

MISERICORDIAS DOMINI

Text: St. John 10:11-16

ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:6

When reading or listening to the Gospel of Saint John, one must always listen or read the words in the context and purpose for which they are written: *“... but these are written that you may believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”*

Therefore, we must listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd who is JESUS, the CHRIST, the SON of God and our SAVIOR. To hear our SAVIOR’s voice, you must know His voice, and when one comes to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd, one no longer recognizes any other voice.

Our Gospel text this morning bears a warning: there is a wolf lying at your gate and his one great desire is to devour you. If he cannot devour you, he will settle for wounding you and scattering you, because the end result will be the same—your destruction. He will attempt to wound you by overthrowing your faith. He will attempt to scatter you by sending you after false gods, false religion, and false worship.

Hirelings, who care nothing for you or for God, will not protect you from this wolf. A hireling’s only concern is for himself. Hirelings will live off your wool and they will extract from you more than a mere pound of flesh if you allow them, all the while soothing you with sweet sounding words, telling you that they know what is best for you, that everything they do is for your own good, but they lie, and they will not protect you. Their primary concern is for their own comfort and safety. They, too, feed on you who are the sheep, and they would strip you of your every defense against the wolf. When the wolf comes, they will not defend or protect you; they will only run away.

Hirelings, you see, make paths straight for the wolf. For the wolf, they fill in the valleys and bring the mountains low. The rough places they make smooth. They lay the foundation for the wolf and his coming. Hirelings sit in the seat of the Good Shepherd caring not a whit for the souls of the sheep they attend, nor for He to whom the sheep truly belong. They do not feed them what is good. They do not comfort the sick and strengthen the weak, they do not bind up the wounds of the injured, and they do not seek the sheep that are lost or have been driven away.

Their only desire is for earthly gain and the praise of men. They fatten the sheep for the wolf, and when the wolf comes, they flee and look for another flock to plunder.

However, the True Shepherd, that is, the Good Shepherd, is different from the hireling, and He is the mortal enemy of the wolf. The hireling is indifferent to the needs of the sheep and the wolf seeks to destroy them. Yet, the *“Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”*

The Good Shepherd knows His sheep, and His sheep know Him. The Good Shepherd speaks and His sheep come running to the sound of His voice. The sheep of the Good Shepherd seek every opportunity to be in His presence and receive from Him what is good. The sheep look to their Good Shepherd for all things needed for this body and life. The sheep seek no other shepherd and no other pasture other than that of the Good Shepherd. They look to Him to be led to streams of living waters, they seek Him out to be fed what is good, and when they come to the valley of the shadow of death, they fear no evil, for the Good Shepherd is with them. The rod and staff of His Word comfort them. When the wolf comes, He does not flee but gives His life to the wolf in their place. That is your Good Shepherd. That is your JESUS.

In a world ruled by sin, in a world of hunger, in a world of loneliness, suffering, pain, evil, and death, sheep are raised to be fleeced, to be slaughtered, and devoured. In our world of sin, sheep are murdered in their homes, schools, universities, and city streets. They are slaughtered by the millions in abortion clinics and by the hundreds of millions in wars. What more proof do we need that the devil exists, he who prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour? Cunning, and hungry like a wolf, Satan seeks to deceive and devour you.

You, and all of creation, do not need a hireling to protect you from the tearing fangs of the wolf, you need a SAVIOR; you need the Good Shepherd. You need JESUS CHRIST.

Unlike the hireling, JESUS does not leave the sheep to be sacrificed, and unlike the wolf, He does not devour them; He loves them by giving His life for them. He loves them so much that, in accordance with His FATHER’s will, He became one of them and yet, was not like them. Instead, He was a humble, pure, and innocent Lamb to be slain—to give His life, a sacrifice, in place of the lives of His sheep.

This is our Good Shepherd’s plan and His desire from all eternity—to die that His sheep might live; to offer Himself as an all-atoning Sacrifice, a pleasing aroma, for the sins of the sheep; to suffer His FATHER’s righteous judgment and the full weight and fury of His terrible wrath, all for the sake of His sheep—the same sheep who would reject Him, who would hate Him, beat, abuse, and crucify Him in their vain search for greener pastures, in a vain hope of being their own shepherd.

Still, the Good Shepherd loves His sheep. He will not flee when the wolf comes. Instead, He stands between His sheep and the wolf and allows the wolf to have his way with Him, doing to Him all that he will—all that he wished to do to the sheep.

The Good Shepherd allowed the wolf to tear into Him, to rip flesh from bone, to pierce His hands, feet, and side. With wild abandon, the wolf indulged himself in an orgy of the Good Shepherd's Flesh and Blood. In a mad frenzy the wolf, who is Satan, and all his minions, exhausted themselves in their rage, and when they were finished, when their bloodlust was finally sated, the Good Shepherd hung lifeless from His Cross and then was laid dead in His grave.

Yet, something wonderful happened that the horror of that scene could not have revealed, but to eyes of faith. The story was not yet over, for it was by that very Blood, the very Blood of JESUS, our Good Shepherd, that the wolf was defeated. On the third day, the stone rolled away to reveal an empty tomb. Empty, that is, except to the eyes of faith, which could see there, lying dead next to the napkin and burial linens, sin and death itself.

Satan, the wolf, is defeated—defanged and declawed—his apparent victory, no victory at all, his power over you, gone forever, and death and sin are left dead in the grave.

Now, CHRIST JESUS, our Good Shepherd calls to you. Can you hear His voice? If you would know the Good Shepherd, if you would hear His gentle voice, look into His face as He hangs from the Cross. There you will come to see His love for you, a love so deep that it caused Him to lay down His life for you, His sheep. He did not push His FATHER's cup of wrath aside; He drank it to the dregs. He saw the wolf coming and did not flee. He did not desert His sheep but gave His Body over to the beast.

We were all like sheep going astray but now have been called to return to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, who, Himself, bore our sins in His own Body on the Tree, that we, having died to sin, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes we are healed.

JESUS has sought you out and called you. He has led you from the wilderness where you were scattered. He left the ninety-nine and came to find you. Now the Good Shepherd is calling you to follow Him to the green pastures of God's holy Mount Zion where He will feed you with the very Body and Blood with which He saved you. He has called you back and with these, He binds up your broken hearts and strengthens what was sick. For His Body and Blood, given and shed for you, are the Medicine of Immortality. With these, He has delivered your soul from sin and death and defeated the wolf forever.

So, let us come this day and feast on the Good Shepherd who is the heavenly Food He, Himself, provided for us who are His sheep. Let us feast on the Risen, Living LORD, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world by laying down His life for us. Let us feast and hear the voice of the LORD as He says, *"I am the Good Shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own... and they will hear My voice [when I say:] I forgive you all your sins."*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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5/4/25 A*~~D~~