

April 25, 2021

St. John 10:11-15

## **“Where Things Are”**

- I. The Wolf.
- II. The Sheep.
- III. The Good Shepherd.

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Dear Friends in Christ,

The writer of Hebrews declares, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings..." (Heb. 13:8) Jesus is immutable; that is, without change and will ever be. He is God in the flesh - the Word in the flesh who has given us the inspired, inerrant, authoritative Word - the Scriptures. They are not subject to change according to changeable human thinking. And so, the warning: "Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings."

Regarding the Lord, the writer of Hebrews stated that the heavens and earth "will perish, but you remain...like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end." (Heb. 1:11-12) A. T. Robertson wrote, "...the revelation of God in (Christ) is final and never to be superseded or supplemented." (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. V, Broadman Press, Nashville, Tennessee, 1932, p. 447)

There will come that moment when the world with its global thinking and dreams of creating a heaven on earth apart from God will have its face-to-face meeting with this: "While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape." (I Thess. 5:3)

This morning we're examining . . .

## WHERE THINGS ARE

### I. The Wolf.

So, let's start with the wolf. In our text, Jesus says, "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." (v12)

The Wolf. In chapter eight of John's Gospel, Jesus identifies what we call the alpha wolf - the lead wolf - Satan. Jesus said to a group of Jews who had believed him but were ultimately offended by Him:

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies... Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not of God. (vv 44-46)

Satan was there in the Garden with every intent to murder our first parents. That murder was built on a half truth; a lie: "You will not surely die." And they wouldn't... at least, not right away. Sin, which was initiated by Satan, is lies and murder (hurting and killing). It is sin that justifies twisted thinking, saying and doing; sin that does everything from hurting and killing the self to hurting and killing others. You're guilty. And so am I. It messes with our lives and the lives of others. It destroys the hope of heaven.

And then there's the fact that the *alpha wolf* has other wolves. Jesus warns, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matt. 7:15) And Paul warns the leaders of the church at Ephesus, "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them." (Acts 20:29-30) Just look at the assorted theological clutter that has hit the church throughout the generations. Instead of learning the Word most run after the clutter!

And with the *alpha wolf* and the *lesser wolves* is another group which Jesus identifies: "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." (vv. 12-13) Lutheran commentator, Gary P. Baumler wrote:

The hired hand is like those church leaders who think more of their own well-being than serving God's flock. They are not true shepherds. They do not feel any personal responsibility for the sheep. They do the job to make a living. When wolves come, they show their real colors. They abandon the flock and let the wolves ravage and scatter it. (Gary P. Baumler, John, People's Bible Commentary, CPH, St. Louis, pl. 152)

The hired hands, the wolves and Satan are always at work destroying God's people. And that, of course brings us to . . .

## II. The Sheep.

The Sheep. Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (v.11) And then He notes, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice." (v.16) The "other sheep" is a reference to the Gentiles. It fits with Jesus' promise, "For God so loved the world..." The world: Jew and Gentile.

And the sheep have two qualities. First, they know the voice of the Good Shepherd. Jesus says, "they will listen to my voice." (v.16) In fact, earlier Christ declared, "A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." (10:5) Strangers. Let's say, every voice of the wolves and hired hands that would twist the pure Word of Jesus. Let's try it this way: the sheep know the Word - they learn the Word - they apply the Word - and they cling to the Word unto death!

The second quality of the sheep is their gentle nature. It makes them vulnerable to assorted attacks. With that in mind there's the reality that they are no more of the world than their Good Shepherd.

We would do well to remember these words of Jesus about His sheep: "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." (Jn. 17:14) That hatred is rooted in these words of Jesus: "The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil." (Jn. 7:7) That is, the world cannot legitimately hate a child of God, but does so because of our connection to Jesus and His condemnation of the world's evil. The fact is, we constantly struggle with the evil of sin in ourselves. The reality is, we confess it and look to Jesus Who forgives sin. The world prefers not to confess sin. And that brings us to . . .

## III. The Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd; this from our text: "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." (vv.14,15) Later in John 10, Jesus says "...I lay down my life that I may take it up again." (v.17b) All this takes us to Calvary and Christ paying for every sin, and, then, to the resurrection and His victory over death and hell. And that takes us to Christ's unfailing promise, "whoever believes...should not perish but have eternal life." (Jn. 3:16)

We have of this world and do of this world, but it is all very momentary. The *having* and *doing* of this world are not our ultimate goals. Again, our goal is what Jesus promised: "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." (Jn. 14:2,3)

And there's something else we want to keep in place in the midst of the fears and uncertainties of this world; from Psalm 34, a Psalm of David:

When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. (vv.17-19)

Twelve years ago, writer and social commentator, Anthony Esolen, wrote an article entitled "Nowhere Man." In the article he wrote:

"Behold,' says the Psalmist, 'I searched for the place of the wicked man, and it was no more.'

...It is the second clause (*his place knows him no more*) that expresses the greater dread of a death beyond death. It is the terrible prospect of a total and unalterable severance - expressed as a loss of place. How should it be, if one were wiped clean from the memory of the earth and heaven and all that dwell therein? How should it be not to cease to live, but to have one's few days of life delivered over - in their essence - to nothingness?" (Touchstone, April 2009, p. 19)

The "Where Things Are" for those in Christ is in His loving presence. Now - in Word and Sacrament. And forever - in His face-to-face Presence!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott