

Sermon – John 10.11-16 (Easter 3 – 2024)

Lord God, heavenly Father, out of Your fatherly goodness You have been mindful of us poor, miserable sinners, and have given Your 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 You, grant us Your Holy Spirit, that, even as this Shepherd knows us and helps 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, Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

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

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

¹² "But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.

¹³ "The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own.

¹⁵ "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

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.

These are Your Words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed,

"I know of him, but I don't know him." You've probably said something like that. There's a difference there isn't there? Bob Backlund was a state high school wrestling finalist from my hometown of Princeton, MN and he went on to become one of the most successful professional wrestlers of all time. And I didn't know it until a couple days ago, but he was an All-American wrestler at Waldorf. So I know of him, I know who he is and some information about him, but I don't know him in that I have had interactions with him.

So then what does it mean that the sheep know the Shepherd, and that the Shepherd knows His sheep? We'll start with our knowledge of the Shepherd first. It is more than just knowing of the Shepherd isn't it? It's more than knowing the facts about him. It's even more than having the knowledge of His life, and His work, and having the knowledge of the

doctrine about Him, such as His hypostatic union, and His active and passive obedience. Yes, this knowledge is very important, but it doesn't constitute a Shepherd-sheep relationship.

To know the Shepherd is to have a personal knowledge of Him, a relationship in which you know that He is your gracious Shepherd. Therefore, you trust in Him. You hear His voice. You recognize the Word, not just as a book of information. Rather, you know the Scripture to be Christ's Word for you by which He makes His grace known to you, draws you to Himself, and saves you. You know Him to be your nearest and dearest friend, who loves you. You sit with Him having fellowship with Him and His body as you come to His Holy Supper. You know that in Him alone you have salvation from your sins. You look to Him to be with you through the valley of the shadow of death, and bring you into His house forever.

And knowing Him as your Shepherd, you follow Him, living in the righteousness to which he has called you. You hate your sin. You love His commands. You live in the confidence that Christ is your living Shepherd, who is with you always in life and through death.

And knowing Him, you are in constant conversation with Him. He speaks to you through His Word, and you respond to Him in prayer. You pray in your need, you pray for your loved ones, for your church, for your country, for your enemies, for the conversion of the unbelieving. And He hears you. He has compassion. And He will accomplish His good and gracious will.

You speak to Him with praise and Thanksgiving, and He is happy to care for you and give you His good gifts.

This is the life we have as Christ's sheep who know Him as our Shepherd. Well, it's not a totally accurate picture is it?

We're not the greatest of sheep, are we? Do we not find that sometimes we find His voice tedious, and give His holy and saving Word an indifferent and cold reception? Doubt, fear, and worry enter our hearts, as though we do not know Him to be our resurrected Lord, who is our closest friend. He prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies; it is the Holy Supper of His body and blood, but we treat such a blessed communion with our Shepherd as ordinary.

And our prayers to our Shepherd often lack. Our Lord is always ready with ears open to hear our cries for mercy, to hear the things that we're concerned about, always ready to

take the matters you bring before Him to heart, but, we keep it quiet, keep it to ourselves, as though God is distant and uncaring.

And we aren't so great about following our Shepherd either. We stumble in our sin. Temptations trip us up. Our love for our Shepherd falters. Our love for the flock with which we travel falls short. Instead of living heavenly minded, we live earthly minded. And of course there's the ungrateful grumbling we have in life, which is unbecoming of those who are blessed to live in this most precious flock. Instead of living according to the righteousness to which we have been called, we get dirty by going in the direction that our worldly, selfish and prideful flesh would have us go.

If it weren't for the Good Shepherd, we would have strayed from the flock in rebellion against Him long ago.

But that's the kind of Shepherd He is and the kind of Shepherd we need. It is not to our credit that we remain in faith as members of His flock. All thanks and praise go to the Good Shepherd. He is the gracious Shepherd that saves us and preserves us in true faith. Even after we have become His sheep who dwell in His flock, He still forgives us, cleanses us of our sins and restores us. He continues to speak to us His life giving Word. He still prepares His Holy Supper for us, drawing us into intimate communion with Him. He does not turn His ears away from you after He has not heard from you in a while, but He continues to invite us to pray to Him, and He still receives our prayers. He strengthens us that we may grow in righteousness, loving our Lord and loving our neighbor.

He does what a Good Shepherd does. He tends the sheep. And He knows them. And this is what it means that the Good Shepherd knows you. Hear His words: "**I know My own,**" He says. "My own." They are His own; the sheep do not belong to the hireling. The hireling isn't willing to sacrifice himself for the life of the sheep. He works for a paycheck. He's interest for his own welfare, not for the sheep. If a wolf were to show up, he no longer is concerned about the sheep. He'll put the sheep between himself and the wolf to preserve himself. And if the hireling were to lose one, it would be no skin off his back.

But Jesus isn't a hireling. He is the Shepherd that owns the sheep. "**You were bought with a price.**" Jesus was concerned about the life and salvation of the sheep, yes even before His own life. He paid the price of His life on the cross to redeem the world. Such is His self-sacrificing love for you. You are indeed His own!

Earlier in the chapter He said that He calls His sheep by name. He doesn't just know the multitude, but He knows each individual. He knows your name. He knows your name. He

has diligently sought you, saved you, and made you His own dear sheep. He is with you. And He loves you.

What a joy it is to be a sheep in Christ's flock. His love and faithfulness strengthens our faith and renews us to live a life of following Him in righteousness and praise.

There's the saying, "It's always greener on the other side." We're not on the outside looking in; we're not looking at this Good Shepherd, and saying, "I know of Him, but I don't know Him." No, we can say "I know Him, and He knows me." Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.