

Dear sheep, heed the warnings from your Shepherd. There are false shepherds, thieves, robbers all around, eager to steal what belongs to God; It may seem harmless, even appears godly; they will tell you doctrine doesn't matter, just love Jesus, which is to say certain words of your shepherd are worthless; tell sheep what they want to hear, usually its not a quick kill, it's poison that destroy faith, kills the soul. And that **to have life and have it abundantly** means Jesus will fill your life with happiness and success and stuff if only you work at it.

Heed the warnings from your Shepherd. Much false teaching. The voices of the true shepherd and false shepherds are similar. They work for the enemy, whether they know it or not, whether you realize it or not.

Dear sheep, heed these warnings well. You are defenseless, you cannot survive on your own. We loved to wander off. It's in our nature as sheep, also our desire to stray from what is right. You grossly underestimate the danger around you. You have a murderous adversary that works 24/7, 365 to destroy you and every relationship have. A simply click on the computer, seemly harmless conversations, distractions to keep you incessantly busy to wander away your Bible and catechism; to stray from the Divine Service, the Table He prepares, works to get you to stray from what is right and godly; you so easily stray from what is good and right; how often you don't even put up a fight.

Dear sheep, heed this warning well. Sheep don't go thru life on their own; they live with a flock. To go it alone, leave the flock, wander from the shepherd, is deadly. But you can't convince some sheep of that. It sees no harm in looking for greener pastures, what's more exciting, no danger in straying from the true flock. The Church is life in a sheep pen. Some sheep are smelly, some sheep don't like other sheep so much. Sometimes there's quarrels. Sometimes sheep don't feel like being shepherded, think they know what is best. The shepherd comes to feed, care for you, in a flock.

Dear sheep, heed this warning well. Many sheep think some head knowledge is good enough, but your Shepherd must feed you His living word over and over into your ears or you will starve. He must give to drink His cup of salvation again and again. Your Shepherd knows what

you need. He knows that apart from Him you can do nothing. Listen to His voice.

We are so far removed from 1st century shepherds we miss much of what Jesus is saying. A shepherd. As a door, at the entrance of the sheep pen. Protecting, Caring. A true shepherd who knows his sheep, his sheep know him; loves each one uniquely, know their exact issue, and sheep have issues; gives each a name; they recognize his voice; they follow wherever he leads. Perhaps the closest comparison we have is our pets, the way some care for, love, name each dogs and cats. No, not silly cats. But okay dogs.

Also consider, I am like a shepherd dog. If you have seen how they work, they keep focused on their Master. His words and actions direct the shepherd dog in obedience, into action for the sheep, works the sheep. My eyes always focused on the Shepherd, the Master's to direct my work to you. A shepherd dog. (You're just a pup but one day). You can call us dogs. But pastor, which means shepherd in the latin, is fine.

Dear sheep heed this blessed Gospel. Your shepherd knows His sheep, knows you by name. Calls to you. Named you in still baptismal waters; you as distinct from everyone else, what each needs, which ones have cuts on their legs, which ones have disease, which ones need special attention. A perfect shepherd for you. He will discipline you when you need it, He will bandage your wounds when you're hurt, He will go after you when you wander off. He will protect you, give you all that you need for your life. He knows what isn't good for you, what each of you needs-money, love, health, trials, courage, comfort, affliction, and so on. The Lord is your shepherd, His sheep are not in want. Ever.

Dear sheep heed this blessed Gospel. His voice that forgives, heals. His voice that leads you in the midst of trials and confusion. His voice that calls you to repentance when you wander. His voice that you know He is there. His voice-the Scripture. His voice from His under-shepherds.

Dear sheep heed this blessed Gospel in which you rejoice: By His work, by His grace, you are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand, gathers you here, into this sheep pen. That beautiful language of Psalm 23, all happens here, He prepares a feast in the wilderness of this world. This is the feast. Come this day then and eat the food of Sheep. His voice calls you to be: His forgiven, His beloved, His flock.

Heed this well, In Him you shall not be in want. Surely goodness and mercy will follow you, all the days, every moment of your life. He comes then and now, does it all, with all His authority now and always, that you shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever.