

Christ The Good Shepherd.

Text: John 10:11-16

Suggested Hymns:

387, 604, 602, 300, 609

1) Gives His Life For The Sheep

2) Lovingly Provides For The Sheep

3) Restores Those Who Have Strayed Away

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 10:11-16, ¹¹ ***“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ¹² But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³ The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.***

¹⁴ ***I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. ¹⁵ As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

I am the good shepherd, says Jesus. He claims that He is the great Shepherd spoken of by the prophets. Jesus Christ is the great central figure of God’s revelation. As we read in Acts 10:43, ⁴³ ***To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.***”

And as Christ is the great central figure in the writings of the prophets, so He is the one great topic of the apostles’ speech. St. Paul, therefore, says to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 2:2, ² ***For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.***

Christ is the great central figure of Christianity also. What is it that constitutes a Christian? It is faith in Jesus Christ. Christ must be our one and all. As the heart is the centre of bodily life, so Christ is the centre of spiritual

life. Christ is our sole Comfort, our Light in darkness, our Hope in distress, dearest to us in heaven and upon earth, our Jewel, our Treasure, our Wealth, our Joy; our thoughts centre in Christ Jesus as the one great object of our desires.

A Christian is a branch on the Vine, which is Christ, and lives in Christ, and Christ in him. To begin to be a Christian is to find Christ; to be a Christian is to abide with Christ; to remain a Christian is to hold fast to Christ; to die a Christian is to fall asleep in Christ.

If a person desires to be saved he must come to Christ and learn to place confidence in Christ alone. There is no other way to eternal salvation. Christ is the door that leads to heaven, and the only door. Christ alone can save our immortal souls.

Christ alone can reconcile us lost and condemned sinners with the offended God, and secure for us a dwelling place in the heavenly mansions.

When, therefore, Christ is portrayed before our eyes in the holy Scriptures, the aim and purpose is always to draw us to Christ, to invite us tenderly to trust in Christ, and to urge us to place all our confidence in Christ, our beloved Saviour.

This is done in our Gospel also, where Christ is portrayed as our Good Shepherd and His great love toward us is made manifest.

Let us consider with the help of God's Holy Spirit, *Christ The Good Shepherd*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Christ The Good Shepherd Gives His Life For The Sheep

Jesus says, *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.* ¹² *But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.* ¹³ *The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.*

In this beautiful parable the Lord exhibits Himself as the Good Shepherd as distinguished from a hireling who shows no concern for the sheep entrusted to his care. What can you expect of a careless hireling? Can you expect of him to put

his life at stake when the wolf rushes into the flock to create havoc among the sheep?

No; the hireling's first thought in case of danger is not how to save the sheep, but how to save himself and secure his own life. He runs, he flees at the top speed, while the wolf has things his own way, tearing to pieces the defenceless sheep and lambs, and scattering the flock in all directions.

I am not such a hireling, says Jesus. As a true shepherd I will fight the wild beast that attacks the flock, and deliver my sheep, and slay the wolf, even though in the encounter I could receive wounds that will cause death. At the price of my own life, I deliver my sheep and save them from the bitter pains of eternal death. I am the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep.

Now, to understand the meaning of this parable more accurately, we must remember that by nature all people are as lost sheep. Our first parents were sheep of the heavenly fold as long as they were in the garden of Eden.

However, they did not remain in this blessed state. They were seduced into sin and fell prey to Satan. Since the fall all people are born in sin; and not a soul is by nature born into the sheepfold of the Lord.

By nature we are all deaf to the voice of our Good Shepherd. We do not heed His words. We do not follow Him. We seek our pleasures on the barren fields of the world, and our nourishment among the poisonous weeds which are destructive to our eternal welfare.

By sin the whole human race has been scattered, as we read in Isaiah 53:6, ***‘All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*** And the wolf is lurking behind the bushes. Satan is only waiting for man's temporal death, that he might seize his victim and get eternal possession.

But behold ! the Good Shepherd came. The eternal Son of God appeared on the scene to deliver the fallen human race from the jaws of the ravenous wolf, to gather them into the kingdom of His grace, to pasture them, and finally to lead them into Paradise.

But oh, what did our Good Shepherd endure that He might deliver the lost sheep! To be our Shepherd He had to fight the devil in our stead and die for us. This is what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us as our Good Shepherd.

As the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world He came down from the throne of His divine glory and He Himself assumed the form of the lost sheep. He became man. He abstained from the full use of His divine power. He became the same as we all, with the exception of sin.

He undertook the combat with the wolf that was after the sheep, with the ruler of darkness, the enemy of our eternal welfare. In this fierce struggle our Good Shepherd not only put His life at stake, but actually did give His life. He died for us on the cross.

O how Satan must have triumphed when our Substitute was slain, when the Good Shepherd was dying, as His blood was ebbing away! The Shepherd conquered, the whole flock seemed to be his.

But things turned out contrary to Satan's expectation. For behold, Christ rose again from the dead. His death now turned out to be the sheep's life, His blood-shedding gave their deliverance, His sacrifice secured their freedom. In giving for us His precious life our Good Shepherd redeemed us all from sin, from death, and from the power of the devil.

