**Sermon John 10:11-18**

*May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.*

Our lesson this morning is from the 10th chapter of John’s gospel and brings us the teachings of the love of Jesus and His love for all of us.

Jesus is telling the people a parable about a good shepherd, a shepherd who was honest, caring, compassionate, and willing to die to take care of his sheep. Jesus, through this parable, is telling us things about Himself as the Good Shepherd.

We all have seen the image of Jesus with a lamb on His shoulders, radiating the love of the shepherd for the member of His fold. You can see the love the shepherd has for the lamb, and the trust the lamb has for the shepherd.

Being a shepherd was a lonely life, a difficult life, but if a shepherd did his job well, everyone would know that he was a good shepherd. In this lesson, Jesus uses what the people would understand -- a parable about shepherds, to tell us something about Himself -- that He is the Good Shepherd of our lives.

But before we see what is good about the Good Shepherd, we need to look at this word good. In the Greek language, which was the language the New Testament was written in, there are two words that can be translated into our English word *good*. The first word implies a moral and efficient quality about a person. A person is good because they can perform their assigned task well.

But there is another word that also means *good* and it is *kalos*. It adds the quality of loveliness, or warmth to it. It is the kind of goodness that makes us feel wanted and secure.

Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, brings the strength and courage of an earthly shepherd to the job, but also the qualities of kindness which helps us to call Him friend.

We use the term Good Shepherd as being the shepherd of our flock, the Good Shepherd who loves us, Jesus Christ.

Jesus says, that the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A shepherd in Jesus’ day, if he truly did his job with all of his being, would be willing and able to lay down his life for the sheep he was protecting.

Jesus is telling us, He was willing to lay down His life for us, his sheep. He wasn’t in it for money or glory. But Jesus would not flee when trouble came, He was willing to lay down His life, -- to sacrifice His life for us so that we might gain forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus died for us as the Lamb of God, and God accepts us because we are clothed with the Lamb’s robe of righteousness. Jesus was willing to lay down His life for us, so that we might have life -- life for all eternity in paradise with Him. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, died for us willingly with love so that we might live.

Jesus tells us that he laid down His life freely, no one takes His life, but He was willing to give His life for us. Jesus loves us enough, cares about us enough to die for us. He could have used His power to get out of dying for us, but He chose to struggle, to suffer, to die, so that we might live. This is a powerful statement of the love, the mercy, the compassion, and the caring that Jesus has for us.

Jesus says that the Good Shepherd knows each and every one of His sheep. People scoffed at the thought of thousands of people, millions of people, numbers beyond our ability to measure, being individually loved. Even the words of the bible seem hard to accept. There are so many souls from the past, millions living today, and an unnumbered mass to come in the future. How can we be individuals? How can we believe that we, out of the millions, are individual? It is mind boggling to think of this.

 But, we now have to look into science, into the science of DNA. Scientifically, DNA truly is unique for each and every person. We each can individually identify ourselves and all others who were, now are, and will be, by our unique DNA. The bible is true. Science has finally caught up with the Bible.

We are able to prove that we are special, that God does care for each of us.

This morning when you come to the altar, you are receiving a special invitation from God to partake in this meal, the sacred body and blood of Our Savior, Jesus Christ.

God knows that we need this special time, this physical relationship with Him, to reassure us, to convince us, that He does love us -- that He does care for us -- that He is interested in us as individual people.

We collectively are God’s children, we collectively are the sheep of Jesus’ fold, but individually we also are God’s children, and individually are the sheep of Jesus’ fold. As individuals, He is concerned about us, He cares about us, He reaches His hand of grace individually into each of our lives.

Each of us, yes, all of us are unique people, who are special to God. We are special, not because we are good, or righteous, or have somehow pleased God, but because God loves us as we are or in some cases, in spite of what we are. God still loves us. He showed us that by the sacrifice His son made on the cross for us. God is concerned about us from the hairs on our heads to the toes on our feet. God, through His good shepherd, Jesus Christ, loves us, and cares about us.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus tells us He gathers His sheep together into a fold. It is the work of the spirit to gather us together as the members of the body of Christ. It is the work of the spirit, to gather the body to worship and praise God at His altar.

Jesus knows the time we spend together is very important for our spiritual lives. It is during this time that we hear again the promises that God has made for us, it is here that we relive the life that Jesus lived on this earth. It is here that we encounter again and again the great love that God has for us. It is important that we come here often to be refreshed, to be renewed, to hear again about our God and the great love He has for us.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus says that it is important for Him to gather the sheep together into a fold, but notice He doesn’t stop with just the sheep that are immediately at hand, the Jews,- no, He says that other sheep must be brought into this fold, and that includes us, the Gentiles. The fold, our church, is not a constant place, but it is an alive place, a place where things happen, where people grow in faith, where people meet new people of faith, people who help us to understand God’s love.

The church is a living, growing place. It is the place where Jesus, through His spirit, is alive. It is the place where we can encounter God through His spirit because He promises to be here with us as we gather in His name. God is here with us this morning, His spirit is here leading us in our worship of Him.

And as we leave to go back out to the world, God’s spirit will go with us, helping us with life, giving us direction, giving us courage, giving us His peace to cope with all the tumult of life. Yes, the Good Shepherd gathers His sheep together in a fold, that is, in the church, because here, we are cared for, here we can learn from each other about faith, here we can help one another as we face all the difficulties of life.

Being in the church, is important for the members. Jesus says that as He calls sheep to the fold they will heed His call. When we come to the fold, we come to listen to the words of Jesus. We come to hear Him and the words of his disciples. Jesus says those of the fold will heed His voice. We will listen to Him, we are to hear about our gratitude as members of the fold, as members of the church. Yes, Jesus is the Good Shepherd, He is the one who leads us down the pathway of life. Jesus loves us, He is our guide, and He is our companion.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd of our lives. He is with us every day. He laid down His life freely for us, He knows each of us personally because we are important to Him, and He gathers us together in His fold, the church, so that we might listen to Him and follow His teachings and share His words with others. We will listen to Him, we will hear about our promise from Jesus as members of the fold, as members of the church. We thank Jesus for all he has done for us. We hold the teachings of Our Lord in our hearts. We obey His commandments.

Our reward for following and loving, the Good Shepherd, is eternal peace and happiness together with Him in paradise.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.