

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 25, a.D. 2010

John 10: 22 – 30

Jesus is our Good Shepherd. He has deep compassion for his flock. He has a merciful heart for everyone. His life-giving words are matched by his strong deeds. He lays down his life for the flock and then he takes it up again from the dead. He gives the gift of eternal life to his sheep.

God the Father gives these sheep to His one and only Son, Christ Jesus. Anyone who is given to this Good Shepherd as a sheep lacks no good thing. The Lord is my Shepherd I lack nothing. The Good Shepherd gives his sheep the food and the cup of heaven. He gives his sheep his own righteousness and leads them through the valley of the shadow of death to dwell in God's house forever.

Sadly not all are his sheep. There are many who hear his words, see his mighty deeds yet do not believe because they are not his sheep. Unbelief has many faces, many excuses and much self-righteous anger. It calls God a liar and seeks to overthrow his rule.

Where would we be without a good Shepherd? Without his compassion, his words, his gifts? How would you know where you are going? Who would protect you from ravenous wolves and coveting thieves? Can anyone fight against the forces of evil alone? Who would rescue you from the path of eternal death and destruction?

But the sheep belonging to God are not alone in this world. They are kept safe. They are found in Saviour's nail-marked hands and in the Father's hands and they realize there is but one hand holding them. There is no one strong enough to pry open God's hands to devour the sheep.

God calls and gathers his flock through his Word. His words are spoken to us from outside us but they penetrate us and make us honest before the Almighty. His words heal, forgive and strengthen us. His words are attached to the water in baptism and that's where God made you a member of his flock. His words are attached to bread and wine and that's where you get a taste of heaven's green pastures and of heaven's banquet.

The Good Shepherd knows each of his lambs by name. They follow him and not another. They do not try to make themselves into a sheep or keep themselves as one. They only listen to what he says when he says that I am the Good Shepherd. I lay down my life and take it up again for you.