



MAY 3, 2020

# LOVE FIRST, FIRST LOVE

WEEK DEVOTIONAL BASED ON SUNDAY'S WORSHIP SERVICE

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP SUNDAYS 9:00AM AT  
WWW.FIRSTLUTHERAN-BARRON.ORG OR ON THE RADIO 97.7FM

## John 10:1-10

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” 6 Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. 7 So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, your Son makes himself known to all his disciples in the breaking of bread. Open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in his redeeming work, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

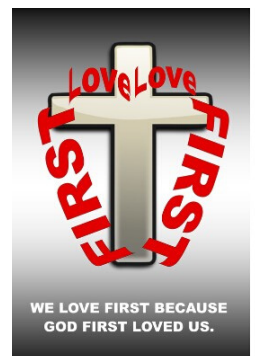
## LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Painted on the ceiling in the Catacomb of Callixtus where the first Christians hid to worship God, is a portrait of “The Good Shepherd.” Dated from the middle of the third century, it is considered to be the first painting we have of Jesus. It was painted during a time when the common practice of the Roman empire was to feed Christians to hungry lions. Those who would gather in this secret hiding place to worship God needed a strong reminder of their savior back then to stay confident in faith.

WHAT ARE SOME  
WAYS TODAY THAT WE  
NEED A STRONG  
SHEPHERD?



# REFLECTION

BY PASTOR RON MATHEWS

I always knew I was in trouble when my mother yelled my full name: "Ronald Mark Mathews." There is something about adding the middle name that makes it a universal statement: "you're in trouble now!"

Mom's are good at calling their children out on their mistakes, but they do far more than just dish out punishments and tongue lashings. That same person was also the one who continued to show me love and forgiveness in those times. And that same person who yelled my name across the house was also the one who yelled my name across the ball diamond and soccer fields cheering and encouraging me.

Thru the waters of baptism you were named as a child of God and claimed in God's love forever. Here in John's Gospel we are reminded that Jesus is the one who "knows our name." In this, we are the sheep and it is the shepherd who leads us, and that shepherd is Christ. Knowing the shepherd is wonderful, but being KNOWN by the shepherd is even better. Like a mother who calls out her children's names, the Good Shepherd calls to us that we may listen and follow when our name is called.

Listen AND follow...that is the point here. How often have we found ourselves listening but not following? In my house mom giving us orders was inevitably followed by dad's voice: "boys listen to your mother!" Listen.

Children of God, listen to your savior. He leads you, you must follow. But in order to follow you must first know his voice from the rest. We are only able to recognize God's voice if we talk to him. Only by having regular conversations and more importantly regularly listen to Him will you be able to recognize his voice. Talking and listening, a conversation, this is the simplest form of prayer! If you want to know your Shepherd's voice, begin with prayer.

We need to be able to recognize His voice because that is how we know the difference between Him and that of the stranger and thief - those who have come to steal, kill, and destroy (characteristics that are the opposite attributed to the Shepherd). Our problem with his metaphor though, is this Utopian pen for all of God's sheep doesn't exist. The reality is the sheep live among the thieves and know the voices of not just the Shepherd but that of the thieves as well.

Sometimes those thieves who wish us harm are people trying to convince us of poor decision making. Other times the things that speak to us don't even have a mouth to speak with. As you pull up to a store you pause and think "Should I wear a mask? Other people aren't, so should I?" or "Is eating my third bowl of ice cream today a good idea?" or "I was in the store and saw this shirt and it called out to me!"

## WHAT ARE SOME THINGS IN YOUR LIFE THAT SPEAK OUT TO YOU?

When we are faced with a decision, we listen to these all of the voices calling us by name... the real decision is which of these voices do we listen to? We struggle to act like the sheep who follow only the voice of their shepherd.

Like a mother who calls out her children's names, the Good Shepherd calls to us that we may listen and follow when our name is called. The one who calls us by name not only knows what we are up to, what we have done, and what we will be doing later...he is also the one who has promised us that he is not a thief who seeks to destroy, but rather he is the Good Shepherd...the one who has come to give us life and have it abundantly:

- To have a life filled with hope.
- To have a life filled with forgiveness.
- To have a life filled with the promise that God loved you then, God loves you now and calls you by name saying I love you, I forgive you, you are mine.