

Jesus says twice in this short Gospel, **the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep**. That is a tender, humble, compassionate, beautiful image, but a powerful, strong image. A Good Shepherd will not flee danger, He stays, He fights, He bleeds, He dies for the sheep.

The American Sniper, Chris Kyle noted he was taught everyone is a sheepdog, sheep or wolf. Truth in that, how some, like sheepdogs are there to protect others, not run off, step in to help; other people, wolves will use, abuse, hurt, manipulate, bully others. Not exclusive to men, but men in particular, to be masculine is to have a sheepdog strength and mentality. Vocations as police, fire, military, fathers- that men act meek, gentle, playfully wrestle with a small child, but try and hurt someone and fierce aggression to rip out a limb to protect. Both gentle and aggressive, always in service to others. Sheepdogs stand up for truth, defend life, do not run from danger.

Consider, I am like a sheepdog. If you've seen how they work, they keep focused on their Master. His words, actions direct the shepherd dog in obedience, into action for the sheep, works the sheep. My focus on the Good Shepherd, the Master to direct my work to you. You can call me a sheepdog. Also considering my family lineage, I am a German Shepherd. Pastor is Latin for shepherd. He sent me to be His shepherd to you dear sheep.

Dear sheep, heed the warnings from your Good Shepherd. There are false shepherds, hirehands, wolves; eager to steal what belongs to God; the voices of a true shepherd and hiredhands are similar. Hiredhands may seem harmless, even appears godly; they will tell you doctrine doesn't matter, just love Jesus, which is to say certain words of your Good shepherd are worthless; they tell sheep what they want to hear, usually not a quick kill, slowly works to destroy faith, kills the soul.

Dear sheep, heed the warnings of Your Good Shepherd. You cannot survive on your own. We loved to wander off, get lost. It's natural for sheep, our desire to stray from what is right. You grossly underestimate the danger around you. How you often listen to your voice instead of His. Much false teaching, other voices out there. And you have a murderous adversary that works 24/7, 365 to destroy you and every relationship have. A simply click on the computer, distractions to keep you incessantly busy to wander away your Bible and catechism; to stray from the Divine Service, the Table He prepares. You so easily stray from what is good and right; how often you don't even put up a fight.

Dear sheep, heed this warning well. Sheep don't go thru life on their own; they live with a flock. To go it alone, leave the flock, wander from the

shepherd, is deadly. Why Jesus is torn with pity for **sheep without a shepherd**. But you can't convince some sheep of that. It sees no harm in looking for greener pastures, what's more exciting, no danger in straying from the true flock. The Church is life in a sheep pen. Some sheep are smelly, some sheep don't like other sheep so much. Sometimes there's quarrels. Sometimes sheep don't feel like being shepherded, think they know what's best. The shepherd comes to feed, care for you, in a flock.

Dear sheep, heed this warning well. Listen to His voice. Your Shepherd must feed you His living word over and over into your ears or you will starve. He gives drink of His cup of salvation again and again. He knows that apart from Him you can do nothing.

Dear sheep heed this blessed Gospel. His voice that forgives, heals. His voice that leads you in the midst of trials and confusion. His voice that calls you to repentance; calls you back when you wander. His voice that you know He is there. His voice: the Scripture. His voice from His under-shepherds which must accord with His Voice.

Dear sheep heed this blessed Gospel. Your shepherd knows His sheep, **knows you by name**. Named you in baptismal **still waters**; you as distinct from everyone else, as precious to Him as any saint or martyr ever born. Your Shepherd knows what you need, which ones have cuts, which ones have disease, which ones need special attention. A perfect shepherd for you. He will discipline you when you need it, He will bandage **your wounds** when hurt. He will protect you, give you all that you need for your life. He knows what isn't good for you, what each of you needs-money, love, health, courage, comfort, even what trials, affliction He will work for your good. The Lord is your shepherd, His sheep are not in want. Ever.

Dear sheep heed this blessed Gospel. Rejoice: By His work, by His grace, you are **the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand**, gathers you here, into this sheep pen. That beautiful language of Psalm 23, all happens here, **He prepares a table** as we are surrounded by **enemies in this valley of death**. Come this day then and eat the food of Sheep. His voice calls you to be: His forgiven, His beloved, His flock.

Heed this well, In Him you shall not be in want. **Surely goodness and mercy will follow you, all the days**, every moment of your life. He comes then and now, does it all, with all His authority now and always, **that you shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever**.