

Sermon for May 12, 2025 – Easter 4: Good Shepherd Sunday

John 10:22–30 (EHV)

Theme: I am Jesus' Little Lamb.

- 1) I follow him because I belong to Him.
- 2) No one can snatch me from His hand.

²²Then the Festival of Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³and Jesus was walking in the temple area in Solomon's Colonnade. ²⁴So the Jews gathered around Jesus, asking, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." ²⁵Jesus answered them, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I am doing in my Father's name testify about me. ²⁶But you do not believe, because you are not my sheep, as I said to you. ²⁷My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one."

I'll never forget visiting my uncle when he raised sheep. Whenever he called out over the pasture, "Here, lamby lambies. Here lamby lambies," the entire flock ran to him. Why do you think that happened? Was he some sort of special "sheep whisperer"? No. The reason his sheep came to him when he called is that they belonged to him. They trusted him as their shepherd.

If you ever adopt a rescue animal, you know it can take a lot of time and effort to awaken your new pet's trust. But, oh, what joy there is when that day comes! The same can also be said about people and their relationship to Jesus.

Those who don't know or belong to Jesus don't trust Him, so they don't come to him when He calls. However, those who do know and trust Jesus as their Shepherd come running to Him whenever He calls. They love Him because they know they are loved by Him, finding protection and peace in His arms. Let's consider these things under the theme: **I am Jesus' Little Lamb.** 1) I follow him because I belong to Him. 2) No one can snatch me from His hand.

Part One: I follow Him because I belong to Him.

Our sermon text took place during *the Festival of Dedication*, a Jewish winter holiday that we know as "Hanukkah." Jesus was walking in a covered open space of the temple complex called "Solomon's Colonnade," where believers often gathered for instruction and worship.

As Jesus was walking along, a group of *Jews gathered around Jesus, asking, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."*

Who were these Jews? Were they believers who simply needed Jesus to confirm their suspicions? Sadly, no. These particular Jews hated Jesus and were looking for ways to trap Him with His own words.

If Jesus had answered them with a definitive “Yes, I am,” would these particular Jews have believed and worshipped Him? No, they would have accused Him of blasphemy and tried to kill Him on the spot. Jesus knew this. Therefore, instead of giving a direct answer to their question, Jesus let His teachings and works speak for themselves. By doing so, He wouldn’t have to make any claims about Himself, because the truth of His identity would be evident to all who believed the Bible.

²⁵ *Jesus answered them, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I am doing in my Father’s name testify about me.*

The fact that these Jews felt compelled to ask Jesus if He was the Christ demonstrates the strength of the evidence. Everything Jesus did, from teaching to performing miracles and acts of compassion, fulfilled what the Bible predicted the Messiah would do. The fact that these Jews could not find a single crime or sin with which to charge Jesus should have given them pause.

“*But,*” Jesus continued, “*you do not believe, because you are not my sheep.*” The problem these Jews had was not a lack of evidence, but a lack of faith. They were sheep of a different shepherd: the devil.ⁱ They embraced his lies and drank his flattery. Like mad dogs belonging to a cruel master, they barked at Jesus and wanted to attack Him, refusing to be calmed by His gentle words and kind actions.

Sadly, like the unbelieving Jews who questioned Jesus, many people in the world refuse to come to Him when He lovingly calls out to them through the Gospel. Why? Because they belong to a different master. And just as it is difficult for an animal to change masters, it is also hard for a person to change gods. The longer people live for sinful pleasure, the harder it becomes to leave such a life behind to follow Jesus. The longer people grow up believing in Allah or some other god, the harder it is for them to start following Jesus as their LORD and Saviour.

Does that mean all our mission and evangelism efforts are futile? I mean, if people who don’t belong to Jesus can’t choose to follow Him on their own, what’s the point in spending all our money and effort trying to reach them? The answer to that question lies in a statement Jesus made on another occasion about salvation: “*What is impossible for people is possible for God.*”ⁱⁱ

God’s Word is powerful and active, and the Holy Spirit uses it to do the impossible: create faith in an unbeliever’s heart. Jesus also said that there are many “lost sheep” in the world—people who are wandering from master to master but who belong to Him. Just as a stray dog can become someone’s loyal pet after receiving a lot of love and care from its new owner, so also lost people of this world can become Jesus’ sheep. Why? Because the patient care He lovingly shows them changes them, much like how the patient care my uncle showed his sheep changed them.

