

April 17, 2016  
John 10:22-30

Easter 4C (Good Shepherd Sunday)  
Safe in His Name

*Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Risen Shepherd King. Amen.*

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

Names. They are all around us. We all have them. It's part of our identity. We have our given name. We also have nicknames. Businesses, Sports teams, colleges, and universities all have names. It identifies them. Some of us identify with the name of our alma mater or our place of employment. Perhaps these names provide you with safe keeping and protection. Children, by and large, when given a name identify with the family of origin where they are protected and taken care of. Oftentimes kids are teased, looked down upon and even bullied outside of home, but at home their parents love them and take care of them. When a bride is joined to her husband, she takes on a new name. This new name shows that she is now being taken care of and supported under a new family. Her husband is to protect her. Names are important! Names might even bring safety as mentioned before. One name certainly does...

In our text for this morning, Jesus reminds the disciples that they are in safe keeping as he knows them and no one can snatch them out of His hand. He even knows their name and they know His name. This comforts the disciples, because the world is hostile to them. Jesus is the Good Shepherd that will keep them safe in His fold and protect them from the assaults of the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh.

Throughout our readings and theme of today's service we see that Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd "who calls us each by name" and keeps us safe in the Father's Hand.

As our text opens amidst this Good Shepherd Chapter of the bible, we hear that no one can snatch us from the Shepherd's hand, from the Father's hand. Even before we arrive at those words, what's going on in this chapter...really what's going on in this text?

Jesus knows that His sheep will always be under the attack of the world. The opening conversation provides us with that clue: *At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter,* <sup>23</sup> *and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. <sup>24</sup> So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."* <sup>25</sup> *Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, <sup>26</sup> but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep."*<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Jn 10:22–26). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

The Jews wanted Jesus to tell them plainly that He is the Christ, but He has and they haven't believed Him. These Jews are not among His sheep. Jesus is face-to-face with his enemies as they are encircling him, hoping to not let him go, hoping to catch him and be able to arrest him. They are not of the fold; they are speaking with another name. They represent the world that brings challenges against the community of Jesus' disciples. Right before our text John writes: <sup>19</sup> *There was again a division among the Jews because of these words.* <sup>20</sup> *Many of them said, "He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?"*<sup>2</sup> They are attributing the work of Jesus to the NAME OF devil. Yet, Jesus attributes the Works to the NAME of the Father.

Later on in the Gospel in chapter 15, Jesus clearly tells His disciples that the world is hostile to Jesus, his message, and his disciple. <sup>18</sup> *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.* <sup>19</sup> *If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*<sup>3</sup>

Jesus throughout his ministry and teaching uses the words: strangers, thieves, robbers, and wolves especially in context to the sheep and shepherd imagery to describe the world. In describing the world in this way, Jesus is showing that the world wants to draw you away from HIS NAME. It happens more than you think!

Earlier in John 10, we learn that living in that world without a shepherd is a terrifying thought! Without a shepherd, the sheep have no sense of direction. They have no voice they know, so they'll follow any voice which can ultimately lead them astray and out into danger. Without the shepherd, the sheep are not safe. So the thief would steal the sheep. The world would easily snatch them away and they would be led into danger of the world where they would eventually die, whether it's by the thief himself or by starvation from the nutrients.

And be warned: this is the world that you and I live in!

Every day we hear the Word and will of Christ being demonized, and we are called names such as homophobic and hate-mongering and narrow-minded. Big money organizations such as NFL, Hollywood, NCAA are pushing back against governors who are desiring to sign Religious Freedom Bills, but don't because they don't want to lose money to the state. The North Carolina governor signed a bill that prevents men from using women's bathrooms and women from using men's bathrooms and the GLBT community is up in arms. There's musicians that are boycotting the state, even our very governor (along with others) has told state employees, no trips to North Carolina unless it is a dire need.

Abortion is called women's rights. When Christians speak out against life we are called names...women bashers or that we are war against women.

---

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Jn 10:19–20). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Jn 15:18–19). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

When we value the definition of marriage as God instituted it, we are called names: narrow-minded and hateful and unloving.

