, but an acquaintance; not one they have never seen, but one with whom they are familiar.

They know his call, the sound of his voice, his tender mercies, his ineffable love, and they listen to his words. ***"My sheep,"*** says Jesus, ***"hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*** ²⁸ ***"And I give them eternal life."***⁵ His voice is heard in the Gospel. The sheep hear His voice; not man's voice, not the world's voice, not Satan's voice, not the voice of our flesh, but His, His voice.

⁴ ***"And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.*** ⁵ ***"Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."***⁶ The voice of the stranger is the voice of Satan, who comes to deceive and to destroy. Oh, do not follow it, but follow the voice of Jesus! Do you? He has the words of eternal life. Believe them and live according to them!

3. Jesus Is Indeed The Good Shepherd, For He Constantly Adds To His Fold

Finally, Jesus is the Good Shepherd because He constantly adds to His fold. He says, ¹⁶ ***"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.*** This was fulfilled when the Apostles went out and preached the Gospel to all nations. Thereby both Jews and Gentiles were gathered together into one fold under one Shepherd.

And the voice of the Good Shepherd is still heard in all quarters of the globe. The Gospel is still being brought to all nations. From North to South, from the dawning East to the glowing West the Gospel is still preached. Other sheep hear His voice and join the fold.

From all parts of the earth these other sheep are brought by the preaching of the Gospel into the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints. Outwardly they may differ as to language and appearance and ceremonies, but within they have the same faith in the crucified and risen Saviour.

They have the same forgiveness of sin and pardon in His blood. They have the same indwelling Holy Spirit, who has called them by the Gospel, enlightened them with His gifts, sanctified, and kept them with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

This one fold is the invisible Church, of which every true believer in Christ is a member. You cannot tell positively who belongs to it, but you can truly know whether you are a member of it or not.

The hypocrite is not a member of this Church, for he has no faith, and Jesus does not look at the outward appearance, but at the heart. A person may belong to a visible church, may be a member in good standing, but if he has no faith, he is not a sheep of Jesus, for *“without faith it is impossible to please God.”*⁷

It is faith, and faith alone, which makes a person a member of Christ’s Church, for *“The kingdom of God does not come with observation;”*²¹ *“nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”*⁸

Among the other sheep which Jesus brings into His fold are also those who were once in His flock, but have wandered away. Many people start out in life with the firm determination to remain faithful to God, to do what they have promised their Saviour on the day of their confirmation; but, alas, they have not rowed out very far on the sea of life when their boat begins to rock, their anchor loosens, the watchfulness of former days changes into drowsiness, the boat springs a leak, fills with water, and founders. Their faith is shipwrecked!

But the Good Shepherd, who knows His flock, sees that one is missing. And He leaves the ninety nine in the wilderness, and goes after that which is lost, until

He finds it. He braves the darkness and the storms, He climbs the rocks and the mountains, He passes through the deep waters, calling the lost one to return.

Although it has embraced error and unbelief, although it has been given to nothing but sinful pleasures, although it has strayed into the thickets of evil and crime, He calls it to repent and to return.

He shows His bleeding hands and His wounded side, and says, *“Look to Me, and be saved!”* Jesus says, ⁴⁷ *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.”*⁴⁹ And happy, yes, blessed is the lost one who returns to the fold.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,¹⁰

The King of love my shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am His
And He is mine for ever. Amen

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

¹ Isaiah 53:6

² Philippians 2:13

³ 2 Timothy 2:19

⁴ Hymn 602

⁵ John 10:27-28

⁶ John 10:4-5

⁷ Hebrews 11:6

⁸ Luke 17:20

⁹ John 6:47

¹⁰ Hymn 391