

Fourth Sunday of Easter
Sermon text: John 10:11-18
Related text: Acts 4:1-12
Psalm 23
1 John 3:16-24
Date preached: April 29, 2012

Alleluia, Christ is risen!
He is risen, indeed. Alleluia!

A man receives a hearing aid. Among making this known, he goes on to state that the world is a very noisy place. In an age of technology with cell phone tunes, buzzers, beepers, pages, i-tunes, the background noise can be extremely distracting. Lost in all the noise is the most important voice one can hear. It is the voice of the one who calls himself, The Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd is our Lord Jesus Christ. In the language of sheep and shepherd, Jesus asserts that not only does he know the sheep but the sheep know him. As the sheep, we know the Lord, for we hear his voice.

It was the voice of the Shepherd who spoke Mary's name that broke through her grief to recognize the risen Lord standing before her.

From John 10:3 "The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all

his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice.”

The stakes in not listening to the voice is to be eternally lost. When we ignore or fail to listen to the Shepherd’s voice we are left to the wiles of the wolf, eager to attack, to seek and to destroy us.

When the wolf comes, he instills fear not only in the sheep, but also in the hired hand. Now the hired hand may not be someone we’d view as a bad person. A hired hand may be someone we respect, share common views, and love.

Unfortunately, the one thing we know about the hired hand is that when moments in life are difficult and the wolf attacks, the hired hand will not defend us. The hired hand does not risk his or her life for those of the sheep in their charge. This is because the hired hand has no investment in the life of the sheep.

Enter Jesus. Enter the one who declares, “I am the Good Shepherd.” The Good Shepherd is the one in whom we can trust, whose voice we know. Jesus is worthy of our trust because he is the only one willing to do what hired

hands will not. Jesus, will defend us against the onslaught of the wolf to the point of laying down his life.

That is the good news. Jesus Christ fully incarnates God's abundant love for us on the cross. Jesus is fully invested in the life of his people, so much so that he laid down his life for you. There on full display on the cross is the greatest expression of His love. From the cross resound the words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

To the point of being fully invested in us, Jesus will not lead us astray. Yes, he will lead us beyond our comfort zones. Yes, he will lead us out into the streets so that we may see the faces of the poor, the abused, the homeless veteran, and those who will do anything because of their poor self image. You see, The Good Shepherd has not only our eternal life in his interest, but our life and the lives of our neighbors in this world as well.

In the words of the 23rd Psalm, we hear the providence of His love for us in this life. In this life, there is rest. In this life there is the reviving of our souls that comes to fruition in the repentance and forgiveness of our sins.

In the forgiveness of sins, the Good Shepherd keeps the wolf at bay leaving us free to honor the Lord. Such freedom lies at the heart of our relationship with God. It is the freedom to tune out the other voices knowing that the voice of the Good shepherd has our best interest in mind. In the freedom we have from God comes the trust that God will give us what is needed for the love of our neighbor.

What is needed is given out as we fully invest in the life of our neighbor just as Christ fully invested in us. This is what it means to open our ears to the voice of the Good Shepherd who calls us to bear the good news.

We go out bearing in word and service the truth of the Gospel. We do this in our vocations as well as in our careers. For in every facet of life God provides opportunity for his voice to be heard, his desire known, and all that he has done be proclaimed. For the best news we have to share is stated in the reading from Acts 4:12, “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men (also including women) by which we must be saved.”