

Misericordias Domini
St. John 10:11-16
April 15th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I Lay Down My Life

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord + Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd. How do we know that He is the Good Shepherd? Because He lays down His life for the sheep. Our Lord + Jesus Christ, suffered and died on the tree of the holy Cross, to bear our sin and take upon Himself our punishment. The sinless Lamb of God offered up Himself as a sacrifice for us. This is what makes our Lord such a Good Shepherd, because He not only is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, but He is also a fellow sheep. He is both High Priest and Lamb of sacrifice for our atonement. He both offers Himself up as the perfect sacrifice, and He is the perfect sacrifice. Only God, the one, true God, can do this. Our Lord + Jesus is the second person of the one, true God and He has done this for you, so that He might reconcile you to the Father, and give you His Holy Ghost to create and sustain faith and life in you. This is what the Good Shepherd—our Lord + Jesus Christ—does for you.

In this Easter season so far, we have gone to the tomb with the women and looked upon the empty tomb in fear and awe at such a wonderful thing—the Son of Man risen from the dead. We have also stayed with the Apostles in the Upper Room, and rejoiced in fear and unbelief that our Lord + Jesus has risen from the dead, and has appeared to us. We doubted with St. Thomas that our Lord, or anyone, could rise from the dead and demanded proof—demanded to see His hands and side, and the marks that were left there by the instruments of torture. And our Lord came to us in His holy Word and Blessed Sacraments—by the means of grace. In them He poured into our hearts His Holy Ghost and we were strengthened and renewed in the one, true faith and given and reminded of eternal life.

Today, our Lord takes us from the tomb, from the Upper Room, and brings us to the sheep fold—to holy Mother Church—where we see our Lord as the Good Shepherd who fights for the sheep. The Gospels for the first few weeks of the Easter Season progress in their telling of the good news of our Lord's Resurrection. First, our Lord's Resurrection was proclaimed to the women at the tomb, and to Sts. Peter and John—just a few people; a few eyewitnesses. Then our Lord proclaims His Resurrection to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus and reveals that He is risen from the dead in the breaking of the bread, much like in our "breaking of the bread," that is, in our Lord's Supper, the Lord + Jesus is revealed to us in His real Body and Blood, given under bread and wine for us Christians to eat and drink, and we are reminded that the sinless, and spotless Lamb of God, has indeed suffered and died for us, and has risen from the dead to confirm that our salvation is indeed completed.

Our Lord then reveals His resurrection to even more eyewitnesses in the Upper Room on the night of His Resurrection. A week later St. Thomas also becomes an eyewitness to the Resurrection. Today, our Lord tells us that the whole world is to become a witness of His death and Resurrection. First, to the Jews and then to the Gentiles—those of whom our Lord calls, “*Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.*” These He must bring into the fold through the pure preaching of the Word of God and the right administration of the Blessed Sacraments. All must be preached the good news of our Lord’s death and Resurrection for the salvation of mankind. For, our Lord intends to gather all of His sheep into one fold, one flock, who live and rejoice in their salvation under one Shepherd. These sheep hear His voice and know Him by His holy Name.

Those who do not know the Lord + Jesus Christ, are the ones who do not hear His voice, that is, they refuse to listen to His holy Word. They would rather listen to the evil desires of their own heart. They want to worship our Lord in their own way. They want to obey or disobey the commands of God as they see fit. They want to cut out portions of His holy Word that do not sound pleasing to them. These unfaithful ones are not sinless, spotless lambs of God, but belong outside of the true fellowship of the sheep pen—outside of holy Mother Church.

Sadly, these poor spotted and dirty sheep have been led astray by bad shepherds—by the hirelings. The hireling allows the sheep to graze in unsafe pastures. He allows the sheep to drink from unprotected pools of water. He flees from the care of the sheep when the wolf comes, because he is only a hireling—a false and wicked shepherd—who does not care truly about the sheep, but only about his own wallet and earthly needs; he only cares about his status in this life. The hireling would rather sacrifice the sheep, than sacrifice himself for the sheep.

The Good Shepherd—our Lord + Jesus Christ—lays down His life for the sheep. He fights and defeats the evil wolf—the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh—by fighting in the wolf’s realm and kingdom, and He does it only with the same weapons given to the sheep. He takes on our human flesh, and He battles sin, death and the devil on their terms and in their kingdom. And He defeats them mightily through His very own selfless sacrifice on the tree of the holy Cross. And He gives us a testimony that He has indeed won the battle over the wicked wolf by rising from the dead and sealing His victory with the crown of eternal life.

Therefore, “rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful.” For, “the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. By the Word the heavens were made.” And by His Word was the whole Earth told of His death and Resurrection for the salvation of all mankind; by His Word were all the faithful sheep, you and me, brought into His gracious sheepfold of holy Mother Church. For by His laying down His life, He has called the whole world into repentance and has given the whole world a reason to rejoice, for our salvation is not just for an hour or a day, but it is for all eternity. Our Good Shepherd will watch over this flock of the Church for all eternity, and He rules and watches over this flock, and protects it from the wolf in this life through His Holy Ghost.

Wherever the means of grace are present in their pure form, there the Holy Ghost is fending off and driving away the evil wolf. Therefore, our participation in these means of grace is vital to our existence and life as sheep of the one, true God. For where the Word of God is not taught in its truth and purity and where the Sacraments are not rightly administered according to Christ’s institution, there a place is given for the wolf to sneak in and snatch away the sheep. This means that the shepherds who have been called by the Good Shepherd to watch over and care for His sheep in His absence must guard against laziness, apathy, and fear, and ever be ready to defend the sheep from the wolf in whatever form he may take.

This also means that the sheep must diligently learn God’s holy Word, so that they might recognize the Good Shepherd’s voice, and recognize when the shepherd called to care for them is not

leading them to pure pastures and cool waters, but is allowing them to play and graze in unsafe and dangerous pastureland. Everything must be decided by the Word of God, and not by majority vote. For, it is the pure Word of God that teaches us to cling to our Good Shepherd—our Lord + Jesus Christ. It is the pure Word of God that makes us a true and lasting fellowship devoid of false preachers and shepherds. Therefore, we must guard against those false shepherds that would destroy our true and lasting fellowship by destroying the doctrine of our one, true Good Shepherd.

Rejoice, however, that such a fellowship exists in our midst. Rejoice that the Word of God is preached and taught in its purity and rejoice that the Blessed Sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution for you. For by these means the Holy Ghost has called, gathered and enlightened you into the one, true sheep fold. Here in this holy Church, you may graze on the pure pastures of God's holy Word, and drink from the cool waters of the blessed means of grace. Come, therefore, and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord + Jesus Christ, Who on the tree of the holy Cross, suffered and died, once and for all, for the forgiveness, life and salvation of all mankind. For it is this meal that feeds and nourishes us poor, miserable sheep, and gives us hope and joy in knowing that by it our sins are forgiven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo gloria!