

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church  
Shobonier, Illinois  
Easter 4A  
April 30, 2023  
John 10:1-10

### The Good Shepherd Gives Abundant Life

7 So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. . . . If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:7, 9-10 ESV)

Dearly Beloved Sheep of the Good Shepherd,

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!]

In today's first reading (Acts 2:42-47), we hear that those who had come to faith through Peter's preaching on Pentecost "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42). These people had become sheep of the Good Shepherd, followed His voice, and were fed and nourished by Him through His under-shepherds. Their faith showed itself in love toward their fellow believers as they shared everything.

Likewise, St. Peter reminds us that Jesus suffered, having committed no sin, and "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." And then reminds us, "For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." (1 Pet. 2:24-25). Listen to His voice, and don't follow a stranger.

As sheep of the Good Shepherd, we listen to His voice because we are in constant danger all around. The world hates us, even as it hates all who of the truth. It hates us because we teach as the scriptures teach that there are only two sexes, what the world calls genders. It hates us because we teach as the Bible teaches that marriages is between one man and one woman for life. It hates us

because we teach as God's Word teaches that children are a blessing from conception on and not a commodity to be used, or eliminated, however or whenever we wish. Add to this the danger of war and conflict near and far, as well as theft, assault, shootings, murder, and abuse of all kinds. There is fear-mongering all around.

Yet, these are not the greatest of the dangers we face. For we are also surrounded by even greater dangers which can affect our eternal life. There are many who "climb in by another way" whose only desire is "to steal and kill and destroy" the sheep of the Good Shepherd. These are false teachers of many kinds, in the church and in the culture, who will lead us astray if we listen to them and follow them. There are those who call sin good, and what is good, sin. The immorality around us is appalling, and those justifying it and even advocating it will stop at nothing to silence those who oppose them.

Others claim that all religions are true, or equal, and will lead people to God or heaven. They say that we must tolerate and even accept these different beliefs as being different paths to the same place. Do not listen to such false teaching, no matter its source, for there is only one way to heaven and eternal life, only one door to the sheepfold, and that is Jesus Christ.

Likewise, there are those claiming to be Christians who teach falsely. You can spot them because they most often focus on two things – proper behavior and having an abundant life. They often teach a list of rules to follow to be a Christian and require certain behaviors. They appear to be new Pharisees and attempt to turn their followers into Pharisees too. Closely related to that is their preaching an abundant life. In so doing, they fleece the sheep to fulfil their own desires. They encourage people to look inward, to trust in themselves, to follow their passions and they'll get the desires of their heart. And, if someone doesn't get what he wants, it's his own fault – he didn't believe enough, he didn't trust in himself, he didn't follow the program. In the end such false teaching destroys life, not give it.

That's why Jesus warns us, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15). Their way leads only to poverty and death because they do not lead people to Jesus. That's why St. Paul writes,

“Those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned . . . do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom 16:17-18). We need to be constantly vigilant against such false teachers for they are all around us, even among our family and friends.

Yet, in the midst of such dangers to body and soul, we have One who is on our side. We have One who gives us true life and that in abundance. We have One who cares for us and supplies all our needs. We have One who keeps us safe and secure. Indeed, we have One who saves us, a Shepherd who gave His life for us. That’s why Psalm 23 is so comforting. For we each confess that the Lord Jesus is \*my\* shepherd. He has called each of us by name in our Baptism, and He calls each of us His own. “He daily and richly provides all that we need to support this body and life.”

And while that is certainly wonderful, He gives us so much more. He gives us abundant life. While He “makes us lie down in green pastures and leads us beside the still waters,” He also leads us into the haven of His Church, the sheepfold of the Good Shepherd Himself.

Thus, it’s the Church’s sound teaching, the wall of doctrine, which protects us. For this teaching is the voice of our Shepherd, and it finds its source and goal in Him alone. That’s why the one door into this “sheep pen” is Jesus Himself. For He alone is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep (John 10:11). He is the only way into the “sheep pen” because He alone took our sins upon Himself so that we could have forgiveness, life, and salvation. He alone died so that His sheep could live. He alone willingly sacrificed Himself, losing everything, even His life, so that we, His sheep, could have everything, including eternal life.

So, where do Jesus’ sheep hear the voice of their Shepherd? Right here, of course. For the voice of Jesus sounds clearly in the Word, the Sacraments, and the liturgy. As the baptized gather here each week, you hear your Shepherd tell you, “I forgive you all your sins.” “Take eat, this is my Body. Take drink, this is My Blood shed for you.” “Go in peace.” These are the words of abundant life, for

they deliver you from sin and death, and give you the life of the risen Lord Jesus.

Here, Jesus speaks to you through His chosen under-shepherd as he forgives your sins, preaches Christ and Him crucified and risen for you, and places Jesus’ Body and Blood into your mouth. Through your pastor Christ sustains His sheep, leads them out, goes before them, and leads you to green pastures and quiet waters (Ps. 23).

Only the living Jesus gives His sheep life now and eternally. And while He does give us everything we need for this earthly life, that is not what’s most important. For Jesus has told us “one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15). Instead, the abundant life consists in hearing Jesus say, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” (John 10:27-28). This is abundant life indeed!

This is the life of Christ, our Good Shepherd, who laid down His life and took it up again so we can be His and live with Him forever. And since He is risen from the dead, never to die again, He gives that life to you. By God’s grace in Christ you are Jesus’ little lamb. So flee from those who would destroy you by their false teaching. Listen only to the voice of your Shepherd who gave His life so that you would have life. He alone died for all your sins. He alone rose from the dead so that you too need not fear death. Indeed, you too shall rise from the dead. Yes, Jesus is your Good Shepherd and He is the Door - the Door to an abundant life now and forever.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!]  
Amen.

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

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener