

"The Sound of the Good Shepherd" 4/14/13 INI John 10:27-28

In the Name of Jesus, our risen Redeemer from sin, death, and hell,

Many years ago a member of my family had a conversation with a girl who was having a sexual relationship with a boy and saw nothing wrong with it. Why should she? The boy's father was a Lutheran pastor who taught that premarital relations are OK as long as the couple is in love!

Teaching contrary to God's word is nothing new. Six hundred years before Christ, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, faithful prophets of God, were feeding God's sheep in the land of Judah. But they were greatly outnumbered by those false shepherds who were feeding the people with words that were easier to swallow, because they offered false comfort and pleasant distractions from the truth.

The great majority of the people, flocked to the lies of the false shepherds rather than to the truth preached by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. However, as you heard the Lord say in the Old Testament reading: **"the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed the flock. . . . Behold, the shepherd shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths. . . ."** (Ez. 34:8-10)

A few years later the Lord exposed the treacherous deceit of those self-serving shepherds. He sent the Babylonians upon the land of Judah.

Thousands were killed in their unbelief. Thousands more were taken to Babylon. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, even as the Lord had warned by the preaching of Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Then the Lord began to gather His O.T. flock once again.

Also in the days of Jesus, the Lord delivered His flock from the Jewish religious leaders, even though the majority of the people continued to follow those whom Jesus called, **"blind leaders of the blind."** This is also our hope and confidence in our day of straying sheep and a multitude of false shepherds. For

STILL THERE IS THE SOUND OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD!

I.

Jesus still has His sheep! And this is a miracle – not that there are sheep, but that Jesus has His own sheep. You children know what a sheep or a lamb looks like, don't you. But we don't look like sheep. So why does the Word of God say we are "like sheep?" We are like sheep

because, of all the animals God created, a sheep is among the most stubborn, self-centered, and helpless.

The sheep wants to go its own way, and is easily led astray and frightened. Because all of us are like sheep **“who have gone astray”** from God, and are not able to return to Him on our own, **“the Lord laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all.”** It is a miracle of divine love that Jesus has any sheep at all!

But the words of our text, **“My sheep,”** speak chiefly of the miracle of grace by which Jesus possesses His own special flock so completely that He can say, **“They shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”** These are the sheep given to Christ in connection with “the election of grace” which the Father performed before the creation of the world (Eph. 1). Not one of those whom the Father chose in eternity will be finally lost to death and hell!

But how does the Good Shepherd snatch His sheep away from the power of death and hell and hold on to them to the end of their wandering in this world? And how do they know they are His chosen and blessed sheep?

II.

“They hear My voice,” Jesus says. When Jesus says in His Word, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,”** they hear Him with faith. When He says, **“I am come that you might have life,”**

And **“He who has the Son has life,”** His sheep run to Him for life! When Jesus says, **“God so loved the world that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,”** His sheep hear Him. Each one knows that he or she is among the **“believing whoseovers”** who shall have everlasting life!

The VOICE of the Good Shepherd is His Word which calls His sheep, creates, and nourishes faith in Him. Jesus is like the faithful shepherd who is always talking or singing to his flock as he walks among them, so that they know His voice and are alert to the strange sounds of those who would harm them. The more we read, hear, and apply His Word to ourselves, the more certain we shall be that we are hearing HIS voice and not the voice of others!

We can hardly over-emphasize this when there are so many other voices that may be heard in our day? There are voices that urge us to

listen to their popular opinions, the decrees of papal councils, the "inner voice and call of the Spirit," and our own "feelings." Ever since the so-called "Eastern religions invaded our country in the 70's people have been told to "meditate" and listen to the "voice within." Still, Jesus keeps on saying, "My sheep hear MY voice" – they hear and cling to MY WORD!

This was Martin Luther's comfort whenever he was troubled by the greatness of his own sins. One time, Luther's friend, Staupitz said to him: "Why do you torture yourself with these speculations? Look at the wounds of Christ and at the blood He shed for you; from these your election will shine forth. Therefore we must hear the Son of God, who was sent into the flesh and has appeared for the purpose of destroying the work of the Devil and making you certain of your election. So He tells you: 'You are My sheep because you hear My voice; and no one shall pluck you out of My hands.'"

III.

It is through His Word that Jesus knows His sheep. Is it possible for us to get ourselves recognized by Jesus through our own religious works and exercises? Many years ago a Florida race-track owner wanted to cover his bets, and gain recognition from the Lord, so he gave 1.2 million dollars for the Oral Roberts ministry. The Lord did not know him by this work!

The Jews to whom Jesus spoke wanted to be recognized by God because of their works and their striving to keep the law of Moses. But it was because they did not believe the Word of Jesus, that He said to them, **"My sheep HEAR MY voice, and I know THEM."** Jesus knows no one apart from the voice of His gospel. It is His voice in His Gospel that **"draws"** lost sheep into His fellowship of faith. (Jn. 6:44; Rom. 1:16)

And what a wonderful fellowship this is! For once His sheep are gathered, they are also fed from His Word. They are given the Holy Spirit as a seal of their belonging to Christ until the day of their final redemption. (Eph. 4:30)

If you are one of the sheep who is hearing the Good Shepherd's voice, then you are under His watchful eye every moment!

When you stray into sin, He will correct you and return you to Himself by the voice of His Word.

By that same voice He will guide and strengthen you to walk in His

own safe way, rather than along the path of sin.

By that same voice of His Word He will assure you of His provision for the needs of your body, and give you strength on your sick-bed.

Whenever you feel helpless along the way, or when the days of old age come, your Good Shepherd will pick you up and carry you in His invisible arms, even as He has already carried the burden of your sins to His cross. How shall we not FOLLOW such a Shepherd who KNOWS our needs and tenderly cares for all His flock?

IV.

His sheep DO follow Him safely to eternal life! Christ says, **“they follow Me and I give unto them eternal life.”** Christ’s sheep are often tempted by the voice of strangers, and irresponsible shepherds. Often they hear: “There are easier ways to heaven;” or “A person does not need to accept all the teachings of the Bible as true and relevant in our day;” or “You must do good and feel the presence of God;” and so on.

But the Good Shepherd keeps on sounding forth the voice of His Word throughout the world, and the sheep His Father has given Him will not knowingly or willingly rebel against His Word. Instead, they will follow Him. As they become more familiar with their Shepherd’s voice in His Word, they will become better able to distinguish the sound of the Good Shepherd from the voices of the false shepherds.

We have heard the word of our risen Lord Jesus. Deep in our hearts we know it is true. Now may He continue to draw and keep us and all His flock safely unto the eternal rest of heaven which He has prepared for us. Amen.