

The historical name today, Misericordia Domini, The Lord is good. And with the ancient readings for this day: Ezekiel 37, John 10, 1 Peter, even more Psalm 23, we all know it as Good Shepherd Sunday. It's impossible to not see Jesus as our Shepherd. Even sung daily in the historical morning Matins, the Venite, of Psalm 95, **we are people of His pasture and sheep of His hand.** Motifs of shepherd, sheep throughout Scripture.

The priest, prophet Ezekiel gives God's own words to the people: **I Myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. I will rescue, I will feed them, I will seek the lost, I will bring back the strayed, I will bind the injured, I will strengthen the weak.** And you heard the fulfillment, Jesus says: **I am the good shepherd. I am,** the sacred name of God, given to Moses at burning bush. Ezekiel preaching to people who've lost everything, conquered by Babylon. Temple destroyed; who wasn't left for dead; are brought to a foreign land, enslaved. What happened?

In this context, the shepherds -that's the men, priests, political leaders- the shepherds failed in their duty to call people to repentance, to protect the people, take care of the people, as shepherds, keep the nation together like a flock; fight the enemies, foremost fight against lies mixed in with God's word that became accepted and tolerated.

When shepherds don't do their job, when they fail to warn, it damages the church, it destroys people's faith, it causes great suffering. You see this throughout history, even today with so much accepted, tolerated in culture, even in churches.

There are 3 kinds of people in the world. Shepherds, sheep, wolves. This was even brought up in the movie, American Sniper, war hero, Chris Kyle how he was taught. There are Shepherds, or sheepdogs; there to protect others, not run off, step in to help; other people: wolves; will use, abuse, hurt others, grab what they can, steal, manipulate truth, bully others, take advantages of others. Not exclusive to men, but men in particular, to be masculine is to have a shepherd/sheepdog character. Vocations especially 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. Shepherds, sheepdogs, stand up for truth, defend life, do not run from danger, that conviction especially for parents, our emergency workers and military and God help us, in our political leaders and pastors. Of course pastor, Latin for shepherd. The Lord establishes, send shepherds to tend sheep in His stead; grave warning against false shepherds, along with wolves.

And in one sense, we are all sheep, unable to take care of themselves, weak, need constant attention, dirty; stubborn, timid, feeble, easily frightened, no homing instinct, easily get lost, defenseless against predators, about as a pathetic helpless animal there is. A reality of your life. I hope you've already figured that out. You're a mess, desperate, hopeless, wandering, fresh-meat, dead, without a Shepherd.

I am the Good Shepherd, I know my own, my own know me. I call them by name, they follow me. What it means to be Christian -live by the voice of your Savior. **I know my sheep.** He knows your struggles, heartaches, joys. He knows you better than you know yourself. Of course He knows your sin. But even that is good news. He knows your sin doesn't just mean that He's aware of it, but He's embraced it; takes on Him your sin, buried within His body, put it to death forever on the cross.

Take heed dear sheep, the Lord warns you the world is a dangerous place. From false, hireling shepherds, to satans wolves. You see in small children, they lack fear of

the dangers all around them, of traffic, things they shouldn't put in their mouth, pools of water, and evil men. We are all naïve, unaware of dangers. Jesus warns you.

According to Jesus, what's the most dangerous thing in all the world? Have you thought about that? What's the most dangerous thing He says you face? It's not disease or cancer. What's your greatest danger? Not plague or terrorism. It's not even death. Your greatest threat isn't even Satan. According to Jesus, the greatest threat you face: False teaching. Different voices than His. He says, **Do not be afraid of those who kill the body** (coming from one who raises dead bodies) **but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.** False teaching to destroy the soul. Satan using false teachers. False teachers, will speak of God, Jesus, tell sheep what they want to hear, sound reasonable and may even have truth in it, but also lies that undermine God's Word. Beware of any who tells you doctrine, certain teachings, Sacraments, this Divine Service, don't matter -which is to say certain words of your Lord are worthless.

That you must know His voice, His truth, His doctrine. About men and women, about the body and life, about our vocations and marriage, there is objective truth, unchanging truth of Scripture. Beware, every child, every adult are expose daily to deadly progressive ideas, sure some good but also lies that undermine faith, God's creative order, Scripture.

In the early church, catechism instruction, wouldn't start as we do with 10 Commandments; they started with Psalm 23. You first learn this Psalm. What it means to have a God and you are but sheep. A God to provide, take care of you. All Scripture encapsulated here. And they would see this Psalm is fulfilled not only by Jesus, but Psalm 23 is real for you, in the Divine Service. Without the Sacraments, without the Church, without pastors, I have no idea how any can truly understand, know Psalm 23.

It's amazing you all come into church with all sorts of different things going on. All of us, different issues, problems. Burdens of sin, the hurting, the wounded, the lost, confused, despairing, lonely, the desperate, the longing to endure, the mourning, whatever struggles comes upon you, all your issues -all addressed, answered.

The Lord **your shepherd**, here His voice made you sheep, you follow His voice, provides what truly matters, **you are not in want**, the treasures of His kingdom yours. **He makes you to lie down**, rest safely here in hostile world, in these **green pastures of His church**, leads you here flowing with living baptismal **still waters. Restores your soul** with Word, Sacraments, leads you, **in His path**, giving **His righteousness**, you bear **His name** from the font. The **anointing of the oil**, Holy Spirit, healing, faith. In spite of this world **this valley of the shadow of death**. He lives. You will never die. There's more evil, more terror, more accidents, more disease in front of you. Enemies work 365.24.7 to destroy you, all your relationships. You are but sheep. But your Shepherd with you. **Fear no evil**, nothing can truly harm you; leads you, **comforts you with rod and staff** with His shepherds, to tend to you, serve you in His stead. And here, (there) **He prepares a table before you**, before **the presence** of the world, surround by **enemies** of His sheep, you drink from **His chalice that overflows** with His forgiveness and life. What promise He gives you to live life. **Surely goodness and mercy will follow you, all the days**, every moment **and you dwell in the House of the Lord** here, now and **forever**. Psalm 23, all happens here and into entirety. Come this day and eat the food of Sheep.