**Jesus Our Shepherd**

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.****2****But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.****3****To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.****4****When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.****5****A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”****6****This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. (John 10:1-6, ESV)*

God gave us Jesus, our Leader-Shepherd. Greetings dear family of Jesus Christ, as we see another aspect of our generous, good Heavenly Father. Last Sunday, we spoke about true sight, as well as the giving and generous nature of God. With love and wisdom, our Heavenly Father gave us His Son as our life Shepherd. Today, as a continuation of that same theme, we’re going to be talking about God’s pastoral personality which He reveals to us through His Son Jesus. Again, God gave us Jesus, our Leader-Shepherd. Let’s talk, then, about this unique Gift.

God has given us Jesus as our Tangible Leader. The passage we read above was the continuation of a healing miracle episode in which our Lord had given sight to a man born blind. However, true sight was not only physical, but the man’s spiritual understanding had an even greater spiritual illumination. So, today, we’re looking at the continuation of that passage as our focus.

Very often, we do not consider the fact that Jesus Himself was a gift from God the Father. Jesus was also the true Shepherd of people (called sheep by him), Who entered by the proper gate, the true means, and not like thieves or deviant or lawless people would. Jesus was established in His ministry through obedience to the Law, through the people of God, having followed the Law of Moses since childhood. In other words, He did not come to that Shepherd-hood because of some other (false) god, or through being subject to false (unscriptural) laws. In addition, Jesus knew Who He was, and He also knew and continues to know His sheep. God the Father ordained that our Shepherd be a knower of His sheep by name. He arranged it that the Shepherd would lead them by going ahead of them (not pushing them into the unknown from behind). God gave us a Shepherd whose voice we could recognize – whose voice was so clear and unique that the one who recognized Him would be able to tell the difference between this Shepherd and other voices. God ordained that by knowing Jesus’ voice, we would be able to flee from other voices which were not the Lord’s.

For example, when a couple gets married and do life together for some time, they usually get used to each other to the point that they don’t remind each other who is on the other end of the phone when one is calling the other. There’s no need to say, “*Hello, this is your husband,”* or *“Hello, this is your wife speaking.”* No, they immediately recognize the other’s voice. However, when someone else speaks on the phone in an improper way or spirit to one member of the couple, even perhaps pretending to be the other person’s spouse, the true spouse will distance themselves, be disgusted and abhorred at the stranger’s speech, because the imposter is not “his” or “hers”.

God has given us a knowable, reliable, always-caring Shepherd in Jesus. He came to us with the Father’s words – and the “doormen” or gatekeepers have been all those preachers who have spoken to us the pure word of Salvation. God has also given us in Jesus a Shepherd that we can hear – whom we can listen to and recognize. This is not like other religions where God is only knowable through laws or the pages of a book. We do not worship the unknowable, scary, distant God whom we cannot call “Father” (like some other religions). Rather, we can have direct relationship with Jesus because He personally calls us by name and knows us by them, thus showing an intimate knowledge. The Lord Jesus leads us uniquely, by going ahead of us, by taking us out to “pasture”, meaning bringing us to those locations and spiritual experiences that are nourishing for us. God gave us Jesus, whose voice is not possible to confuse with the devil’s, the stranger’s, or the thief’s.

God loves us so much that He gave Himself by giving Jesus to the world. So, if our Father God, who does not need anything and is always glorified and praised by the angels, has desired to wrest us from the claws of hell, then what response to we have for Him for this great gift? Can we honestly give anything less than our whole life (back to Him)? Can we devote ourselves, give, sacrifice in a way that is not generous? Whether we are young or old, a preacher, a cook, looking after the kids, serving the poor, keeping a house, a worker of a day job, or have some other position in life, no matter what way we are honoring the Lord, may that be a response to God’s all-encompassing gift, Jesus, who is our knowable, tangible, comprehensible, approachable Shepherd. If we approach God in that way, then just as we treat our own family members and our close friends with love and sacrifice, we’ll be able to do the same with God’s people, the church.

God gave us Jesus as the Tangible Leader, Good Shepherd, Knowable Savior. May that truth, in the same way, bring about a generous, graceful response from us. The Lord Bless You all. Amen.