

St. John 10:11-14

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) Of this Scripture teaching, Reformed theologian A. T. Robertson notes, "Forever"...is eternity as well as the Greek can say it. Jesus Christ is eternally 'the same' (1:12) and the revelation of God in him (1:1f) is final and never to be superseded or supplemented...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)

I call him *The American Jesus*. He's hard to identify from a Scriptural basis. He's never the same, but shifts and changes according to the demands of the moment. He's the worldly Dr. Feel Good, the dispenser of clap happy formulas, an earth loving teacher who throws a promise of heaven into the mix. But for those who understand His message and don't like it, He's a massive conflict!

This morning I wish to consider with you . . .

THE JESUS I KNOW

I. The Good Shepherd.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (vs. 11) And there they are: - the words that are the core of why Jesus was born, suffered, died and rose again. "For the sheep." Because the sheep were and are sinful, full of death because of sin, and incapable of doing anything about it.

There it is. It all starts back in Genesis 3. The fall into sin. If we can discredit the Genesis account of creation and the fall into sin, we can discredit Jesus in every way. The discrediting of Genesis, sin and Jesus comprise the greatest fairy tale drive by those who want God out of the picture; those who promote the fairy tale of the - oh, say - the Big Bang Theory!

And just as problematic are these words of Jesus: "My Kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36) Excuse me!? Jesus isn't the *Dr. Feel Good of the moment*, after all? His interest is not the fantasized coming improvement of this world? I mean - seriously - do you think, for a moment, Jesus would sing, "And I think to myself: 'What a wonderful world?'"

Recall those words of Scripture from the very beginning of the sermon: "Jesus is the same...forever." His love is the same. His forgiveness is always there. And recall these words once again: "Do not be led away by strange and diverse teachings...". Well, that's about all the American Jesus offers: strange and diverse teachings. And what has become a very strange and diverse representation of what calls itself "church."

I ask that you hear these words from the old commentator, P. E. Kretzmann:

He (Christ) is the one most excellent Shepherd of the spiritual sheep. The first feature which distinguishes Him as the true Shepherd of souls is this, that He gives His life, His own soul, as a ransom, as the one complete sacrifice, for the guilt of all sinners, who have earned eternal damnation. He became their Substitute; He took upon Himself their transgressions and died in their stead. Thus the guilty, the sinners, were delivered from sin and destruction. (P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, New Testament, Vol. I.*, pp. 467-468)

It is as John writes:

But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sin, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2)

Christ is not a *chameleon savior*. He is the One who stands before all human history with its risings and fallings - its *here today, gone tomorrow* cycles - and declares: "I the Lord do not change." (Malachi 3:6) What a blessing for the sheep, befuddled and slammed around by the storms of life. This is the Jesus I know.

II. Opposes Hirelings and Wolves. (vss 12,13)

And the Jesus I know stands in complete opposition to those who have made Him something less than Who and what He is. 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. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep." (vss. 12,13)

Maybe the first question is this: Who is the wolf? How about Satan and his driving forces of hell. But that's not all. 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) Wolves; a person or faction bent on twisting or altering the Word of God for personal benefit or gain - and that at the expense of the sheep.

But worse than that for the sheep is the hireling. Jesus describes such as the one "who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees... He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep." Or - specifically - it is the pastor who is "pastoring" simply for his own advantage and will never confront or oppose error.

Martin Luther wrote,

He that will be a preacher, let him love the work with all his heart, that he seeks only God's honor and the welfare of his neighbor. If he does not seek God's glory and his neighbor's salvation only, but thinks, in such office, of his benefit and detriment, there you need not think that he will last. Either he will flee shamefully and desert the sheep, or he will keep silence and let the sheep go without pasture, that is, without the Word. (Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, New Testament, Vol. I*, pl. 468)

The Jesus I know opposes every one who thinks he has something new and wonderful to offer other than His Word - or he has something new and wonderful to enhance the Word. And Jesus opposes those hirelings who stand by without confronting that which twists, distorts and draws people away from the Word.

III. Knows Us.

And just in case we think all this does not touch us personally, Christ says,

"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. (vss. 14.15)

He knows us; each of us. God says to His people who must endure the outrage and misfortunes of this world: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." (Jer. 31:3) This is His promise to His own as in those words "I know my own and my own know me." His "own" are those He purchased with His blood. Those who are righteous - not by virtue of their own righteousness, but those who are counted as righteous through faith in Christ. As Paul calls it, "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe." (Rom 3:22)

And get this: God knew us before the beginning of the world. David exclaims the reality: "Your eyes saw my unformed substance, in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." (Ps. 139:16)

The Jesus I know does not take away the sufferings and struggles of this life, but uses them for our ultimate good. And He lays before us these promises:

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. (Ps. 34:17-19)

The Jesus I know is the One Who is clearly and only presented in the Holy Scripture. He is the way, the truth and the life. Without change. And I must cling to what He states of Himself: "No one comes to the Father except through me." (Jn. 14:6)

This is the Jesus I know. And you?

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

April 26, 2015

*St. John 10:11-14: **“The Jesus I Know”***

I. The Good Shepherd.

II. Opposes Hirelings and Wolves. (vss 12,13)

III. Knows Us.

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