What about us? Do we belong to Jesus? Let me ask you a different question first: Why did you come to worship this morning? Was it because you love Jesus and want to spend time with Him, learning more about His love for you? If so, rejoice because you belong to Christ.

Jesus says: ²⁷ *My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.* When Jesus calls you, you come running. Why? Because Jesus knows you, and you know Him. Like the rest of humanity, you were once a stray sheep, lost in the wilderness of this world. He saw the mortal danger you were in and set out to save you by laying down His life to win your forgiveness. He rose again to show that you've been reconciled to God.ⁱⁱⁱ

After winning your salvation, He set out to search for His scattered sheep. Through the proclamation of His Gospel, He called out to you, found you, and coaxed you into following Him. For some of you, this happened shortly after your birth when you were baptized. For others, it happened later in life through the proclamation of His Word. Regardless of when it happened, understand that Jesus Himself was the one working through His Gospel in Word and Sacrament to forgive and win you over so that you would belong to Him.

And just as sheep love being with their shepherd, you love being with Jesus. You run to Him when He calls and stay close to His side so that no one can snatch you from His hand.

Part Two: No one can snatch me from His hand.

Jesus continues: ²⁷*My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.* ²⁸*I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.* ²⁹*My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.* ³⁰*I and the Father are one.*"

If there was any doubt as to who Jesus claimed to be, He dispelled it with the statement: "*I and the Father are one.*" Jesus is God the Son, your promised Saviour from sin. He is your Good Shepherd whom you trust. With Him at your side, you need not be afraid of anything.

The wilderness that surrounded Jerusalem was a dangerous place for sheep. Wild animals prowled, looking for lambs to devour, and thieves constantly sought ways to entice or force sheep away from their owners. However, the sheep that remained close to their shepherd found safety and peace.

Like the Judean wilderness, many dangers threaten your soul. The devil constantly seeks to devour you, and the world relentlessly tries to entice you away from Jesus. If enticement doesn't work, then it shames you for your beliefs, calling them unloving, hypocritical, bigoted, and the like. And if shaming doesn't work, it uses boycotts, lawsuits and, in some places, physical force to try to tear Christians away from their Saviour. Is it any wonder that a Psalmist once wrote: "*Yet for your sake we are killed all day long. We are considered sheep to be slaughtered*"?^{iv}

With so many dangers threatening us, what should we do? The answer is simple: stay close to your Good Shepherd, Jesus. He sees the dangers that threaten you and knows you can't make it through life alone. Therefore, He not only leads you through life, but often carries you. Jesus says, "*I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.*" Oh, the devil and world will try to snatch you away from him, but as long as you stay close to Jesus, all their attempts fail. As St Paul explained in his letter to the Romans:

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? Just as it is written:

For your sake we are being put to death all day long.

We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, neither things present nor things to come, nor powerful forces, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.^v

Because you belong to Jesus, no one can snatch you from His hand. Oh, what joy that truth gives you. Jesus is always watching over you, giving you everlasting life. Because of this, you can confidently confess with the apostle Paul: *The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.*^{vi}

Yes, the only time you are in real danger is when you stray from Jesus and His Word. For just as a sheep loses its protection when it runs away from its shepherd, so you lose your protection when you try to sneak away from Jesus to pursue the foolish lusts of your heart. Worse yet, the more you wander away from your Shepherd, the more estranged you become from Him.

An animal that continually stays away from its master reveals that it doesn't want to belong to Him. The same would be true of you, too: if you constantly avoid Jesus and refuse to come when He calls you through His Word, you show that you don't want to belong to Jesus.^{vii} Another master has won your heart – the same master that possesses the world: the devil. Sure, he might offer all sorts of tasty treats to lead you away from Christ, but understand that he is just fattening his sheep up for the slaughter. He is not a good master.

And so, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, do not delay when you hear Jesus, your Good Shepherd, call to you. Run to Him. Listen to Him. Follow Him. Rejoice in the fact that, through faith, you are Jesus' little lamb. He adopted you as His own when He put His name on you at your baptism. No one can snatch you from His hand. Therefore, remain at His side as He guides you through the valley of the shadow of death^{viii} to bring you safely home to Himself in heaven. Amen.

ⁱ Cf. John 8:44

ⁱⁱ Luke 18:27 EHV

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Romans 4:25 EHV

^{iv} Psalm 44:22 EHV

^v Romans 8:35-39 EHV

^{vi} 2 Timothy 4:18 EHV

^{vii} Cf John 8:47

^{viii} Cf. Psalm 23