

Text: John 10:22-30

Theme: Privileged to be His Little Lamb

April 17, 2016

How many of you recognize these words, "I am Jesus' little lamb, ever glad at heart I am. For my shepherd gently guides me, Knows my needs and well provides me, Loves me every day the same, Even call me by my name"? As you hear those words, how many of you associate them with children?" We know the words, but, we must admit that our minds view them as a children's song. Yet as we look at our text for today, I encourage you to rethink that idea as we focus on our theme: Privileged to Be His Little Lamb.

I. Our Good Shepherd has invited us to be His little lambs. A. Yet, as we know, some choose to reject His invitation. 1. Some reject it because of their own foolishness. In our text, the people were looking for evidence. In simple terms, Jesus says to them, "How foolish can you be? I have told you, but you choose not to believe!" How many in our community have the evidence, but choose to ignore it? In our honest moments, aren't there times when we act foolishly, when we choose not to listen to the Shepherd's voice? To us, at first glance, it may sound foolish to reject the Good Shepherd, but, sometimes, we find ourselves numbered among the foolish.

2. Some reject His invitation because they are spiritually ill. An American, traveling in Syria, saw three native shepherds bring their flocks to the same brook where they all drank there together. Then, one shepherd called out, "Men-ah! men-ah!," the Arabic for "follow me," and his sheep followed him. The next shepherd did the same and the man didn't even stop to count them. The traveler said to the remaining shepherd, "Give me your turban and crook, and see if they will not follow me." So he put on the shepherd's clothes and called out, "Men-ah! men-ah!" Not a sheep moved. "Will your flock never follow anybody but you?" inquired the gentleman. The Syrian shepherd replied, "Oh, yes; sometimes a sheep gets sick, and then he will follow any one."

3. Some reject the invitation because they believe they are being deprived. How many of you have witnessed at least one moment when your kids thought you were depriving them? As kids, it looks so obvious. Everything they want must be good for them because they want it! How true it is in the world around us. Many reject the invitation for fear that they will be deprived of the great life they envision, that somehow God is against them, not for them. We would never want to announce it to the world, but there are those moments, for whatever reason, where we go our own way because we, as those foolish sheep at that moment, think God is holding out on us.

B. Although sometimes foolish, what do we do because we are privileged to be His little lambs? 1. We listen to the Shepherd's voice. On a sightseeing trip, a couple visited an old mansion. In the exquisitely furnished master bedroom, they were surprised to see signs on the bedspread and curtains reading: "WASH HANDS IMMEDIATELY AFTER TOUCHING." They admired the furnishings from a safe distance, but on leaving, they decided to ask the guard if the fabric had been treated with some harmful chemical. "Oh, no, ma'am," he said, grinning. "There's nothing on 'em. We just never did have much luck with the "Do Not Touch signs." As His little lambs, we learn to listen to His voice.

2. As His little lambs, we realize the privilege of being known by God. With over 7 billion people on multiple continents, isn't it purely amazing and astounding that God knows you by name, that He knows your every thought and every move including those you are about to think? Logically, we should be little more than a speck on God's radar. Yet as His little lambs, Jesus says to you personally, "I love you; I know your needs and I will provide all you need as you need it. In all of history, I have never failed even once!" What a privilege it is to be known. What a privilege it is to know that we are known by the One who knows the names of over 7 billion people.

3. As His little lambs, we follow our shepherd. Remember the shepherd earlier who called his sheep from the group and they followed him? Add to that one more thought. When a baby lamb is born, who does it always follow? As His privileged little lambs, what joy, what comfort we find as we follow our Shepherd. As His little lambs, as lambs who became part of the flock by our Baptism, could we, would we want to follow any other shepherd? The greatest Shepherd ever, the Shepherd who went looking for us as the lost sheep, that's our Shepherd, the Shepherd we follow, the Shepherd we follow because we realize there is no better shepherd in the world.

4. As His little lambs, we remain constantly on guard against the wolves. Living in northern Wisconsin, we perhaps know more than we would like to know about wolves. As we hear the stories, we realize ever so clearly that wolves are nothing to mess with. As Jesus' little lambs, wolves are nothing to mess with. The devil and his cohort of wolves are looking for their next target, for their catch of the day. In our first Reading, Paul says, "fierce wolves will come among you, not sparing the flock." As His little lambs, we heed our Shepherd's words; we learn His voice well, and we refuse to follow when one of those wolves attempts to lead us away from the Good Shepherd.

5. As His little lambs, we hold on to the promise that no one and nothing can steal us from His flock. We're all familiar with identity theft, with someone stealing social security numbers and other pertinent information. Within this world where so many are attempting to steal our identity and to steal our faith, we, as those fragile little lambs, cling to the Shepherd's promise, to the promise that no one will snatch us out of His hand. In this disturbing, corrupted, anti-Christian world, we find comfort, we find peace knowing that, although we are fragile, our Good Shepherd is untouchable. By hiding behind Him, we will always remain within His flock.

6. As His little lambs, we look forward to that day when He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Over the course of your life thus far, how many tears have you shed? A spoonful, a cup, a gallon or more? Life has its share of tears, but as His little lambs, we're waiting for that day when there will be no more tears, for there are no tears in heaven. Our world may create tears, yet, as His little lambs, we know that they will only last a little while, that once we depart, He will permanently wipe away every tear and life will be nothing but tears of joy, tears of happiness, tears of celebration as the little lambs enjoy the presence of their Good Shepherd forever.

7. "I am Jesus' little lamb" may have been only a child's song, but now it's your song, a song in your heart because you are privileged to be His little lamb. Amen.