**Jesus Cares for Us**

Based on [John 10:11-16](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn10.11-16)

Preached for April 26, 2020

Third Sunday of Easter ~ Misercordias Domini

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A couple of months ago, when the coronavirus situation was beginning to ramp up, I remember hearing a headline. It was, I believe, about certain US Congressmen who, after leaving a committee meeting projecting the impact of the virus situation, went and immediately sold all their stocks. I might have a few of the details wrong, but that was the basic story.

This story immediately aroused in me a sense of anger and cynicism against governmental leaders and their selfishness. Upon reflection however, it is useful to think...how would I respond? You leave such a meeting, you know your bank account is severely threatened. Would you protect your money? It’s not like you are stealing from anyone. And this isn’t like insider trading, where they deliberately used their power for the purpose of getting privileged stock market information. You were invited to this meeting, and incidentally left knowing more about a situation likely to affect the economy. And we can take this thought it further. Would you call family or friends and tell them to sell? Could you? Should you?

The fact is that, in this world, certain men and women have been and always will be given privileged positions and information that the rest don’t have. And it is not possible for human beings to care about everyone equally. Scripture says you have a duty of love to everyone, but that if you don’t care about your brother or your household...something is wrong with you. People naturally feel responsible for those closest to them, whom they know and love, and they do not naturally feel responsible for those masses of people elsewhere who they’ve never met. And especially in a government that is founded on the law and not the gospel--leaders will not by nature have the power to truly care for all people. It is just a fact. And it is suspicious to me hear someone say that they care deeply about people know nothing about. It sounds nice, but it cannot be true.

What all this brings to mind, with respect to the gospel reading today. Jesus says, “**I know my own and my own know me.**” He says, “**I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.**” I for one have difficulty thinking of how a *shepherd* would die for his sheep. It’s really a metaphor that can be better understood by us to indicate the relationship in a close-knit family, the shepherd is like the parent. I wouldn’t die for a sheep that I was raising to shear and slaughter anyway. But I would die for my wife. I would die for my children. And I would do so without a moment’s thought about it. I would do it instinctively and heartily. And this is not because I am a christian or have the holy spirit; it is because I am a man, and naturally families and close friends (which are familiar people) will die for one another. There is such a love that is natural, familial and belongs to all but the most debased and deadened of conscience people. By nature, the pain of losing someone you care about is stronger than your fear of death.

This gives us an example to help understand Jesus’ love for us, and our responsive love for him. Jesus has sheep, he has family, he has those he is familiar with--familiar is what family means. And this family is his gathered flock, his church, who is spiritually gathered all seven days of the week, but for at least one day, they physically gather together in the sheepfold, the church. This can be a building, but it must be a building in where Jesus’ voice is spoken and heard. As he says a little later, “My sheep hear my voice, I know them and they follow me.”

Government officials, MPs and such who have never met you...they can’t possibly care for you. They can care generically for all citizens. They can honor and respect their generic duty towards all people (and they should and I believe many do). But it is impossible to truly care for someone you don’t know.

In the midst of this crisis remember, those who make the highest level decisions for the good of the nation...they don’t know you. They can’t possibly care about you the way they care about their family, or the way you care about yours. They are hirelings, and while the wolf is able to be kept at bay--be it the present virus or any other widespread calamity--whild the danger is manageable they will remain to govern. But if things were to get extremely threatening and deadly, don’t trust that they will remain at their post. They will take themselves and their family to a safe place that you will not be able to go. At least don’t trust them NOT to. Trust not in leaders, they are but mortal and run from death when he attacks their family. It is only Jesus Christ, the life and light of the world, who is able to save his family by surrendering to death and winning eternal life for them.

It is amazing to me how many people are heartbroken and cry and mourn when a celebrity dies. Celebrities don’t know their fans and can’t really care for them individually. But Jesus knows his sheep individually, he knows them intimately and more. In obedience to His Father, he came to us and offered his flesh and blood on the cross to pay for the sins of the whole world. It is true that for each and every sinner on the face of the world, he paid the price and made the way for salvation. But make no mistake, he did it ***for*** his sheep. He did it ***for*** his church. He did it ***for*** his elect and chosen people. He did it ***for*** you.

Scripture says of Jesus, “But ***for*** *the joy that was set before him*, endured the cross, scorning the shame.” That joy was not for the scoffers, and mockers, and hypocrites, and unrepentant masses who remain in their sin and care nothing for Jesus or his sheep. That joy was not for those who have the devil as their father and refuse to know God. The joy that was set before Jesus was you, his church, those who trust in him, talk to him in prayer, seek forgiveness through him, and desire to keep his commands. And he guards you like a mother hen guards her chicks even now. If my child was terminally ill, and I could give my life to save his, I would joyfully do it because the health and life and happiness of my children is my joy. I am not a hireling to them, I am their Father. Such as it was for Christ and his church, because if I who am a sinner would die for my family; how much more would Christ, who is God in the Flesh, die for his sheep?

Jesus tells a parable about a man who went into a field and found a treasure. He covered the treasure, went and bought the whole field for the sake of obtaining the treasure. So Jesus went into the field of the world and he found a treasure, his sheep, his people, his church. He covered it with the humility and weakness by which he marked his coming in this world, emptying himself and taking on the form of a servant. He went and bought the field, bought the whole world, redeemed the sin of the whole world. And he did this for the sake of the treasure, his family he found, the church, the sheep of His Father which will never be snatched from His almighty hands.