

# The Good Shepherd to God's Children

## May 8, 2022

**Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church    Pastor Tyson Labuhn**

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

Happy Mother's Day to all of you who are well deserving of all the sacrificial love you have given and continue to provide to your children. I'm sure that it certainly isn't an easy task. I know because growing up I remember giving my own mother a hard time – I didn't always listen to her as I ought... But like mothers around the world, because of the deep connection they have with their children, they're often called upon to put up with a lot. Because in the end, they only want what's best for them. That is why it's good for us to be able to celebrate Mother's Day on this fourth Sunday of Easter. A day in which we hear new Easter words from our Lord Jesus, ***"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."***

According to our Gospel reading for today, it was on the Feast of Dedication, prior to Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection, that Jesus was walking in the colonnade of Solomon. It was a joyous day that marked the rededication of the temple in Jerusalem. And it was there, just outside the temple where many religious discussions took place, especially between rabbis and their disciples. Seeing Jesus they gathered around Him, some of God's own chosen people, believers, and children of God, asked Him if He was the Christ. They said, ***"How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."*** (v.24)

Now, Jesus had already shared with them who He was. According to John's Gospel, He had healed a man who was

lame in another part of the temple, He had fed the 5,000, and had even walked on water for His disciples. He had performed miracles and still, they didn't see, listen or believe. Why? Because they didn't believe. So, Jesus said to them, ***"I told you and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock."***(v.25-26) God's once chosen people had fallen away from God because they refused to listen. Because those who listen to our Lord's voice are part of His own, and still, there will be others that listen.

This morning, we might want to learn from our Gospel reading because while we might not always listen to our mothers, we should certainly listen to our Lord. As we confess, we're born sinful and left on our own, it's easy for us to wander off on our own. We listen to other voices. We harden our hearts and don't like it when we hear that we've done wrong, that we sin against God and our fellow man. We don't like it when God's law shows us our sin. Just like we've done with our own mothers, we can go too far when we get in the habit of not listening to Him!

There's a story of a farmer who had just rescued a lost sheep. When he was asked how the sheep got lost, the farmer replied, *"They just nibble themselves lost. They go from one tuft of grass to another, until at last, they've lost their way."* That's what happens in life, isn't it? When we no longer listen to the voice of our shepherd and nibble away at life with little purpose or direction until it's all gone. We don't know just how far we've wandered.

Why? Because we live in a world that teaches us that Jesus was only a good man or a prophet at most and that we should ONLY be concerned about the things of this world. And we start focusing only on the quality of our life and

whether God has taken us away from all illness and misfortune. But God never promised that our lives would be perfect. And yet, He provides us with much more! He keeps us safe, provides for all our needs of body and soul, and provides for our eternal well-being. Because the Father's hand is the hand of Jesus. We also know that He is the Christ, the anointed one, who says, ***"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."*** (v.28) [For] ***"My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are One."*** (v.29-30)

While people in this world might have different opinions, it can't and doesn't change the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed One of God. And they can reject or deny His divinity, but that rejection doesn't remove His divine nature from His being. Throughout Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, He completely and perfectly fulfilled God's plan of salvation. And that salvation comes to us because God, Himself, became one of us, in the person of Jesus Christ. It's His Good News for us that shows us our Savior. And it's only by His grace that we can know, believe, and confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

I'm not sure if you heard the story of a young woman who had a baby boy. It was just after her son's baptism that an older, odd-looking man came up to her and offered to grant her one wish on behalf of her son. Thinking only the best for her baby, the woman wished that her son would always be loved by everyone he met. The old man said, *"so be it,"* and then vanished. And it turned out just as she wished.

The boy grew up, and everyone loved him so much that he never lacked for anything. But things didn't turn out the way she expected. As adored and admired as the young man was,

he experienced a terrible emptiness. He could have anything he wanted just by asking, but he didn't have real friends. He never knew the joy of a day's work or achievement that was richly rewarded. His neighbors took care of all his needs. And so, the young man became cynical, jaded, and selfish because there were never any negative consequences to his actions.

Finally, the day came when his mother died. And at her funeral, that same mysterious old man appeared and offered the young man a wish. The young man took him up on his offer and asked that his mother's original wish for him be changed. Instead of being loved by everyone he met, the young man asked the old man to give him the power to love everyone he met. And from that day on, he knew joy and happiness. Something that his mother wanted for him from the very beginning.

While mothers often put up with a lot as they give of themselves, they love in a way that their children have what they need. And while Our Lord Jesus also does the same for us by His grace, He continues to watch over us as we gather together as His church. He loves us and calls us to be His own, so that we might truly hear His Word, follow it, and share it with those who had wandered away. That following His example of sacrificial love we might reach out to those who are lost, hurting, and alone. That by His grace, they too might hear the voice of their Good Shepherd once again and rejoice with us that our eternity is being kept safe for us because one with the Father, no one can snatch it from the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that as the sheep of His pasture, and for our eternal good, we might praise Him, through our words and actions here on earth and there in Heaven.

In Jesus' name, Amen.