

Sermon for the Easter 2 – John 10:11-16

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Our Lord said in today's Gospel, "I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me." What does it mean to be known by the Good Shepherd? St. Peter knew all too well what it meant to be known by God. Much like St. Thomas of last Sunday, Peter is also man who was hot and cold. While walking the streets of Caesarea Philippi, a city which was notorious for worshipping a veritable pantheon of false gods, Peter made the bold confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." And yet, shortly after his truly foundational identification of the incarnate Lord, Jesus taught and showed His disciples that the Christ must suffer, be killed, and the third day be raised again. In zealous fervor, Peter rebuked the Lord, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." Was Peter looking out for what was best for the Lord? Was Peter desiring God's will or His own will to be done? Our Lord responds: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." The Shepherd knew the true heart of His sheep.

After the final Passover with His disciples, Jesus tells them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'" The fiery chief among the apostles could not fight back his zeal: "Though all fall away because of you, I will never fall away ... Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" The Lord responded, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." The Shepherd knew the limited devotion and utter weakness of His sheep.

The list could go on for Peter. He fell asleep during the watch in the Garden of Gethsemane. He lived by the sword in cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant. He refused communion fellowship with the Gentile faithful in Antioch. Peter was hot as fire in boasting of his devotion to the Lord, but he was cold as ice in denying God and refusing his fellow man. It could rightly be said that Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew Peter. God knows the sinner better than the sinner knows himself. Christ is the Good Shepherd. He knows His own.

And that means He knows us. That's a troubling thought. Now why would I say that's a troubling thought? Think about it: He knows everything. Do we ever let anyone know who we really are? Do we tell our parents everything that happened at school? Do we tell our spouse all of our secret thoughts? Do our friends and co-workers know what we've said behind their backs? Has deceit been found in our mouth? Have we retaliated when wronged by others? Have we, like sheep, also gone astray? Do we have thoughts that we will never share? Do we have secrets that we will take to the grave? Do we have shame we will always hide?

We can hide. We can put on a disguise to mask who we really are around others. But we can't hide from God. He sees through the disguise. There is no hiding. He sees

all. So repent. Peter said he had strength when he had none. Let us not hide who we are, rather let us learn more fully who we really are. We are weak sinners. We are stained by sin.

Repent and turn to the Good Shepherd. Remember what He said, "I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me." The Good Shepherd knows us, but how should we know the Good Shepherd? Allow Peter, in his first General Epistle to explain: "[Christ] committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed." What are we to know about the Good Shepherd? He loves us. He laid down His life for us. No cost, not even His own life, was too great a cost to pay for us. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, to death, so that His lambs will not face eternal death. The devil and hell have their way with Him so that now they will never have their way with us. He laid down His life only to take His life and our lives back up again. Death swallowed Him only to be swallowed up in its own death, and so we now have victory over death. He bore our sins. He died in our place. His wounds heal us, His sheep.

And we are not just any sheep. We are His sheep. We are not our own. He bought us. He paid the price. But upon honest examination of ourselves, we are slaves to devil who works in tandem with the world and our flesh. "O little flock, fear not the foe/Who madly seeks your overthrow;/ Dread not his rage and pow'r./ And though your courage sometimes faints,/ His seeming triumph o'er God's saints/ Lasts but a little hour." The Devil's hour is only a short time because our Good Shepherd, hidden in suffering, still holds His flock in His hand. "As true as God's own Word is true,/ Not earth nor hell's satanic crew/ Against us shall prevail./ Their might? A joke, a mere façade!/ God is with us and we with God – / Our vict'ry cannot fail."

He is our Good Shepherd and provides for our greatest need: the forgiveness of sins. He leads us to the still waters of Holy Baptism where He cleanses us. He restores us and leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. And though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death in this world, we need not fear because he's already defeated death with His rod and staff: the cross beams of the crucifix. In the presence of our mortal enemies: sin, death, and the devil, He prepares a table of bread and wine, yes, His own Body and Blood which will never run dry. By these gifts, God's mercy and goodness follow us all the days of our lives and we will dwell in His house forever. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep. He knows we've all gone astray. But know that He paid the price for every one of your sins. He died and rose again, so that you will also be resurrected and live forever with Him. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