

He Lives!

To Be My Good Shepherd

A Sermon on John 10:1-10

Year A - Easter 4

7 - May - 2017

JJ¹

“Don’t talk to strangers!” Why do we say this to our children? We hammer this into our children’s minds to keep them safe. Sadly, with each passing generation, this command has needed to be stressed all the more. When children do talk to strangers and tragedy strikes, why is it? It’s because the criminal looks nice, acts nice, and offers to help in order to put the child at ease and deceive them. Then, disaster strikes!

Our culture continues to produce these wolves in sheep’s clothing at an alarming rate—greater than any other country on the face of the earth, perhaps any time in history. Great thinkers, philosophers, psychologists and anthropologists are speculating away, trying to pinpoint the cause of this epidemic. But they’ll never find the answer. Not so long as they refuse to listen to the Good Shepherd’s voice. But you see, friends, the answer is simple—the Great Thief is at work in this world stealing hearts to believe his lies.

But the Great Thief, the Devil, isn’t just working to produce kidnappers, pedophiles and murderers. No, he’s doing the work he’s been doing since the beginning. Work that has been inflicting more pain, damage and disaster on the human race than all the kidnappers, pe-

dophiles and murderers combined. While all those criminals have done gut-wrenching and mind-numbing things, their wicked work has only attacked and killed the body. The Great Thief, the Devil, he attacks and destroys the soul...eternally!

Jesus spoke these words before us today to warn us about the work of the Great Thief and all his fellow thieves. He spoke these words to and about his enemies, the Pharisees. In John 9 we hear the account of Jesus healing a man born blind. We studied this account just a few weeks ago on the 3rd Sunday in Lent. With the exception of Holy Week, John 9 is the most revealing example of the true nature of the Pharisees. After the man was healed, the Pharisees interrogated both him and his parents about the healing. The Pharisees had already rejected Jesus as the Christ and now were expelling from the synagogue anyone who confessed Christ. Their threat kept the man’s parents silent, but not the man born blind. And so they expelled him, accusing him of being completely filled with sin from birth. Then the Pharisees turned their hatred toward Jesus. The words before us today are Jesus’ response to them.

“Amen, Amen, I tell you: Anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the door,

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for “Jesus Help”. It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.”

In this parable, Jesus is both the shepherd and the door. He is the Shepherd who cares for and even gives his life for the sheep. He is the Door, the only way to peace with God and eternal life, as he would explain again in chapter 14: “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

But the Great Thief, the Devil, along with his followers, they reject Jesus as the only Door to forgiveness and life. Jesus says they “climb in by some other way.” They are thieves and robbers. What’s the difference? A thief takes what isn’t his own secretly. A robber takes what isn’t his own by force. And what is the goal? They come, Jesus says, “only to steal and kill and destroy.” They promise to do otherwise, but it’s all lies.

What are the devil’s lies? Simply put, they are any word, comment, idea, philosophy, religion, and way of life that doesn’t agree with God and his Word. Those who are more like robbers are easier to spot. They look the part. They are those who are blatant and come by force. They deny Jesus and his Word outright and threaten those who hold to it. In our

country in particular, they wear the face of militant atheists like Bill Nye The Science Guy and groups like the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

The thieves are more subtle and cunning. They are those who take the attention away from Jesus either for their own vainglory or to put the attention on you—often both. Some may say you don’t get to peace with God and heaven at all through Jesus, but they aren’t pushy or violent. You find these in the likes of Buddhism. Then there are those who want to mix Jesus with works and earning your own way. They’ll even use God’s Word but with different meaning. But whether robbers or thieves, neither go through the Door, Jesus. Neither lead to life, but only death and destruction.

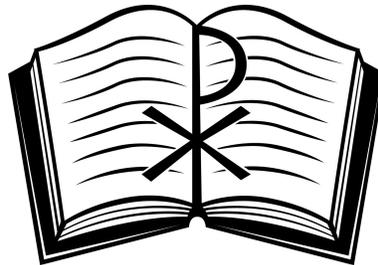


But Jesus, the Door / the Shepherd, he is entirely different. “The one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep... He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own sheep, he walks ahead of them.”

Jesus leads the way. He doesn’t drive from behind with the threat of the law saying, “Earn your way! Make me happy! Work your salvation!” Instead, Jesus leads, showing us the way he has already

trod. He leads us to the green pastures of life which he produced by giving his life as the Lamb of Sacrifice. And here we have some linguistic beauty in the Greek. Jesus says the thief kills. The word Jesus uses literally means “slaughter for sacrifice.” Where Jesus sacrificed himself for you, the Great Thief, the Devil, intends to make a sacrifice out of you on the altar of unbelief, rebellion, death and damnation! Ah, but your Good Shepherd, he lives to rescue you from all of that! “Whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.”

Jesus came. Jesus died. Jesus lives again so that you “may have life, and have it abundantly!” Having abundant life in Jesus isn’t about dream jobs, homes, cars, etc. **JESUS LIVES TO BE YOUR GOOD SHEPHERD** and that you would have real life. Jesus lives so that he can heap his grace on you, forgiving all your sins and removing all your guilt, leaving peace in its place. Peace that floods your hearts at all times, but especially in times of great sorrow and distress. Peace which fills your hearts as you see a world falling apart around you, but knowing that heaven waits for you, his sheep!



Jesus lives that you may have abundant life to also live for him. He is your Good Shepherd, and you know his voice because he has called you by name. You know what he says. You know that what he says, he says for your good and blessing. He leads you away from danger and defends you. He leads you into good pastures. How can we not listen to his voice and follow him?

Friends, as we tell our children to listen to our voice and run away from strangers, listen to your Good Shepherd’s voice. You know his voice and how to recognize the strangers. Oh yes, the strangers offer another way, promising it’s even the better way. But that’s exactly what the Great Thief has been offering since the Garden of Eden. The strangers’ lies only work to steal you away from your Good Shepherd, kill you and destroy you. Run away from the strangers and into Jesus’ protective arms, because there you are safe, both now and forever! Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn’t about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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