

# “Love is the Willingness to Suffer for the Benefit of Someone Else”

John 10:1-10

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

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is historically celebrated as Good Shepherd Sunday. It is also Mother’s Day, and I wish a happy Mother’s Day to all. The loving action of a mother to her child seems so obvious to us and is celebrated by most all people – as it should be. Our culture, our society has made this a big day on the calendar – and for good reason.

Genuine love is the willingness to suffer for the benefit of someone else. Love is not about you. Love is not about what you receive from a loving relationship. It is not about how you feel. Love is about the other person. The real other person, not the one you imagine them to be. It is about the real human needs; real human weaknesses; real human shame that needs to be covered by your love, by your forgiveness.

This is what mothers are called to do. This is what all Christians are called to do. It just seems that mothers tend to do it better. It is all a part of God’s design, and we celebrate this work, because it can only properly flow from Christ – who has covered your weaknesses, covered your shame.

The truth remains. Jesus is our Good Shepherd. Jesus is the Way and the Truth and the Life. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. He says, "This is who I AM." "I AM the Door." There is no way into the safety of God's peace except through the One Door. There is no way to cover guilt and shame other than passing through that Door. It is in Christ and Christ alone that we have access to God.

Not even the deep and abiding love of a mother can rescue and provide life for the children of God. The Lord is My Shepherd. The Lord is the Door through which we must pass. You listen close to Jesus words – the Lord is also the Gatekeeper. The Lord is One who calls you by name and leads you. He is the One who does it all.

The thieves and robbers speak with a different voice than the Good Shepherd. Do not listen to them. The world outside of Christ's Church is a place where you are not going to find helpful words. They may be words that you want to hear. But, words that you want to hear and words that you need to hear are not always the same.

The world outside of Christ and His Church wants the Resurrection of our Lord to go away. That world wants your relationship between parent and child to be based on shallow, sentimental feelings expressed in \$4.00 greeting cards once a year, but nothing real beyond that.

Love is the willingness to suffer for the benefit of someone else. Love is the willingness to cover sin and guilt and shame, even though

doing so will come at a great cost. And no one shows this kind of love better than the Son of God.

Jesus says, "I am the Door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

How do we enter into the protection of God? How do we enter into the flock of the Good Shepherd? We enter through the Door. Jesus says I am the Door. How did you enter into the flock of the Good Shepherd? In Baptism. Baptism is the Door. But I thought Jesus was the Door. Yes, He is. Therefore, if Baptism is the Door and Jesus is the Door, then Baptism equals Jesus. In John's Revelation, the saints have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

What do you think you are receiving when the Word of God is joined with water? Jesus is the Word made flesh who dwelt among us, as we hear in John 1. Baptism is the Door. As it says in 1 Pt. 3, "Baptism now saves you." This is where you enter. Jesus, the Word of God, in and through the water, brings you into the safety of the protection of the Good Shepherd.

He also takes you out, through the Door; through Jesus. And He feeds you (with His own body and blood), that you may have life and have it abundantly. Jesus said in John 6, "Unless you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, you have no life in you."

He is the Door; He is the Gatekeeper; He is the Good Shepherd; He provides the pasture. “You are saved by grace, through faith. It is a gift from God – apart from works” [Eph. 2]. He has done all of this for you. Your safety, the peace of God, the covering of your sin, guilt, and shame, has come at a very high price – not a high price for you, but for Jesus. And in this, He shows that He truly loves you. Genuine love is the willingness to suffer for the benefit of someone else.

The Good Shepherd feeds you that you may have life and have it abundantly. As David said, “The Lord is my Shepherd . . . My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Amen. Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!