

Sermon for Easter 3 Misericordias Domini – John 10:11-16

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

The truth that Christ is the Good Shepherd is bound together with His resurrection. These two go together because God has “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep.” He has become the Shepherd of all. God has raised His Son from the dead and has sent Him to bless us.

And now the Good Shepherd is abroad in the world, seeking lost sheep. He has compassion upon the crowds in the streets, the people in the business world, the crowd seeking entertainment and amusement, for He sees them as “harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.” He seeks to gather them all together that there may be one fold and One Shepherd. He seeks out everyone to be part of His fold. The Good Shepherd has given His life for the sheep, and therefore He is still our Shepherd today “by the blood of the eternal covenant,” a covenant of redemption and forgiveness where all are made whole again.

But, from this Good Shepherd, “all we like sheep have gone astray.” And “all” means all of us. Have we not also kept ourselves out of reach of the Good Shepherd’s hands? Do we not forget our invisible Savior to follow after other “gods” that we can see and feel?

“No one can serve two masters ... you cannot serve God and money.” If we serve God, then why do we submit to the tyranny of the almighty dollar? Is there any greater oppressor than the desire of riches? It brings no pleasure but only anxiety, envy, scheming, hatred, and false accusations. Chasing wealth makes even freemen into slaves. When bound in such slavery, we are pleased to hug our chain. We are happy to dwell in our prison full of darkness. We delight in the temporal riches that are all ours, so that we can’t be freed. Was it for this, O man, that you were brought into the world? Were you made only to gather earth’s luxuries, wealth, and possessions? Did not God create you in His Own Image to delight in Him, to obtain the treasures to come, and to join the choir of angels? Didn’t God create you to be part of eternity? Then why do you run from Him? Why do you bind yourself to this world’s riches and their extreme slavery, when you are destined to outlast every single one of them?

Each and every one of us wants to go our own way. That’s what sheep do. We’re preoccupied with our own cares. We’re worried about our livelihood. We believe we know best how to get by. So we jump the fence. We leave the Shepherd and try to make our own way. Everything is fine for a while. Sheep don’t comprehend the risks, sometimes not even when it’s too late. What do sheep know about the wolves prowling nearby, looking for easy prey? What do we know about our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour? Unknowing, we too fall into the raging clutches of hellish enemies.

Yet, then the Shepherd comes. Maybe it's the grasp of His hand. Maybe it's the curve of His staff, trying to get a good grip to pick us up and rescue us. Both sheep and humans alike have only one thought in these situations: to get free. We don't want to be grabbed or lifted. We jerk and twist out of the Shepherd's grasp to slide even further down the slope.

But He will not let go. The Good Shepherd always seeks after you. He brings you back. He binds your injuries caused by sin. By His wounds you have been healed. He strengthens your weaknesses. He puts you on His shoulders and carries you. He rescues you from sin and death. He said so: "I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly." He will never desert you, but even lays down His life for you so that you will not die. When men desired to kill this Shepherd, He neither changed His teaching nor betrayed those who believed in Him. He stood firm. The Good Shepherd chose to die.

He loves you so much that He gave His Life for you. He gave His mortal life so that you now have immortal life. No one took His Life from Him, but He gave it up of His Own accord for your sake. That's why you are His Own: you are bought with the price of His Life. You are purchased with His Own Blood. He gave up His Own Life into death for you. But the Good Shepherd could not stay dead. He rose victorious over binding sin, eternal death, the wily devil, and anything that would entrap and enslave you. You are free!

This victory comes to you in Christ's Body and Blood. The Lord is known to His disciples in the breaking of the bread. In this, the Good Shepherd knows you and you know Him. He feeds you with good pasture. The Body of Christ is more precious and more secure than money in the bank. You were ransomed, not with perishable things such as gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ: the Lamb without blemish or spot. And by His Resurrection, you are taken to a place of safety where not even death can harm you.

The Good Shepherd Himself bore your sins in His Body on the tree, that you might die to sin and live to righteousness. So you have been called to new life. Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model, so that you might follow in His steps. Follow your Good Shepherd: He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. Follow Him: when He was reviled, He did not revile in return. Follow Him: when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. Perpetual gladness and eternal joy are yours as you entrust your life to Christ, the Good Shepherd and Overseer of your soul. Amen.

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