2. Christ The Good Shepherd Lovingly Provides For The Sheep

But in the portrait of the Good Shepherd, as shown in our Gospel, the Lord is pictured also as lovingly providing for the sheep. Jesus says, ¹⁴*I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.* ¹⁵*As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.*

To understand these words more fully we must know that in the East the sheep of different herders are usually taken to a great gathering place, to a large fold, for the night. The shepherd is out all day, watching his sheep and leading them from pasture to pasture.

But when night comes he brings them into the common enclosure, where they mix with the sheep of other shepherds. Now in the morning, when the shepherds come to take their sheep out for the day, how does each shepherd know

which are his sheep? He simply calls them, and they know his voice and follow him. The sheep will always follow their own shepherd and never heed to the voice of a stranger.

Now Jesus says, ***“I know my sheep,”*** and when He says, ***“I know my sheep,”*** He is not merely saying that He knows which are the sheep that belong to His flock, but that He acknowledges them to be His own and lovingly provides for them.

He pays attention to the special condition of every sheep in His flock. He knows their needs and helps them. He knows their ailments and heals them. He knows their faults and leads them in the paths of righteousness. He knows their dangers and protects them. He knows their weakness and upholds them.

O blessed is every one who has committed himself to the care of Jesus! Blessed is every one who knows the Good Shepherd, knows Him by faith and trusts in Him!

As a good shepherd provides for his sheep, so Jesus will lovingly provide for us. A good shepherd will wash his sheep from uncleanness; and so Jesus washes off the sins of His sheep in holy Baptism.

We read in Isaiah 1:18 that ***Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.***

A good shepherd will take his sheep to the pastures, where they will find ample nourishment, and to the fresh waters, where they may quench their thirst; and so Jesus leads those who are His own into the green pastures of His precious Gospel and to the refreshing water of life.

He says to them, ***“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”***¹ And ***“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.”***² He does even more than any shepherd will do. He gives us Himself, His own body and blood, to eat and to drink in the Lord’s Supper.

A good shepherd will deal tenderly with his sheep. He will let the dogs bark at them and chase them from some dangerous place, but the dogs are not permitted to hurt and to harm them. And so Jesus deals with those who are His own with the utmost caution and tenderness.

His sheep know what they may expect of their Good Shepherd — nothing but love, grace, mercy, and kindness. At times He does permit the Law to frighten them, so that thoughts like these will trouble them, *Ah, are you not too great a sinner? Can you expect to be received into heaven?* But He thereby merely keeps them from carnal security, and soon again they can rejoice in His love.

At times He permits trials and afflictions to harass His dear children, but they know, it is for their own eternal good, so that with the unbelieving world they will not be condemned. Could any shepherd provide more lovingly for His sheep than the Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus, provides for His flock?

3. Christ The Good Shepherd Restores Those Who Have Strayed Away

But He also restores those who have strayed away. Jesus says, ¹⁶ *And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.*

The meaning of these words is obvious. The sheep of this fold are the Jews. Christ was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Here we find also who were the hirelings spoken of in the beginning of the parable. The hirelings of whom Jesus complains, not taking proper care of the sheep, were the spiritual rulers of Israel, the chief priests and scribes. They misled the people, contending that Jesus is not the Christ.

The other sheep which are not of this fold are the Gentiles. Jesus also promised to restore the Gentiles, so that there would be no more distinction before God between Jews and Gentiles, but all would constitute one fold, or rather, one great flock under His shepherding care.

Behold the great love of our Good Shepherd to all people, to the whole fallen human race. The Gentiles in the time of the Old Testament did wrong when they did not come into the fold of Israel and did not join God's chosen people. They had strayed away from the Shepherd's care and went their own ways in superstition and idolatry.

But Christ declares that from the Gentiles also He will call His sheep. There are those who are without Christ, without His Word, without His grace, roaming about in the world without a Saviour. They are all His, inasmuch as He has

bought them at the price of His precious blood; and not a human soul does the eternal Son of God want to see eternally lost.

He loves even the greatest sinner, loves him because he has an immortal soul which has been redeemed with His blood. When a good shepherd misses a sheep, he will search for that lost sheep and spare no pains to find it.

And when he finds the poor sheep caught in a thicket and in the hedges, or in some ravine, sore and bleeding, O how great is his joy in finding it! Jesus does the same. If you are a lost sheep, He spares no pains to restore your soul. He calls you by the sweet voice of the Gospel.

His voice may reach you and sound in your ears and penetrate to the very depth of your soul when you are ever so far away from Him, upon forbidden paths and in the ways of sin and shame.

And when, at last, He does find you, when you answer His voice and return from the ways of sin and death to your own Good Shepherd, He will not chide with you, He will not punish you. With gladness He restores you to the fold, and even the angels in heaven take their harps and sing songs of praise when the sinner comes to repentance.

May the Lord, then, grant us all His grace, that we abide with Jesus, our Good Shepherd, and say from the depth of our souls,³

Let me be Thine for ever,
Thou faithful God and Lord;
Let me forsake Thee never
Nor wander from Thy Word.
Lord, do not let me waver,
But give me steadfastness,
And for such grace for ever
Thy holy name I'll bless. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 11:28

² John 7:37

³ Hymn 300