

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter  
“Known by the Good Shepherd to know Him” (John 10:14)  
April 21, 2024  
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter is from our Gospel reading, John 10:14.

**“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.”**

So far the text...

“I am”. Jesus said these great “I am” statements especially in the very presence of spiritual danger and trouble. When the opposition to God was greatest, Jesus stood in the midst of the people and gave them this comforting strength – the Great “I am” is with you and nothing greater can harm you.

What was the danger that surrounded the sheep? The wolf, the devil, who came to attack, destroy and scatter the sheep... and the hirelings, the Pharisees and Saducees, who did nothing to defend them, but rather fled because they cared nothing for the sheep. Why are the sheep defenseless against the wolf and evil teachers?

How does the wolf hurt the sheep? He uses the law to accuse them and condemn them. And the sheep, you and I, and the whole world cannot defend ourselves, for we are guilty of not keeping the law perfectly. And the teachers of the law, the Pharisees and Sadducees offer no comfort. They direct the sheep not to the fulfiller of the Law, Jesus. No, they turn the sheep to look inward for help, to their own souls, as if the sheep could purify their souls by good works.

There is but One who is Good. There is but One who is good and holy and freely offers His goodness and holiness to the sheep to defend them and cover them with His righteousness so that the wolf cannot harm them. Who is this? The great “I am”. The “I AM GOOD SHEPHERD”. The “I AM”, Bread of life, Way, Truth and Life.

To actually care for the sheep is to teach and lead the sheep to know the “I Am” – Jesus...and have life in His name. But the Pharisees did just the opposite. They rejected Jesus and crucified Him. They are bad shepherds who care only about themselves.

Jesus reassures us that He does care for His sheep. He is the Good Shepherd. Jesus cares about His sheep so much that He doesn't flee when danger comes, but stands up to danger. The great “I am” does something totally unexpected. He lays down His life for the sheep.

This is what Jesus says in the very next verse following our text.

**“As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”**

This is breathtaking to hear how the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of one accord in the singular purpose of saving the sheep. The Father knows His Son intimately and knows what is needed to save the sheep. The Father knows that the only way to save the sheep is for His Son to suffer and die. And the Father willingly sends His Son to death.

The Son knows that this is His Father’s will. He knows that there is no other way to save the sinful sheep, but to lay down His life. And He willingly does this. For Jesus knows the sheep as He knows His Father. He knows how lost they are. He knows that they cannot on their own come to the Father.

He must be the Mediator who opens heaven for the sins of the world! He must be the Good Shepherd.

Jesus continues to explain that this is the greatest act of love...love for His Father...loved by the Father and love for the sheep.

**“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. This command I have received from My Father.”**

And here we are given again the promise of the resurrection. This is 6 months before Jesus would die on the cross. And He told the people that though He would die, He Himself, has the power to take His life back again!

What a comfort for Jesus to know that after all the suffering for the sins of the world, that He would finish the work of salvation and then take up His life on the third day to show He had conquered all evil! The resurrection of Jesus is the proof that the wolf is powerless to condemn the believing sheep!

And this is what Jesus wants all people to know and believe! For this reason, He appeared to the lost and despairing sheep for 40 days after His resurrection. For this reason the church of the God’s sheep hear the resurrection stories for 40 days after Easter. For we need to be assured again and again that the great “I AM” stands for us and continues to defend and feed His sheep.

Who did Jesus especially appear to after He rose from the dead? Listen to what the Emmaus disciples heard when they returned to Jerusalem after seeing Jesus themselves.

**“So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!”**

This is the Simon who said that he did not know Jesus, who denied Jesus three times. Yes, Jesus knows His sheep very well. He knows how they, we.. deny Jesus when we don't put our trust in Him, but rather turn our backs on Him. The Good Shepherd knows our weaknesses, our sinfulness, our denials, and for this reason He willingly gave His life on the cross for all sinners.

Jesus appeared to Simon Peter to turn his “I don't know Him” into a “Yes, I know that Jesus is my Good Shepherd who paid for my sins and rose again!” I know Him as my Savior!

And so we see Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost by the power of the Holy Spirit and proclaiming that Jesus who the people crucified is risen. We hear Peter telling them how Jesus loves them too in Acts chapter three.

**“You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ 26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”**

And what did the Holy Spirit do? He rescued 5000 from the wolf. Listen again to our first reading from Acts 4.

**“Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”**

This Peter who denied knowing Jesus, this lost sheep was rescued by the Good Shepherd and then was sent to tell other lost sheep how they too could be saved!

Listen to Peter's words again from our first reading as he explained how this 40 year old man who was lame since birth, how he was well-known as being lame ...now walks.

**“8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

No other name, but the name of Jesus the Good Shepherd, by which men, any man, woman or child can be saved! For Jesus was crucified for the sins of the world. And He who healed the body of this lame man and made him whole, makes the souls of all who believe in Him whole. He is the Chief Cornerstone and brings His sheep into His one holy apostolic church – His one sheepfold.

And that’s where you and I also hear the good news from our Gospel. For Jesus did not only search for the lost sheep of Israel, the covenant people, and bring them back into the sheepfold, but He promises this to us.

**“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.”**

Other sheep... Gentile sheep...lost Gentiles including you me! The Good Shepherd stands before you and me and says “I AM” your Good Shepherd also. He knows you and you hear his voice being proclaimed through His Word. You are invited to eat of His very body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins today. The Good Shepherd feeds you in these green pastures of His Word and Sacraments.

So that on the last day, when Jesus raises up all the dead, He will not say to you, “I don’t know you” as He said to the bridesmaids who had no oil of faith in their lamps. But He will say,  
**Matthew 25:34**

**“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”**

So Peter says in his first epistle:

**“1 Peter 1:3**

**“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”**

Amen. **“And this peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**