

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Third Sunday after Easter, April 29, 2012

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 426, 237:1, 433, 207, 207:6.

Lessons: Isaiah 25:6-9, Revelation 7:13-17, John 10:22-30.

Sermon Text: John 10:1-10.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Fellow Redeemed in Christ our Lord:

Do you think you will get to heaven? This is a very important question, but one that is not taken very seriously by a lot of people. Many have the idea that since God is love, everyone will finally go to heaven.

Anyone who thinks that does not know what the Bible says about man's sin and God's anger because of sin. In Psalm 7:11 we read: ***"God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day."*** In Psalm 90:8-9 we read: ***"You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. All our days pass away under your wrath."*** Sin really is a serious matter. Isaiah writes: ***"Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."*** (Isaiah 59:2) If there is no repentance for sin, there can be only God's wrath. Paul speaks to unrepentant people and says: ***"Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed."*** (Romans 5:2) Sin finally results in eternal death for all who do not repent. Paul writes: ***"The wages of sin is death."*** (Romans 6:23)

There is also no salvation by attempting to be good or by trying to keep God's commandments and so earning His favor. The Bible says: ***"A man is not justified by observing the law."*** (Galatians 2:16) The reason is that no one can keep the Law perfectly as the holy God demands, and the Bible says: ***"All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.'"*** (Galatians 3:10)

It is evident, then, that everyone needs a Savior from sin. That Savior is Jesus Christ. In Him alone is there salvation. Let us learn from our text:

JESUS IS OUR ONLY SAVIOR.

- 1. He alone is our Shepherd whose voice we recognize;**
- 2. He alone is the gate to the sheepfold, the Holy Christian Church; and,**
- 3. Through Him alone we have life and nourishment for the soul.**

Jesus gives us these facts about a shepherd and the sheep of his flock. ***"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep."*** There is only one legitimate way to get into the sheep pen, and that is through the gate. A true shepherd of sheep would not enter in any other way. Those who try to get at the sheep in the sheep pen by climbing in some other way are thieves and robbers. They will do great harm to the sheep.

Another fact about a shepherd and his sheep: ***"The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."***

Several flocks of sheep were kept in the sheep pen at night. In the morning each shepherd would be admitted into the sheep pen by the watchman and he would then call out his sheep. The sheep would recognize

the voice of their own shepherd and follow him. If a thief or robber dressed up in the clothes of the shepherd and even if he used the shepherd's sheep dog, the sheep would not be fooled. They listen for the voice of their own shepherd and will follow no one else.

As we apply these objective facts of Jesus' parable, we want to learn that Jesus is the true Shepherd, and His sheep are the people who believe in Jesus as their Savior. The thieves and robbers Jesus speaks of are the false teachers. They try to get at the sheep in order to do them harm. False teachers, of course, give the impression that they can do much good for the sheep. That's why Jesus warns: **"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."** (Matthew 7:15)

Jesus our Shepherd was sent by the heavenly Father. He said: **"The very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me."** (John 5:36-37) This is what God testified about Jesus: **"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."** (Matthew 3:17) Jesus is the only One, therefore, who can be our legitimate Shepherd. The Lord Jesus shows that He is our true Shepherd by warning us against the wolves who would destroy His flock. In the days of Jesus' earthly ministry they were the Pharisees and Sadducees. In our day there are many false teachers who can do great harm to Christ's flock, all of whom claim to be preaching the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

How do we know whom to believe? Sheep recognize the voice of their Shepherd. So believers in Christ recognize the voice of their Shepherd Jesus. Jesus' voice is heard when we hear and follow the Holy Scriptures. False shepherds or false prophets can be identified by the things they teach contrary to the Bible. We have to become well versed in the Bible by not only hearing it preached, but by studying it. Then, if we hear anything contrary to the Bible, we will recognize that as being the voice of a false shepherd. We will, then, also remember Jesus' warning: **"Watch out for false prophets."** (Matthew 7:15), and His command: **"Keep away from them."** (Romans 16:17)

Here, too, we should think of our pastor as a shepherd under Christ. Our pastor has a divine call to do the work of shepherding the flock God entrusted to his care. We are to listen to our pastor, seek instruction and comfort from him alone, and not look to other shepherds for pastoral care.

When Jesus spoke to the Jews about a shepherd and sheep and the shepherd's voice, our text says: **"Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them."** So Jesus used another figure of speech to describe himself as the only Savior. We learn that Jesus alone is the gate to the sheepfold, the Holy Christian Church.

2.

Jesus said: **"I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."** The ecumenical movement of our day has thoroughly deceived many people so that they do not know the truth Jesus teaches in our text. People have been taught to believe that all roads lead to heaven, that it does not make much difference what you believe, just so you are sincere. The ecumenical movement has even convinced many people that faith in Jesus is not necessary for salvation.

Jesus gives us the true facts in our text. The sheepfold is to represent the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints. This is the one Church in which there is salvation. Faith alone in Jesus Christ makes one a member or part of this Church. And since no one can see faith, but only the fruits of faith, we speak of the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints as 'the invisible Church'. Jesus is the gate to the sheepfold, He says. He is the one Way to salvation. By faith in Him we become members of the Holy Christian Church. Speaking of those who would in the future become believers, Jesus said: **"They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."** (John 10:16) The one flock is the Holy Christian Church and the one Shepherd is Jesus. The Bible says: **"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."** (Acts 4:12)

Jesus says that He is the one gate for the sheep to enter the sheep pen. That in simple words means that Jesus is the one and only way to heaven. He says: **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** (John 14:6) John writes: **"God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his**

Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:11-12) That makes faith in Jesus absolutely necessary for eternal salvation. So the Bible clearly says: ***"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."*** (John 3:36)

It is in Jesus alone that we also have life and nourishment for the soul.

3.

Jesus says: ***"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture."*** What a comforting picture Jesus describes for us! Sheep following their Shepherd and getting the nourishment they need from the green grass in the pasture. So our Shepherd provides true nourishment for our souls in the pasture of His Word. That nourishment is the comforting truth of the Gospel, ***"that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them."*** (2 Corinthians 3:19) We are comforted, our faith is strengthened, and our souls are nourished when we hear this blessed truth about Jesus: ***"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*** (2 Corinthians 3:21) In Christ, ***"we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."*** (Ephesians 1:7) How comforting to hear that Jesus paid for our sins in full, that His precious blood is the ransom price for our eternal redemption, that God raised the crucified Jesus from the grave to assure us that in Him we are accounted as righteous in God's sight!.

It is in this crucified and risen Savior that we have life and all spiritual blessings. Jesus says in our text: ***"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*** False teachers can only mislead us into the eternal miseries of hell. But Jesus gives us life and all the spiritual blessings promised in the Gospel. Consider these precious blessings: Jesus has given us Holy Baptism as a means of grace to wash away our sins. Jesus has given us His true body and true blood in the Sacrament of the Altar to reassure us poor sinners that our sins are truly forgiven. Jesus has given us the sure hope of eternal life in His resurrection from the grave. He promises: ***"Because I live, you also will live."*** (John 14:19)

Surely, then, we have the proof that Jesus is our only Savior. Trusting in Him let us confidently say: "He lives and grants me daily breath; He lives, and I shall conquer death; He lives my mansion to prepare; He lives to bring me safely there." Amen. (The Lutheran Hymnal 200)

(This sermon has been edited and reprinted from the April 21, 1985, Ministry By Mail.)