

Misericordias Domini (3rd Sunday of Easter): April 30, 2017
“What a Wonderful Voice of the Shepherd”

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Fellow saints of God, “He lives to silence all my fears; He lives to wipe away my tears; He lives to calm my troubled heart; He lives all blessings to impart.”¹

If last year’s political season taught us anything, it was that voices are important. There were many voices speaking on all sides of various issues, and they used all sorts of media platforms. Radio, Television, Facebook, Twitter, Newspaper, town hall meetings, debates, and anything and everything they could think of to get their voices heard.

There are many voices, voices are important as they convey our innermost thoughts and feelings through words, and words themselves can be good, bad, or ugly. They can be misunderstood. They do not always come out the right way. The same word can be heard differently depending on the hearer. The same word can be spoken differently, depending on the speaker. Among the many voices and the many words in our world today, there is One that stands out among the rest. There is One that is higher than the rest. While sinful humans speak many things in their own voices, there is One voice that speaks to bring the other voices to silence. There is One voice that breaks the hard heart of human pride and righteousness, and One voice that soothes the troubled heart. The Word of God made flesh, Jesus Christ, is that very voice.

With our many devices today we can record and playback the many words that we speak. In God’s gracious wisdom, He has recorded His Words, His voice, to speak to us today. Hear what God’s says about this Voice, this Jesus:

Jesus is “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”² These two things, “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”³ In Jesus, we see

¹ LSB 461 I Know That My Redeemer Lives: stanza 5

² John 1:14

³ John 1:17–18

God. What great love for us is shown as this sinless man, the Son of God Himself, is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”⁴

One of the many problems today is how to identify the Voice of the Shepherd. The voices of the world are ever around us and they persistently confront and hound our ears. They call us in many ways, blatantly and many times every so cunning, to disobey the voice of God, reject His commands, or like the great deceiver in the garden, to subvert His Word as a way to cover our own self-direction, to twist it and turn it in many different ways.

So just where is the Shepherd’s voice? We find it through His very Word. His voice is proclaimed in the Scriptures. Jesus said, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.”⁵ His voice is heard through His ministers in the Office of the Ministry who are to speak with His voice and not their own, “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’”⁶ His voice is heard through all who speak His Word to us. Our brothers and sisters in Christ, our spouses, and our children all speak His Word to us. As His love binds us together, we hear Him say, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”⁷

Our Good Shepherd’s voice is known also by the tools that He carries. Psalm 23 highlights one of these tools. “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”⁸ His Word is a rod that breaks the enemy, protecting the sheep from outside harm. His Word is a staff to lean on in troubled times; to lead to better pastures. The rod and staff is Jesus and His Holy Word. Jesus speaks two kinds of words: Law and Gospel. The Law shows us our sin, our going against

⁴ John 1:29

⁵ John 5:39

⁶ John 20:21

⁷ 1 Peter 2:9–10

⁸ Psalm 23:4

God, and how we deserve nothing but God's wrath. He also speaks the greater Word of Grace. A declarative word that forgives our sins, that bestows life and salvation, that proclaims the favor and blessing of God in Christ Jesus.

God uses this unique voice of Law and Gospel for the very benefit of His sheep. He laid down His life for the sheep. He paid for them. He feeds them. He binds them together. As the Good Shepherd looks over His sheep, He can see the pain, He can see the attacks, He can see the wolf, He can see the hired hands, He can see the turmoil among the sheep and He can see the unrest. And to the sheep He declares, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."⁹

To His sheep, His voice rings out, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. *By his wounds you have been healed.* For you were straying like sheep, but have now *returned* to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."¹⁰

Our Lord God declares to His sheep, "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God."¹¹ As He is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life, as He is the Good Shepherd who speaks even now today, as He is the Good Shepherd who continues to watch over us, we are brought to Him and He gives us the gift to lie down in peace. As His sheep, we have been given a new voice so we can wonderfully pray, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head

⁹ Matthew 11:28

¹⁰ 1 Peter 2:21–25

¹¹ Ezekiel 34:15

with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”¹²

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

¹² Psalm 23:1–6