

# “The Voice of the Good Shepherd”

John 10:1-10

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

The shepherd or “the Good Shepherd” is a common and beloved image of our Lord. Jesus Christ is the shepherd of this flock we call the Church – who guides us to “streams of living water” as we “walk through the valley of the shadow of death.” God has then called pastors to be shepherds of individual congregations and to stand in the stead and speak by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. As an undershepherd, as pastors are often called, I must speak with the same voice as that of the Good Shepherd – Jesus Christ.

If I would only speak similar to the words of Jesus, or if I would leave out something that He says, or if I would add to what He says, the sheep of this flock would not, or should not listen to my voice. But rather, you should run away from a strange voice. There are a lot of strange voices in the world today.

How do you know what the voice of the Good Shepherd sounds like?  
How do you know that my words and the message that I preach are identical to the words and message of Christ the Good Shepherd?

If I was a deceiver or a hypocrite who twisted the words of Christ, you would never know how beautiful and wonderful the Good Shepherd's voice sounds. I would like to think that you have confidence that what I am saying is the truth. And you have every reason to have confidence that what I preach is the truth.

As we celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the beginning of Luther's Reformation this year, if there is nothing else that you get out of looking back at those days, I pray you come to appreciate (or more deeply appreciate) the fact that the writings of Luther's Catechisms and the Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord, and the other confessional writings that I (and every other LCMS pastor has vowed to uphold); I pray that you draw confidence from the fact that those writings have never been shown to be in disagreement with the Word of God. We have never had a reason to change the teachings of the church. Confessional Lutherans speak with the voice of the Good Shepherd. I'm not saying this to brag. I'm saying this because, especially those of us who were raised in the church, sometimes we forget how blessed we are.

From the day of our Baptism, we hear the voice of our Good Shepherd in the Word of God, in the sermons drawn from the Word of God, in the words of the Catechism that we memorize and make a part of who we are. We hear the voice of the Good Shepherd in the rich hymnody of our music.

It is a most pitiful shame that there are sheep who wander off never

hearing the Good Shepherd's voice. This is one reason I strongly encourage parents to participate with their children in the liturgy. Help them follow along in the hymnal. One of my early church memories is when my mom helped me finally figure out how the hymn verses work.

Far too often, those who don't hear the Good Shepherd's voice are like what Isaiah said of the Israelites, "They may indeed hear but not understand" [Mk. 4:9]. And if you never really hear that voice, how would you recognize it among the cacophony of static and strange voices bellowing at you every day. Our world is filled with more Bibles now than at any point in time, but knowledge of Scripture seems to be near an all-time low. There is just so much noise drowning out the voice of the Good Shepherd.

We need to be like the people in the town of Berea to whom Paul and Silas preached. In Acts chapter 17 we read, "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."

The people of Berea listened to Paul preach, and then searched through the Old Testament to make sure that what he said agreed with God's Word. They wanted to make sure that this undershepherd was speaking with the same voice as the Good Shepherd. If you ever hear me say anything that you think is contrary to the Word of God, search the Scriptures; ask for clarification. I will never pass by an opportunity to learn and grow in

my knowledge of God, or to help someone else learn and grow in theirs.

Berea is a much less famous city than other places where Paul preached, such as Corinth, Ephesus, and Thessalonica. That is because Paul never had to write a letter to the Bereans admonishing them for following other teachings, or adding to, or taking away from the Good News of Jesus Christ that Paul had preached to them.

The Holy Spirit works through Word and Sacrament. Listen to and cherish the voice of the Good Shepherd. Search the Scriptures so that God and His Word are an active part of your lives.

Did you hear in our first reading what life was like for the early Christians? They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers . . . And day by day, attending the temple [they gathered] together" – broke bread in their homes.

The sheep look for and listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd every day. Christ is our Good Shepherd. We listen to His voice. He calls His own sheep by name, and when we hear that voice, we joyfully follow knowing that we are safe, and when we hear that voice, we know we are exactly where we are supposed to be. Amen.

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.