

## **“My Sheep Hear My Voice”**

(John 10:27-30 – Easter 4 – May 11, 2025)

John 10:27-30 – <sup>27</sup>“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup>And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup>My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. <sup>30</sup>I and My Father are one.”

Dear Redeemed in the name of our Good Shepherd and Savior, Jesus Christ:

When a baby is born into the world, of all the voices surrounding his little ears, he knows his mother’s voice. Studies show that babies recognize their mother’s voice even in the womb. After birth, a baby will turn his head toward the familiar voice of his mother when she talks, wanting to be held close to her heart. We thank God for the blessing of our mothers, through whom He has given us life from the womb and nurtured us with countless gifts of love.

On this Good Shepherd Sunday, God gives us another dear image of His love for us and His blessing of life. It is not merely physical life, but the spiritual rebirth and life He has given us in Christ. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus laid down His life for us and rose again to give us His eternal life. He has made us the sheep of His hand, who know Him by faith. He holds us near to His heart, caring for us. So of all the voices surrounding us in this world, we turn to His familiar voice as the only one who gives us eternal life and every blessing. Jesus says: **“My Sheep Hear My Voice.”** Then He goes on to describe the close relationship He has given us with Himself saying: **1) I know them, 2) They follow Me, and 3) I give them eternal life.**

### **1) I know them**

Before a baby ever hears its parents’ voices and knows them, the mother and father know their baby. Long before a baby learns to say, “Mama” or “Dada,” the parents may choose a name for their newborn son or daughter. They make plans for how they will love and care for their baby – setting up the bassinet, making the baby’s room ready, etc.

Jesus says: *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them.”* Long before we ever heard the voice of our Good Shepherd, long before we ever knew Him and could call Him by name, He knew us. He made plans for how He would love and care for us as His sheep.

The Bible teaches that from eternity, God knew us and chose us in Christ. Ephesians 1:4-6 says that before the creation of the world, in love He “*predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.*” By grace, God chose us and named us, with great plans for us as His children in Christ.

Again, long before we were ever born, God chose to send His Son into the world, to make everything ready for us, that we might become His children and heirs of eternal life. Yet this required the greatest act of love and sacrifice on the part of His Son. As Ephesians 1:7 goes on to say: “*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*”

This is because none of us was naturally born a child of God. We were not born in His holy image, but in the fallen image of Adam. Isaiah 53:6 describes our sinful path of life: “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way.*” Left to our own way, we would not know our loving Creator and Life-Giver as Lord; rather, we would seek to be lords of our own lives. On our own, we would not hear the Good Shepherd’s voice or follow Him; but like foolish sheep, we would run after our own greener pastures. We would eat of the poisonous weeds of this world’s false teachings and false hopes. We would follow the deceitful lusts of our sinful flesh. We would seek life where the devil lies like a lion seeking to devour unsuspecting souls (1 Peter 5:8). On our own, we would follow the crooked path of sin and falsehood that leads only to the pit of death and hell.

But from heaven, as the Good Shepherd saw us in our lost condition like sheep without a shepherd, He was moved with compassion (Matthew 9:36). He came to rescue us from falling into the jaws of death and hell forever. In love, the Good Shepherd would lay down His life for the sheep (John 10:15). In love, He would pay that price on the cross to ransom our souls. He would become as a Lamb who was slain to redeem us to God by His own blood (Revelation 5:9). He would make the greatest sacrifice to pay the price for our adoption, to give us His new birth, to make us the children of God.

## **2) They follow Me**

When a mother speaks to her newborn, whom she has known and carried for many months, her baby recognizes her voice. By that familiar voice the baby's heart is moved. It turns to that loving voice. To whom else would the baby cry for every need of life?

Our Good Shepherd says: *“My sheep hear My voice... and they follow Me.”* He who has known us from eternity, He who has laid down His life to win our salvation in time, has spoken to us in our lifetime. By His loving voice, He has called us to saving faith. By His familiar voice, we know Him. As Ephesians 1:13 goes on to explain: *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”*

The Good Shepherd has sought and found us, who were lost and perishing in our way. He has taken us, as sheep whose woolen coats were covered in the filth of our sin. He has taken us in His arms and baptized us, washing us by His own blood, putting His saving name on us as our God and Savior. Our Good Shepherd has spoken to us by His own voice in His Word and Sacraments. By His voice, He has moved our heart. He has turned us in repentance away from the call of Satan, the world, and our sinful flesh. He has turned us to His loving voice, by which we know Him and follow Him alone as our Savior from sin, death, and hell.

Here our Good Shepherd has added a loving warning. Do not follow just any voice that claims to be His. In Matthew 7:15-16 He warned of false shepherds: *“who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.”* They claim to come in the name of the Good Shepherd, but they are not faithful to Jesus and His Word. Instead, they preach a worldly message to please itching ears. They do not join Jesus in calling straying sheep to repentance, but make them feel comfortable in their sinful way. Nor do they point sinners to Jesus’ all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross to take away sins. Instead, they point you to the holy life and sacrifices you must make to get right with God. They may preach in the name of Christian love and appear pious, but they destroy true faith. Jesus said of His sheep in John 10:5: *“Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”*

Of all the voices in the world, the Good Shepherd says: *“My sheep hear My voice... and they follow Me.”* What else does it mean but to follow the familiar voice of His Word: *“the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (2 Timothy 3:15). Faith clings to His Word alone, for this alone is where we hear His voice, and this alone is how we know Him.

*“As newborn babes, desiring the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,”* (1 Peter 2:2) to whom else would we turn, but to Him who has the words of eternal life (John 6:68)? To whom else would we cry for every need of life? And to whom else would we, as Christian parents, want to lead our children but to the

Good Shepherd? He who laid down His life for us will continue to provide all that is truly good for us and our children, not only for temporal life but for eternal life.

### **3) I give them eternal life**

And finally Jesus says: *“My sheep hear My voice... And I give them eternal life.”* To hear the Good Shepherd’s voice and believe is to have eternal life. Jesus said in John 5:24: *“He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”*

The Good Shepherd, who has given us eternal life, will continue to hold us close to His heart forever. Jesus goes on to say: *“They shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.”*

You don’t want to come between a mother bear and her cub! If you do, you may meet with the fiercely powerful and protective hand of a mother’s love for her own.

How much greater is the love of our Good Shepherd, who has known us as His own from eternity, and laid down His life to save us, and gathered us into His arms by faith! Who can separate us from the love of God in Christ? No danger or distress in this world, no persecution by enemies of Christ, no evil powers of Satan’s kingdom, not even death itself, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:35-39).

Through it all, our Good Shepherd remains with us, leading us safely by His voice. He leads us in the green pastures and life-giving waters of His Word. He restores our soul by His Gospel of forgiveness. He presents us washed by His blood and pure white in His own holiness. He prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies, His cup of salvation running over for us. As sheep who hear His voice and know Him as our Good Shepherd, we can say with Psalm 23: *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”*

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.