

The gospel lesson for today reminds us that, **“We are members of God’s Flock”**

### **Gospel - John 10:11-18**

<sup>11</sup> “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. <sup>13</sup> The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

<sup>14</sup> “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. <sup>17</sup> The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Jesus is our Good Shepherd. I know that this is a correct translation of the original Greek word but it is rather bland in trying to convey what Jesus was saying. He is not only our good shepherd but he is our beautiful, most noble, excellent, and perfect shepherd.

A shepherd who owns the flock cares for the sheep and will defend them fiercely but when it comes to his own life – he usually will not give his life for the flock. That’s where Jesus, our Good Shepherd, is different. A number of times he talks about laying down his life for the sheep. He will pay the ultimate price so that his sheep can live. Of course, he is talking about giving his life on the cross for us and for all people.

But as he gave up his life, he doesn’t leave the flock defenseless. Jesus tells us that he is not only going to lay down his life but he is also going to take it up again and that is good news. That is what we celebrated 3 weeks ago on Easter morning – the resurrection of Jesus.

He made the ultimate sacrifice for our sins and then rose from the dead to assure us that his sacrifice saves our life. But as he took up his life it also assures us that we have a living Savior – a living Good Shepherd – who continues to watch over us as, who continues to protect us, who continues to guide us and who continues to speak to us to calm us and bring us the spiritual peace we all need.

Even though a shepherd watches over the flock to protect it, there are still dangerous wolves that try to attack and scatter the flock. We live in a sin marred world and we know that there are many wolves in this world.

Many times we can identify these frontal assaults and repel them but the “wolves” are smart and so they sometimes sneak into the flock. Jesus once warned, **“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”** (Matthew 7:15) These attacks on God’s people can come from within the church – from those who are only looking out for themselves and are spreading false doctrine while they do it. – to attacks from outside the church.

Sometimes the attacks go after the unsuspecting. A dear friend of mine who was a retired pastor and is now in heaven told me, “The public schools are not a failure. They are a success in taking God away from people and replacing him with humanism, tolerance for sin, and human reasoning above everything else.” That was about 10 years ago and in a different community but consider what he said and then consider the impact the unbelieving world is having on schools and sports and colleges. Consider what some school districts are teaching the children of our country and it isn’t hard to see there are many wolves trying to tear our nation apart and trying to tear God’s people apart.

Those are pretty sobering thoughts, so what do we do? Listen to our Good Shepherd. We know him and we know his voice. Listen to him as he speaks to us through his Word. When we wonder about something, see what God has to say about it. I always encourage my confirmands to hold onto their catechisms because it is a good reference to find out where God speaks about certain subjects in the Bible.

And remember our 1<sup>st</sup> lesson. As God’s people and as members of God’s flock we want to pray. Ask the Lord for courage – ask the Lord for help – ask the Lord to protect us against these ravenous wolves.

And when our Good Shepherd tells us something we don’t like or don’t want to hear, listen to him anyway and ask him to help you accept and understand what he is saying to you and he will.

Finally – know that Jesus has defeated our greatest enemy; Satan. He has taken up his life to help us in our fight against Satan and the influence of the world. We are not alone – our Good Shepherd is watching over us and he cares for us better than any other shepherd in the world.

So take heart. Trust in your Good Shepherd. He loves you so much that he gave his life for you. He loves you so much that he took his life up again so that he can continue to speak to you and provide for you and love you. Amen.