

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL MARCH 25, 2015

Written by the Rev. Laura Blank SYI '01/ '13, pastor of Colver and Ebensburg Presbyterian Churches, and brought to you by the **Miller Summer Youth Institute** at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

SCRIPTURE

JOHN 10:1-18

1 "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.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away — and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

DEVOTIONAL

The neighboring farm has the most unusual flock of "Jacob Sheep". These spotted sheep, with the rams often having four or even six large horns, are descended from an ancient Middle Eastern breed. Their name is a nod to Jacob selecting the spotted sheep from Laban's flock, and their looks quite literally stop traffic. One frigid day in lambing season, the flock's giant Great Pyrenees guard dog was fiercely protecting a tiny newborn, claiming it as her own. (Not to worry! After a game of distraction, the lamb was returned to its mother.)

We are tempted to do the same. Forgetting the flock belongs not to us, but to the Good Shepherd, we exhaust ourselves with our efforts to corral, control, and direct. Thinking we know best, we fiercely guard our own ideas and plans for the Church. However, we need to be open to hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd telling us to "Heel!" and let Christ lead the flock!

PRAYER

Guiding God, true shepherd of the flock, help us to hear and answer to your voice above all, that we may follow your leading and respond to your calling, through Jesus Christ our Good Shepherd. Amen.

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