

Sermon for April 21, 2013 – Good Shepherd Sunday

John 10:27-28

Theme: **Let the little lambs spend time with their Shepherd.**

- 1) So they may know His voice.
- 2) So they may never be lost.

*My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give them everlasting life.
They will never be lost, and no one will tear them out of My hand.*

My uncle is a retired pastor. He has a farm and raises sheep. When he wants the sheep to come, all he has to do is call: “Here lamby, lamby, lamby. Here lamby, lamby, lamby.” and the whole herd quickly comes to him – both young and old. They are excited to be with him.

Now if I try to call the sheep, they don’t come. I am a stranger to them.

My uncle knows each of his sheep by name and can tell you about each animal’s personality. He has cared for them ever since their birth. This is why his sheep trust him. This is why they follow him.

If my uncle gets a new sheep from a different herd, that sheep will not trust him right away. It takes time for trust to be fostered. But the lamb that has grown up with my uncle will not easily stray from him.

The Bible often pictures believers as sheep. We belong to the Good Shepherd. Some of us have belonged to his flock – the Church – from childhood on. Some of us came to join his flock later in life. Regardless of when we came under his care – the fact remains that the LORD Jesus is our shepherd. We know his voice and we follow him.

Just as the trust between shepherd and sheep grows as they spend time together, so also our trust in Jesus grows as we spend more and more time with him.

And this is why Christian education is so important: to **let the little lambs spend time with their Shepherd.** 1) *So they may know his voice.* 2) *So they may never be lost.*

Part One: So they may know his voice.

Jesus says: *My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*

There are a lot of voices calling out to our children in this world. The voice of humanistic science is calling them to believe in evolution and human progress. The voice of consumerism is calling them to covet material things. The voice of carnal lust is calling them to abuse the gifts God reserved for marriage. All these voices – and the many others like them – have this in common. They are trying to lead our children away from their shepherd and into the teeth of the great wolf. And this leads us to ask the question: will our children be able to hear and recognize their Shepherd’s voice?

Thankfully they have heard their Savior’s voice when they were baptized. When the pastor spoke: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,” faith was created in the hearts of our children.

God has forgiven all their sins - even the sin they inherited from us. The LORD has adopted and sealed them as his own dearly loved sons and daughters. Through baptism we have all become Jesus' sheep.

God has created us in such a way that the habits we learn when we are young are not soon forgotten. They get hard wired into our brains. The people we seen day in and day out become important to us – as do the voices and instruction we learn from them. This is why the Scriptures command parents to train their children in the way of the Lord. Why? Because God knows how he created us, how vitally important it is for us to hear his voice as children, to spend time with our Good Shepherd when we are young. The more time we are able to spend with him as children, the harder it becomes for the evil one to tempt us away from our dear Shepherd's loving care.

Parents, imagine for a moment that Donald Driver agreed to volunteer to coach a weekly football camp here in Kewaunee free of charge. How many of you would make sure your child would be there? Well, parents, you have someone more famous than Donald inviting your children to spend time with him: your Savior and God Jesus Christ is inviting them. He wants to teach them everything about himself, his Father, and how to live a Christian life. He wants to give them a very special gift – the gift of the Spirit and the gift of His presence. He wants them to trust him for the rest of their lives.

And what exactly will they learn from their Savior as they spend time with him? They will learn the truth about themselves and their God – how they were born into this world sinful and unable to save themselves, but how the LORD loved them so much that he sent His Son Jesus to save them through his perfect life, innocent death and glorious resurrection. They will learn about how Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to them through Baptism, how He strengthens their faith through the Word and Sacraments, and how He is ever so gently leading them home to be with him forever in heaven. The more time our children spend with Jesus the more they will learn to trust in him to work in all things for their eternal good. They will be strengthened for the tough times to come, and learn to not let the good times make them complacent. They will learn to look forward to the day of Christ's reappearing and be comforted in the knowledge that Jesus is with them always – to the very end of the age.

Jesus says: *My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.* Let the little lambs spend time with their Shepherd so that they might know his voice. And how can you do this? At home you can read Bible Stories together, pray and sing hymns. You can, throughout the day, remind them of the 10 Commandments and talk about God and his wonderful love for us in Jesus. You can bring them to Sunday School and Church. You can send them to our Lutheran elementary school at St. Paul's and High School in Manitowoc.

Part Two: So they may never be lost.

And what is the great benefit of doing these things for your children, of letting them spend time with their Good Shepherd? Jesus tell us: *I give them everlasting life. They will never be lost, and no one will tear them out of My hand.*

A parent's worst nightmare is seeing his children get hurt or killed. The Christian parent's worst nightmare is seeing his child fall away from faith and being lost eternally in hell. Oh, may God forbid that this happen to our children. And it won't happen, as long as they hear their Shepherd's voice and follow him.

There are many, many dangers facing our children – spiritual dangers that we and our parents before us did not think we might have to face. Our culture is changing. Our society is becoming more and more godless. The love of most is becoming cold. Church membership and attendance is declining at an alarming rate.

Many are falling away from Christ and pursuing whatever their hearts desire. Who will save our children from this spiritually bleak future?

Jesus will. As long as they listen to their Shepherd's voice and follow Him, Jesus will keep them safe. He will not allow anyone to tear them from his hand. The Lord promises His sheep: ¹⁰ *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.* (Isaiah 41:10 NIV) And because of this blessed promise, we can say with St. Paul: ³⁵ *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?* ³⁶ *As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."* ³⁷ *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* ³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,* ³⁹ *neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 8:35-39 NIV)

What wonderful promises Jesus offers us and our children as we remain close to him – listening to his voice as he leads us with His Gospel. And this is why, parents, we should let our children take every opportunity to spend time with their heavenly Shepherd. God loves them. He doesn't want your children lost. He wants to give them far more than you can ever dream of giving your children. So let the little lambs spend time with their heavenly Shepherd: that they may know Jesus' voice and not be lost to these evil times. Let them attend a Christian school.

And what are the benefits of sending your children to a Christian school? Your children will be taught every subject taught in the fear of God and from the Christian viewpoint. They will learn to praise God for his creation, see his guidance in history, learn to read worthwhile books, learn how to study the Bible, have the positive example of Christian teachers and the joy of Christian friends. In all these things – as they study God's Word and apply it – they will hear their Shepherd's voice and follow him. What they learn during this time will not be soon forgotten and influence them the rest of their lives. And as our children stay close to their Good Shepherd, Jesus promises us: *They will never be lost, and no one will tear them out of My hand.*

Brothers and sister in Christ: Let the little lambs spend time with their Shepherd. Let them attend a Christian School. Amen.