

Easter 4      5/11/25  
John 10:22-30 C

“MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE, AND I KNOW THEM, AND THEY FOLLOW ME. I GIVE THEM ETERNAL LIFE, AND THEY WILL NEVER PERISH, AND NO ONE WILL SNATCH THEM OUT OF MY HAND.”

Today is Mother’s Day, which is a reminder for us of all that our moms did for us. They gave us life. They wiped our tears away. They kissed our owies to make them all better. They chased away the monsters from under our beds. They read us stories. They cooked and cleaned. They gave us a lot of patience. And let’s be brutally honest – they loved with us with **unconditional** love when we were not always that loveable.

When we think of our moms and what they did for us, we are reminded of the words of Jesus, *“In the world you will have tribulation, trouble” (Jn 16:33)*. And there mom was for us through all of it.

Today, the Church celebrates Good Shepherd Sunday and Mother’s Day reminds us that in the tribulation, troubles, of the valley of the shadow of death, Jesus is our Good Shepherd and He says to us, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand” (Jn 10:27-28)*.

We need to be reminded, comforted, encouraged with that good news because we feebly struggle in the Church Militant. We are in constant, daily struggle with the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh.

Look at the words of our Epistle, *“These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation” (Re 7:14)*. We are sheep who must endure in the great tribulation of earthly life.

Marriage is a great blessing to us from God for the mutual enjoyment

and edification that only a husband can give to his wife, and a wife to her husband. But, how sad it is that our homes more often resemble a pro wrestling battle roy-ell. That child who was once the joy of your heart has now broken your heart. And yes, even on Mother's Day, how many children will not even bother to reach out to their moms because of resentment and anger? One little post on social media, and "poof," your good name and reputation is destroyed. And where do you go to get it back? And in this time of confirmations, how many who once said they would suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from Christ have indeed fallen away. And we look at them and want very much to see lost sheep, when in fact, they are goats who have abandoned the faith.

Sheep cannot care for themselves. They must be tended to, cared for. They must be led to food and water so that they can eat and drink what is good for them.

Sheep left alone to fend themselves will wander aimlessly; often falling into danger. And when faced with eminent danger, they literally freeze -- they cannot move at all. They are helpless in the face of danger, even when it means certain death.

It should not surprise us that our Lord Jesus calls us sheep. Like sheep, we need a shepherd.

II. In mercy, God gave us a shepherd. Not just any shepherd, but He gives His only-begotten Son, Jesus, to be our Shepherd.

The Good News for us and for our salvation is that our Good Shepherd became for us and for our salvation the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, made Himself the innocent Lamb who was slain upon the altar of the cross for the sin of the world.

Jesus said, *"The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep"* (Jn 10:11). Because He did lay down His life on the cross, we are forgiven all of our sin.

Our Good Shepherd says to us, *"I lay down my down my life that I may take it up again"* (Jn 10:17). This is the joyous gladness of Easter. Jesus our Good Shepherd comforts us, the sheep of His pasture, that He has taken away the sting of death and the grave.

III. *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand"*.

In the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit of baptism, Jesus makes us one with Himself in His death and His Easter resurrection. In baptism, our Good Shepherd finds us and makes us one with Him and one with each other. In baptism, our Good Shepherd makes us members of own body, His Church.

His flock on this earth is His Church, the Holy Christian Church. Here, His sheep find peace, safety, comfort, from the world. Here, He feeds His flock through His Word, for His sheep listen to His voice, know Him, and follow Him. Here, He leads you into His presence where you are nourished with His Holy Body and precious Blood.

I love the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation. It is a brief "snapshot" of the glory of heaven that awaits us:

"Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall

hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

In the midst of our tribulations, our Good Shepherd comforts us today with His rod and His staff, and with the assurance that the day is coming when He will wipe all the tears from our eyes.

Which brings us to our first reading today, the words of Paul's farewell to the pastors of the Church at Ephesus. For three years, Paul had lived and worked among them. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, where he would be martyred. These were his last words to the undershepherds of Christ at Ephesus,

"I know that after my departure **fierce wolves** will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears."

What was true for the Church in Ephesus is true for the Church in Beulah. Fierce wolves attack us. People speak lies which our itching ears long to hear. And, that prowling lion, Satan, is set on destroying the Shepherd's flock, separating and scattering us from the tender love of our Good Shepherd. Amid such great danger, walking through the valley of the shadow of death, especially in times of trouble, sheep need their Shepherd.

This is why we pray in our collect for this Sunday:

"Almighty God, merciful Father, since you have wakened from death the Shepherd of your sheep, grant us your Holy Spirit that when we hear the voice of our Shepherd we may know Him who calls us each by name".

The great tribulation of earthly life can bring real tears to our eyes. That's why we cherish those words of our Good Shepherd, "*I give them*

*eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*” Our Good Shepherd’s rod and staff comfort and cheer us, strengthen and guide us, that we may dwell in the house of the Lord, forever and ever, without end.

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