Every minute we are being tempted by the world to follow false Christ's-gods of our bellies, prophets of prosperity, theologies of man. Some of these theologies include Mormonism and Islam. We are constantly being told that all gods are the same. I've read or seen those words countless times. I'm reading a book about Spirituality in America and you would be astounded how many people are desiring to become their own god or even seek after spiritists, fortune-tellers and the like. There are stories in this book of real-life people in real-life Lutheran churches that are falling prey to another voice, the voice of Satan, they are following after another name. They are living as if they have no shepherd. It's not just them! We fall prey as well to other gods, maybe it's not a fortune-teller, but it's our video games. Maybe it's not that we are jumping head first into Mormonism, but we are starting to listen to prosperity preachers that when we do enough good, God will reward us.

Without a shepherd, we fall prey quickly to any of these worldly wolves. Without a shepherd we begin to follow some other name.

So Jesus promises that He will always keep us under the care of the Shepherd, himself. "No one will snatch them out of my Hand." This is a chief blessing Jesus brings to the community of the disciples. Through the Word of God, the Good Shepherd calls His disciples by NAME! He tells us that He knows us, and we know His voice. Through His Word, the Good Shepherd saves and gives life abundantly to those whom He calls. He will also go and search out the sheep that are lost and wandering away from the fold.

The voice of the Good Shepherd leads His sheep to follow Him to green pastures and beside still waters where everlasting life and salvation awaits as the Psalmist tells us. Earlier in the chapter, we learn that the Good Shepherd cares for His sheep so much that he lays down His life for the sheep in order to save them from the wolves and eternal death. Jesus promises to keep in His hand those whom He calls and saves. *"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."* That includes you!

We will always be safe in the strong hand of our heavenly Father...after all He has given us our name and calls us by name. Jesus tells us in our gospel: <sup>29</sup> *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.* <sup>30</sup> *I and the Father are one.*"<sup>4</sup> Jesus is the voice the Father has given to you to hear. You hear His voice through the Word of God, whether it's in public worship or in your own time reading the bible at home.

---

<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Jn 10:29–30). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

For as we know Jesus, we know the Father. We see Jesus loving, having compassion, speaking kindly, touching gently, healing, and genuine care. When we see Jesus doing this, we see the Father.

Thus the guidance, love, and protection for His disciples and for you is the very guidance, love, and protection the Father provides for His people, Israel. Look at how He cared and protected His people throughout the Old Testament. He even gave Moses His Name so that Israel could identify with Him and know His voice! The Lord God never ultimately abandoned His Children. He was always seeking them out!

As your Good Shepherd, the Son speaks to you in the Word, love, and care of His Heavenly Father for you and for your salvation. By speaking to you through His Word, you hear His voice. You know Him and the Shepherd knows you, He knows you by name. By dying on the cross for you of his own accord, the Good Shepherd fulfills the charge He received from the Father, who loves him and loves the world through Him. By His promise of eternal salvation, the Good Shepherd keeps you in His hand. In Christ, you can be certain that you are in the Father's Hand forever. In Christ, you can be sure that you are protected by His name! In the book of Acts we hear: *"There is no other name under heaven by which you are saved."*

Children are given names when they come into a family whether by birth or adoption. This happened to you as you became a member of a family, one that is called to protect and care for you. Each of us has that type of name and it's special to us. You were given another name. You were given a new name because you are part of the Bride of Christ!

You were given a name when you born through the Water and the Word in your baptism. You were given the name – Christian! You were given the name – Child of God! Christ Jesus – your Good Shepherd knows both your names. He knows your given name, knows each of you personally. But He also knows your baptismal name, and that's more personal because it means you're a member of His family. It means that you were crucified, buried, and raised in new life with Him. Christ Jesus knows each person who's in Him.

In Christ, you are members of the family of God. In Christ, you are protected and cared for by your Heavenly Father. In Christ, you have eternal security and protection. In Christ, you are safe...Safe in His Name.

You are safe in the name of Jesus because Jesus died and lives for you! Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen!

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Risen Shepherd King. Amen.*