

“I AM . . . the Good Shepherd!”—John 10:11-18

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “I AM . . . the Good Shepherd!”, is John 10:11-18 → *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father.*

This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

I walk in danger all the way. The thought shall never leave me

That Satan, who has marked his prey, Is plotting to deceive me.  
This foe with hidden snares May seize me unawares  
If I should fail to watch and pray. I walk in danger all the way.

(LSB 716:1)

This hymn stanza confesses that you are in constant danger, marked as the devil's prey. This happened at your baptism when you were "marked" with "the sign of the cross both upon your forehead and upon your heart" as belonging to Christ the crucified. That mark is the target for the devil to attack Christ in you by striving to lead you into sin, false belief and despair. You walk in danger all the way, every moment of every day. You need the protection of Jesus, your Good Shepherd!

The main focus of Jesus' picture of Himself as *the good shepherd* is the sacrifice which He willingly made as He cares for you, His sheep. He says in verse 11 of our text: *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.* He contrasts His protective care to that of the *hired hand . . . who . . . sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees* so that *the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.* (cf. Verses 12-13) Since the hired hand is only in it for the money, he will think of himself first, thus leaving the sheep unprotected in the midst of danger.

This analogy is very fitting in describing Jesus' relationship with us in the

midst of the constant spiritual danger we face everyday of our lives. 1 Peter 5:8-9 says: *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith.* It is important as we function with the presence of sin in our vocations and relationships of life that we recognize the real enemy before us. This is very difficult because we tend to identify those who attack us, victimize us, abuse us and hurt us in some fashion as our enemies since they are the most visible presence standing before us. This is exactly what the devil wants us to think because as long as our “sights are set” on other people, situations or circumstances as the enemy we will fail to identify the true enemy and he is given freedom to wreak havoc upon us and those around us.

Because it is so difficult for us sinners to identify the devil as the real enemy we need help and protection from outside of ourselves. We need Jesus, our Good Shepherd! 1 John 3:7-8 says: *Little children, let no one deceive you . . . Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. **The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*** The whole purpose for which Jesus came was to “take on” satan **for you** and defeat his power **for you!** The only way for you to survive in this constant spiritual battle with *the wolf* (i.e. satan) is to follow your *Good Shepherd* and stand firm **in His victory**

## accomplished for you!

This happens as you cling to Jesus, the great I AM and the only One with the authority to make the sacrifice necessary for your salvation. Notice Jesus says in verse 18 of our text that *no one takes His life from Him, but He lays it down of His own accord*. This can appear a rather strange statement in light of our focus on the passion of Jesus this evening. From all practical appearances it seems like the Sanhedrin, working in cahoots with Pontius Pilate, took Jesus' life. The evidence clearly reveals their hand in it all. However, according to Acts 2:23 Jesus was actually *delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God as He was crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men*. Cling by faith to the only One with authority and power to defeat the power of sin and the devil by laying down His life and taking it up again in His resurrection **for you!** (cf. Verse 17)

Standing firm in your faith in Christ also means that you know the voice of your Good Shepherd. Jesus says in John 10:27 → *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*. This means being in His written Word daily. The Bible is where you hear the voice of Your Good Shepherd and receive the power of the Holy Spirit to follow Him. He speaks forgiveness to you through absolution of your sins based upon the promise of His voice in the Word! As your Good Shepherd He reassures you that you are safe and He

gives you *eternal life*, and you will never perish, and no one will snatch you out of His *hand*! (cf. John 10:28) **You are safe and protected in the hands of Jesus!**

We see this need for a constant relationship with *the Good Shepherd*, Jesus, by recognizing our sin when we give in to satan's temptation, repent and follow Jesus, trusting in His all-sufficient sacrifice for our sin. This is so important because we are constantly tempted to think that we don't need to be led and protected when we fail to recognize that we are constantly under attack by satan. Once again we mistake someone or something else for the enemy. Thus, His love for us includes working to protect us through His Law and Gospel. As Psalm 23:4 describes this work of the LORD as our Shepherd it says we need not fear evil, for He is with us; His rod (i.e. His Law which convicts us of our sin) and His staff (i.e. His Gospel which restores our relationship with Him), they comfort us.

Because of this great sacrifice which Jesus has made for us we have the privilege of belonging in His *flock* eternally and will always experience His protective care in our lives! Because of taking up His life again by His resurrection from the dead we can live as victors over the power of sin, death and the devil! We can also be discerning about who we are in this world as 1 John 5:19-20 says: *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies*

*in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him Who is true; and we are in Him Who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.*

Thus we sing with the words of the hymn:

I walk with Jesus all the way, His guidance never fails me;  
Within His wounds I find a stay When Satan's pow'r assails me;  
And by His footsteps led, My path I safely tread.  
No evil leads my soul astray; I walk with Jesus all the way.

(LSB 716:5)

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