

Misericordias Domini
St. John 10:11-16
April 18th, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I Know My Sheep

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, who of Thy fatherly goodness hast been mindful of us poor, miserable sinners, and hast given Thy beloved Son to be our shepherd, not only to nourish us by His word, but also to defend us from sin, death, and the devil: We beseech Thee, grant us Thy Holy Spirit, that, even as this Shepherd doth know us and succor us in every affliction, we also may know Him, and, trusting in Him, seek help and comfort in Him, from our hearts obey His voice, and obtain eternal salvation, through the same, Thy Son Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The greatest news that we can hear from our Lord + Jesus is that He knows us. We are not strangers to Him. He knows His sheep. He knows every single one of us poor, miserable sinners. He knows that we are hounded daily and often by that wily thief and wolf of the devil. He knows that we are in desperate need of a Savior from sin and death. Therefore, our Lord + Jesus, Who knows us and our condition, becomes for us our Good Shepherd. He battles the wolf for us. He guards and protects us from the assaults that we face daily from the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. He does this by first becoming the propitiation for our sins. He becomes the sacrifice that atones for all of our sins, and the sins of the whole world. We find our salvation and redemption from sin and death in Him.

We cling to Him in faith, the faith granted to us by the Holy Ghost. This Holy Ghost is given to us through the means of grace. The Holy Ghost and the means of grace are given to us by our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. He sends to us His Holy Ghost by sending to us shepherds which care for us poor, miserable sinners. The faithful shepherds of the One, True Good Shepherd, are not only sent by Him, but continue to provide for us the things that make for our salvation. The hireling—the false shepherd—does not do the things that the Lord + Jesus has sent them to do. The Lord + Jesus, our Good Shepherd, has sent shepherds to us to preach the pure Gospel into our ears. He has sent to us shepherds to administer His means of grace in the way that He intended them to be administered.

The hirelings—the false shepherds—do not preach the pure Word of God, but instead tickle the ears of their hearers by telling them what they want to hear. They do not preach the Law in such a way that the sheep hear the warning that they are sinners in need of the Lord God's grace. Our sins are not to be taken lightly. The Lord God threatens to punish all who transgress His commandments. If we are in doubt about this, we have before us the crucifix upon which our Lord + Jesus hangs. The punishment of our sins was laid upon the Lord + Jesus. He took upon Himself what we deserved. The Lord God heavenly Father poured out His wrath over our sins upon His One and Only Beloved Son. He sacrifices His Son, and lets the servant go free. If we want to know what the penalty of our sins is, we need only look to the cross of our Lord + Jesus Christ.

But the false preachers—the hirelings—will not tell us about how sinful we are. They would rather have us believe Christianity is all about being a happy person. The pure Gospel certainly brings joy to us poor sinners who have been weighed down by the guilt of our own sins, but this joy is focused on the fact that even though we may be miserable sinners, our Lord + Jesus becomes our Good Shepherd for us and lays down His life for His sheep. He does this because He knows that we cannot save ourselves. He knows us so well; knows that we are in need of redemption that He wins our redemption for us by His death. He battles the devil for us. He battles sin and death for us, and becomes the Victor over sin, death and the devil, and gives to us the spoils of the war He fought for us.

The shepherds that our Lord + Jesus sends to us tell us of all the good things that our Lord + Jesus has done for us. The hireling instead praises our works and the works of other men. They exclude Christ by praising works. Our works do not save us. Our being a good person does not save us. Being happy all the time does not save you. How can one be happy all the time if they truly understand their sinfulness? Making our salvation dependent upon being a certain type of person, like the false shepherds do, will only lead us into false belief, pride or despair. For either we will become puffed up in our works thinking we are finally earning our salvation by being a good, happy Christian, or we will despair when we realize just how much of a sinner we are. We will see how we daily and often fail to keep the Lord God's Commandments.

This is why our Lord + Jesus sends to us faithful shepherds. He knows His sheep. He knows that we need Him and only Him for our salvation. He sends us faithful shepherds to preach the pure Gospel into our ears; the pure Gospel which tells us of all the things that our Lord + Jesus has done for us. These faithful shepherds also give us the gifts that make for our salvation. For these gifts grant the Holy Ghost, which creates faith in us, and this faith clings to the works and merits of the Christ which won for us the forgiveness of our sins, eternal life and salvation. The faithful shepherds sent by the One, True Good Shepherd, fulfill the command of the Lord + Jesus, when He said to make disciples of all nations.

The faithful shepherds of the Good Shepherd wash away our sins through the waters of Holy Baptism. The Word of God connected to the water absolves us of all our sins. It drowns the Old Adam in us. It kills all that is evil and wicked in us. The washing of regeneration of the Holy Ghost through Holy Baptism defeats the wily foe of the devil. All of our enemies are held at bay, for through the waters of Holy Baptism we have put on the works and merits of the Christ. We have put on His righteousness. Therefore, our enemies can bring no accusation against us.

Not only do the faithful shepherds of the Good Shepherd quench our thirst for righteousness through the waters of Holy Baptism; not only are we clothed with the righteousness of the Christ and made holy through faith, but we are also fed by our Lord + Jesus through the faithful shepherds. Through His ministers our Lord + Jesus feeds us His very own Body and His very own Blood in bread and wine. He gives us a meal in which we remember and proclaim His sacrifice for us on the tree of the holy cross. We are fed with His righteousness. We take the medicine that heals our sin-sick souls.

And as if these gifts were not enough, our Good Shepherd—our Lord + Jesus—gives us even more abundant gifts of His grace and mercy. He sends His faithful shepherds to us to hear our sins. We kneel before the pastor—the representative of the Lord + Jesus—and confess our sins to the Lord + Jesus and penitently ask for forgiveness for all of our transgressions. The faithful shepherd of the Lord + Jesus speaks the absolution of our Lord into our ears. On account of what our Good Shepherd has done for us; on account of the fact that our Lord + Jesus knowing who we are, and what we are offered up His life as a ransom for all men, so that all those who cling to Him and His works in faith, have what the minister declares into our ears as we kneel before Him. We have the forgiveness of our sins. We are absolved and forgiven. The faithful shepherd speaks the words that the Good Shepherd gave him command to speak.

He declares that He knows our every weakness and sin, and for this reason He came down from Heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Ghost and was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary all so that He might fulfill the Law of His heavenly Father perfectly. He then paid the penalty of our sins by sacrificing Himself on the altar of the cross as a whole burnt offering for us. Therefore, my dear friends, let us rejoice in the Lord + Jesus for knowing that we need a Savior. Oh, you righteous ones, clothed with the works and merits of the Christ, rejoice in Him, for He knows us and calls us by His Name, the Name He placed upon us at our Holy Baptism. Thanks be to God! In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Thou Good and Faithful Shepherd, Jesus Christ, Who, of Thy infinite love, didst lay down Thy life for the sheep, we give Thee praise and glory for this Thy unspeakable grace and mercy; and we beseech Thee, feed us upon the pleasant pastures of Thy Word, give us to drink of the waters of salvation, and guide us by Thy Holy Spirit, that, as Thou knowest us, and dost continually minister to our need, even so we also may know Thee, gladly hear Thy voice, and follow Thee, and by Thee be delivered from all our foes, until the whole flock shall be gathered in Heaven about Thee, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!