

## The Fourth Sunday of Easter (2018)

**John 10:11–18** I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. **For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.**”

In the Name of Jesus.

Jesus has HIS ‘charge’—we have ours! ‘A new charge I give y’all, that y’all love one another just as, the same way, AS I have loved y’all!’ First John teaches us today: ‘And this is his commandment: that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.’

What our Fine Shepherd calls His ‘charge’ gets translated into ‘commandments’ and who KNOWS what else when it comes to OUR LIFE...!

There’s a Christian ‘sniff test,’ my dear ones, that Doctor Martin Luther has given the Church. Just as the Lord plainly, blandly states that ‘My sheep hear my voice! The voices of others they will NOT listen to...,’ so no matter what danger number ONE puts in your ears—and your PASTOR is danger number ONE, because you’re held hostage here so often—AND, no matter what ANY...OTHER...VOICE puts in your ears—the whole flavor of the thing, the tone, the SMELL of the thing is detectable for all, by all.

Luther wrote somewhere, ‘GUILT is the STENCH of the devil!’ Your ‘sniff test,’ courtesy of excommunicated Luther!

I bring this up, because I fear that when I warn you about how your Bibles are translated—MIS-translated!—I fear sadness may hit you. Your Bibles are for the most part and generally faithful to what the original texts say. But people are people and hardly a Bible is translated by Lutherans—and so what you too often get is something that just doesn’t sit right, smell right, SOUND right.

‘THIS is the REASON the Father LOVES ME—  
BECAUSE I lay down my life for my sheep!’

Now that stinks!

There is actually a fair Lutheran theologian who DID translate this with happiness and joy and the voice of our Proper Shepherd! Name: Martin Luther!

‘*Darum* liebt mich mein Vater, daß ich mein Leben lasse, auf daß ich’s wiedernehme.’

Darum, darum, darum! Whatever ELSE that lovely word means, IT...DOES...NOT...MEAN that the Eternal Son in our Flesh somehow had to EARN the attachment and love of His Father! ‘For *this reason* the Father loves Me, BECAUSE I lay down my life for the sheep!’

No... THEREFORE, the Father LOVES Me, *that* I lay down and pick up My life again!

I pray you don’t think poor pastor’s medicine is not working or that I’m picking at nits! It makes all the difference in the world!

Jesus does not EARN the Father's love any more than do you and I—or the world! Instead, the Revelation of our King, our Shepherd, is that THIS is the way things are NOW!!!!

What goes ALONG with the Father's LOVE with His Son is HIS laying down His life for the sheep, despite the wolves, despite His foes. And what goes along with the Almighty Father's love with His Son—and with us!—is that our FOES are now DE-FANGED! Toof-less! Scarey—ONLY, ONLY IF and WHEN other voices fill our ears, other than the Spirit of our Fitting Shepherd!

I wanted to make a big poster of this today, but had to settle for this crumpled paper. 'Motivation is a 'Law'-word, NOT a Gospel word! BEAR with me!

All men have a 'motivation' either to do violence to God's Law, or to PRETEND to follow it! We are either MOVED by the desire so much that any future pain or payment we figure will be worth it. OR, just the opposite, and we need to ACT as if we are Law-keepers, Law-LOVERS, somehow to ward OFF getting what we deserve.

Is that green pastures? Still waters? Does THAT sort

of fine calculating and weighing and judging how we're doing in heaven's eyes refreshment for our souls?

Sounds to me the way I was wired to 'DEAL WITH'—Ugh!—deal with others; and the evidence I have of the way others are wired to go back and forth with me: 'Are YOU matching up?! Is EFFORT worth expending THERE?! Am I reading the SIGNS right? Am I 'IN' or am I 'OUT' with him, her, them, the SKY?'

He laid down His Life with authority—no man takes it from Him!—and He picked it up again, to remove the stench of the devil from our noses—guilt!—and to fill our ears with the glad tidings that the Lamb of God has taken away the sins of the world! And that THAT Lamb is NOW our Shepherd, our King, our Trailblazer in THIS world and the NEXT!

And there are wolves; and there are enemies; and we ARE walking through the valley of the shadow of death! But HE...is...with...us! Who? JUST the Shepherd sheep like us NEED but could never EXPECT! The One Who counts US worth more than Himself, though HE is beyond our calculations, UTTERLY loved and loving with His Father, in all the ways we AIN'T....!

And now, having picked up His life again—that means that He picks up US! Y'all! Me! Who NOT if He picks up US?!!

And has raised up US—our enemies will not agree, the wolves!—raised US up to what and where and who He is! The Lamb is the Shepherd and now the Sheep are called to follow Him; not only BELONGING to Him, but utterly MORE!

‘Y’all will do even GREATER works than I do!’ The voice of our Shepherd!

So the Father is attached to US—  
WITHOUT...ANY...REFERENCE to our performance, our motivations, our sincerity, our successes OR our failures! Just as the Father loves the Son, SO, the Good Shepherd says, in the same way He loves US! The sheep, who can ONLY be saved when they are saved from themselves, and their fears, and their wanderings. They live in the secure guarantee of their Baptism: HE died! And they die in the secure pledge of His Body and His Blood: He has risen again!

My dear sheep of the Good Shepherd:

RIGHT...THERE...

PRECISELY in that SPOT, when and where you are SCRAMBLING to find motivations within and without to make one more step with those in your presence—are they enemies, or friends; worth it, or NOT?

Right there, HEAR the voice of your King and Ruler and Savior and Brother, your Lord and your God, YOUR Shepherd eternally prepared JUST for that glorious moment for YOU...TO...SHINE! OUT-SHINE Him, He says! What a Shepherd! 'GOOD' is hardly good enough a word!

What comes to you comes from your Father of Love.

Friends and love and good cheer and support are unearned, all gifts—so you never need fear LOSING them, if they seem to slip away. For we never HAD them IN...OUR...GRASP!

And enemies, wolves, devil and his stench—oh, your Father Who IS Love cannot absent Himself from you just because of all THAT!

You are free from the tyranny of ‘motivations!’

Oh, as far as the LAW is concerned, you may need to play that game. Want pay? Show up! Work hard! Want health? Diet! Exercise! Want people to smile at you? Trying SMILING! There is a realm, a kingdom, a whole LIVING we are still IN—our Old Adam!—who ONLY responds to carrot and stick, promise and threat.

But HIS Kingdom is not OF this world! Nor His Flock! We are IN the world, He prayed to His Father, our Father. But we are no more OF this world than HE is!

He rose. And by your Baptism at His authority, YOU have risen too!

From what?

From weighing and figuring and calculating ANYTHING about you are anyone else before you LIVE, before you LOVE, before you FOLLOW That Voice, That Shepherd!

The ‘sniff test!’ The voice that tells you in the presence of your enemies, of the wolves: ‘I GIVE you

eternal life! Where do you think THIS has come from?’—that’s the Voice of your Shepherd! And you will never go wrong following it!

Any OTHER voice, that tells you that your Father, your God, your Lord, your Love, is still holding back, waiting on YOU and YOUR performance—the NEXT man and HIS performance—to see where His love will settle—

The good work you can do with that is to wag your little lamb’s tail and ignore it and walk away in the Name of Jesus. Amen!