**One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church**

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

Preached on April 14, 2018

Third Sunday of Easter ~ Misercordias Domini

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

This gospel is about how Jesus Christ has established one holy catholic and apostolic church under Jesus Christ. Apostolic means according to the apostles and what they taught. Catholic, doesn’t mean Roman Catholic, and we say “Christian” instead now in the creed to avoid confusion. But to surrender that word is a mistake. Catholic is a Greek word that means “according to the whole” church, and it teaches that true Christians gather together according to the whole church of Christ; which gathers as a shepherd gathers sheep.

The word shepherd in Latin is Pastor. Your one pastor is Christ, I simply hold the office that Christ instituted, and do what he has commanded. So when a called and ordained pastor baptizes, Christ baptizes. **When a pastor preaches, Christ preaches.** When a pastor consecrates and distributes the Lord ’s Supper, Christ is doing it through the office. Christ sends out ministers saying, “whoever hears you hears me, and whoever rejects you rejects me.” He sends them out to be his representatives.

Even though there is one Pastor, Christ, those who hold the office of the ministry are also called “pastors.” This is consistent with scripture. Jesus says to Peter, “Pastor my sheep”. Paul says to the Ephesian elders, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.

All this to say that the relationship between Christ and all his sheep on earth, is the model for individual pastors and congregations in a particular place. Yes Jesus says there is one pastor and it’s him. **But he also says there will be one flock, or congregation, one church.** And though Christ says there is one church, we still presume to call ourselves a church though Resurrection is not the only true church on earth. And just as Resurrection is a church, representative of “the church”; a pastor is a representative of “the pastor” Jesus Christ.

The idea that there are many flocks, yet one flock, many congregations, yet one congregation; many churches yet one church—is wrapped up in the word Catholic. Catholic comes from the greek word “Katolica” which means “according to the whole”. The idea is that--even though Resurrection Lutheran Church is just a small flock--it is a flock according to the one flock, the one church. And all of Christ, and all of his benefits, are here at this altar right now, even though there are other sheep not of this fold here present.

And there are other folds throughout the world, other congregations, that gather in the same way and around the same teaching and voice of Christ. **Just because we are apart from them geographically, we are one with them catholically, according to the whole church.** We recognize fellowship with them, and acknowledge that wherever the word of Christ is rightly preached and his sacraments rightly given, there he is 100% for his flock, gathering them as a mother hen gathers her chicks, forgiving their sins, sanctifying them in his truth, and protecting them from the wolf.

In this gospel, Jesus speaks entirely in figures. He of course is not a literal shepherd. He was actually a carpenter by trade before his ministry began. And of course you are not literal sheep, it is a figure of speech. Christ is like a shepherd though, because he gathers you, watches over you, protects you from danger and to sum it all up, is responsible for you and your welfare, just as a shepherd is responsible for the welfare of the sheep. And true believers in Christ are like sheep, in that sheep naturally flock together--congregate, and if one wanders off and neglects the flock he puts himself in grave danger. And so sheep need a shepherd, not only to keep the flock together--as it says somewhere “strike the shepherd and the sheep will scatter”—but also because there is a wolf about, who comes to scatter the sheep. This is, the devil.

The “devil” is our English translation for what was in the original Greek new testament says “diabolos”. **Dia means apart; Bolos means cast. “Diabalos – the one who casts apart, who scatters”.** The devil by name is the one who casts apart. He is opposed to Christ’s kingdom, and knows that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. And so he divides. He divides by dividing the doctrine of Christ.

Why are there so many denominations of Christianity throughout the world today? It’s because of false doctrine. **Our Conservative Confessional Lutheran Church is often accused of being divisive.** We are told to be ecumenical, *to not be so arrogant and concerned with being right all the time and just join in fellowship with other Christians who claim to confess Christ.* They will slander you as being self-righteous, stubborn…that you aren’t humble or christlike because you don’t tolerate for those who scoff at the bible and who cast the pearls of Christ’s body and blood to swine.

What we need to say to them is this: “**If you truly want Christian unity like you say you do. If you truly think that communion practice, and teachings about baptism or whether the pope is the antichrist aren’t important enough to divide us, prove it.** Prove that you aren’t “arrogant” like you say we are. If you think these issues we are dividing over baptism, communion, biblical authority are so insignificant as to not get in the way of worshipping as a flock and that you would never divide over such things, then prove it. You “selflessly” give up your false view on these things, repent and join us.

You say it doesn’t matter if you believe baptism saves or not, then for the sake of the “unity” you claim to prize above all things, *you* give up *your* false teaching on baptism and adopt our biblical teaching.” But of course, it’s a ruse. Their humility is arrogance, and their contempt is slander. They aren’t any more willing give up their earthly doctrine of “**agree to disagree**” and “**go along and get along**”, than we are to give up the sacraments and the bible. To “agree to disagree” about God’s word, is to “unite in division”, which is exactly what the wolf wants. So that when he comes into the flock, they have nothing really keeping them together, and they scatter as strangers from one another and he devours them, wool and all.

But Christ is the good shepherd. He says my sheep hear my voice, they know me and I know them, and I lay down my life for them. And we confess one ***apostolic*** church because there can be no disagreement about what Christ is saying or when he’s speaking. What the apostles taught, Peter, Paul, James, John and others—what they taught is our only connection to what Christ our good shepherd taught. **Christ’s voice echoes until the end of the age in the teaching of the apostles, which is preserved for the Church the new testament, which is preached to us through the called minister of Christ for his flock in a particular place.** And this wasn’t some unfortunate oversight. Christ planned it this way. He promised to his apostles, “But theHelper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, **he will teach you (twelve apostles) all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.**” One Holy Apostolic Church.

But there are false shepherds of god’s people. Hired hands. “Yes men” of the wolf, who only preach what’s in season, and then move to Arizona in the winter. **Now I’m speaking in figures, but you understand. People pleasers who will only teach what people will accept, instead of accepting only those who are willing to hear what Christ Teaches.** They will be known by their fruits. When they see the wolf coming they leave. This is pastors who will not call people to repentance, and will withhold doctrine from the faithful. This is a pastor who starves the sheep of Christ, to entertain goats with empty words. And then the wolf comes and devours them, and the hired hand escapes out the back door to find another job.

But that is not what true pastors are called to do, because Christ is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. And he didn’t only do so figuratively, but literally on the cross where he distracted the wolf from the sheep and was devoured himself. But the wolf bit off more than he could chew, for the flesh and blood of Christ is poison to those who are perishing. But to you who believe it is true food and true drink that forgives your sins, and gives you eternal life, today and every day through the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

And you will know them by their fruits because they will leave to save their own skin.

One of you told me yesterday