

4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER “Saved Sheep Serving Our Suffering and Sacrificial Shepherd Savior” John 10:1-10

While plenty of people primarily prefer privacy today, there still are places where we appreciate it when others know our name. Won't it be great to get back to those places once this COVID shutdown is over? -19

Those are our favorite spots where we regularly attend and hang out. I certainly hope here in church is one of those places for you. But they also include a restaurant or tavern, a barber shop or beauty salon, a bank or bakery, a coffee shop or a golf course. You know the owner and the owner knows you. Fellow customers are your friends, neighbors and co-workers. The employees there call you by name. Being called by name indicates friendliness and give us a sense of value and importance.

Part of the cherished image of Jesus as our Good Shepherd is that He knows our name, calls us by name, and claims us as His own by name in our holy baptism. We are so special and important to our suffering and sacrificial shepherd Savior that He lived, died, and rose from the dead for the forgiveness of our sins and our new life with Him. Risen from the dead and ascended into heaven our shepherd Savior Jesus comes to us, calls us to have life with Him and to have that life to the full.

I. What Is Trying to Steal Us Away From Our Shepherd?

At the time of our text the sheep of a community were kept overnight in an open air enclosure surrounded by a stone wall. The only opening was guarded by a doorkeeper. He would lay down there to keep the sheep in and the thieves out. Thorns were spread on top of the wall to discourage thieves from climbing over it to steal sheep. It was their version of barbed wire. Thieves were a problem even then. They would steal sheep like people steal cars today. We know that a person who is breaking car window is most likely a thief. Likewise, anyone then climbing over the wall of a sheep pen was a thief.

Who or what is trying to sneak over the wall and into our lives to steal us away from our Good Shepherd? Is it personal pleasure?

Do we allow our hobbies, recreation, vacations and relaxation to take priority over time spent with God in His Word and Sacraments? Is it feeling

and from robbers in the pen. Jesus has laid down His life for us. He defends us from our enemies of sin, death and the devil that want to take God's gift of life away from us.

Because of His perfect life, Jesus protects us imperfect people from the accusations of our sin. Because of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, we are spared from death as being a punishment for our sins. Because of His resurrection from the dead, Jesus has eliminated death as a weapon the devil uses to threaten us. The life Jesus gives us is full, abundant and eternal because it is a relationship with our loving, powerful and everlasting God. Jesus our Good Shepherd calls us to follow Him in faith through the dangers of this world into a life that is full.

III. We Follow the Voice of Jesus Our Good Shepherd

Why do we cherish this biblical image?

After all, in our time and place we are not

familiar with sheep and shepherds. If Jesus had said, "I am the Good D airy Farmer" or "I am the Good Hog Farmer," we might identify with His image better. What's more, it is certainly not flattering for us to be compared to sheep. Sheep are dumb, dense and defenseless animals. If Jesus had compared us to cute kitty cats or to playful puppy dogs we could feel better about ourselves. What purpose does a shepherd have for raising and caring for sheep?

Chickens lay eggs. Cows give milk. Hogs give of themselves so we can have

bacon, ham, pork chops and pork steaks. What do sheep give?

Wool, that's it!

As sheep of our Good Shepherd what do we have to offer Him for all that He does for us?

Ephesians 2 says, "by grace you have been saved through faith, not by works, so no one can boast." But then it goes on, "We are created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." As a forgiven flock of faithful followers we have a purpose in our lives, that is to give to our Good Shepherd the sacrifice of our praise in worship. We are to bring to Him our offerings as a portion of all that He first has given to us through the many blessings we have in life. We are to do those good works of faith that give glory to our God and serve those around us in their needs.

We now are to wear masks when out in public. It is hard to recognize someone who is wearing a mask. Please don't be offended if I see you over the next few weeks but don't realize that it is you behind your mask. Thankfully,

that is not a problem for God's own Son, Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd. In holy baptism He calls us by name to follow Him. His Word and Sacraments are the pastures of refreshment that nourish us in this life as Jesus leads us into that full, abundant and eternal life which He has won for us. AMEN