

## Misericordias Domini, A✠D 2008

**John 10:11-16** I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. <sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own 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> And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

*In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

1 Sheep have excellent hearing. Given the difference in time between when each ear hears a sound, the sheep's brain can pinpoint the exact source of the sound. Their ears can amplify a sound to enable the sheep more clearly to tell one sound from another. They can distinguish sounds. A young sheep can identify his mother's bleat within a flock of sheep and make his way toward her. And sheep know the soothing tones of their shepherd's voice. They can tell the difference between his voice and an imposter.

2 So, sheep, the Lord calls Himself your shepherd. Are you listening to His voice? Or are you listening to false shepherds? Your ears know the difference. He who called you by a name He gave you and made you His own is the Good Shepherd. But he who calls you by the name you prefer to give yourself is a false shepherd. He who called you out of darkness into His light is the Good Shepherd. But he who calls darkness "light" and who calls sin "acceptable" is the wicked shepherd. He who calls the wolf "death" by his name and who refuses to run when Death stalks the flock is the Good Shepherd. But he who wants you to ignore the wolf, he who runs from Death's foul breath, he is the wicked shepherd.

3 Even he who would entice you overly to sentimentalize your thoughts about the "Good Shepherd" is a wicked shepherd. Whoever wants you to think that this Jesus who calls Himself the Good Shepherd is chiefly a good, moral teacher is a false shepherd. Whoever wants you to think that Jesus is your savior from economic hardship and physical oppression is a false shepherd. Even he who misuses the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm to make you think that Jesus guides you around the valley of death's darkness so you don't have to walk through it, or who keeps

you a safe distance from your enemies, is a false shepherd. There is only one Good Shepherd. Repent of following false shepherds.

4 Not even the wolf Death could frighten this Shepherd. Death howled and prowled and the sheep were terrified. He licked his lips and fed insatiably on the flock. But the Shepherd was unafraid. The Shepherd intervened between the wolf and the flock, blocking the wolf's uninhibited access to the sheep. So Death snarled and roared, "Don't you know what I can do to you? I'll drive away all your friends; your sheep will scatter. I'll strip your clothes off of you. I'll rip the flesh from your bones. I'll pull your joints out of socket. I'll sink my teeth into your tender flesh. I'll hang you humiliatingly for people to mock. And then, slowly, agonizingly, I'll devour you." Funny thing about the wolf Death: he's honest. But the Shepherd knew His fate. He came for this very purpose.

5 And so the wolf Death did everything he threatened. The Shepherd was seized in the Garden and his flock scattered. He was stripped, beaten, whipped, and mocked. He was publicly humiliated, nailed to a cross. And as Death's merciless teeth sank deeper and deeper into the Shepherd, he cried out in agony and finally died. Death swallowed the Shepherd and for three days he was in Death's belly. But on the third day, the Shepherd tore Death's belly open and strode out triumphantly, almost arrogantly. Death was defeated, dying.

6 The Good Shepherd Jesus Christ called you by name and made you a part of His flock. The death He died, He died for you. "The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep...I know My own and My own know Me." For all your tendency to wander from the fold, the Good Shepherd died. For your desiring false shepherds, the Good Shepherd died. Because the wolf Death would have made you his eternal meal, the Good Shepherd died for you. So now the penalty for your sinfulness has been paid. And Death's rumbling stomach is satisfied. Even though death still bites, still stings, still consumes for a moment, he is defeated. The Shepherd will call His sheep from death to life eternal.

7 You know the Shepherd's voice. No other voice sounds quite the same. No other voice speaks you into the flock. No other voice calls you from death to life. No other voice calls sin evil in one breath and in the next breath declares sin forgiven. No other voice could announce from the cross "It is finished." No other voice speaks faith into your ear. No other voice declares you righteous and forgiven. No other voice is like the Shepherd's. "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

8 No other voice bids you graze in the pastures of the Lord's mercy. Here at the Lord's altar, the Good Shepherd feeds you with His own life-giving flesh and blood. Here, sheep, you feast on forgiveness. Here is proof that the Good Shepherd gave His life for yours. Here is proof that your sins are forgiven. Here is proof even that the foul-smelling wolf Death need no longer alarm you. Here you are fed and nourished. Here your faith is guarded.

9 Knowing His voice that has spoken you forgiven, you may continue to follow the Good Shepherd. As trusting sheep, you may follow Jesus, undaunted by death. He who laid down His life for you is He who defeated Death for you. And He bids you follow. In your following, it may not always be easy. He may lead you through the valley of the shadow of death. The table of bounteous feast He prepares for you may at times still be in the presence of your enemies. But where you follow, the Good Shepherd has already gone.

*In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*  
Pastor Jeff Hemmer  
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