Easter II

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Date: 19 April 2026

Preacher: Seminarian Matthew Stuart

[0:00] In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen. In our gospel reading that we just heard this morning, Jesus says, I am the Good Shepherd.

Now, this is one of the seven I am sayings in John's gospel, where Jesus identifies himself by using a specific image.
And the image that he chooses, in this particular instance, is a very personal one. A shepherd in first century Palestine spent every moment with his sheep.
He ate when they did, watched over them when they slept, and tracked down those who wandered off, bringing them back safely to the flock.
The shepherd knows his sheep. Jesus says the Good Shepherd gives his life for the sheep. When a Palestinian shepherd died defending his flock, that was usually an accident.
[1:06] He planned to live with the sheep, not die for them. For Jesus, his death was always a part of the plan. And when he went to the cross, it's because he knew his sheep.

Then Jesus talks about the hireling. The hireling is he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep. Now, his motivation was wages, not the flock.
The word hireling, as we all know, means someone paid to do a job. And there's nothing negative about the term, the way that there is with the word thief that we see earlier in the chapter.
But it does describe a person whose interest is in what he gets paid, not in the sheep themselves. So when the wolf comes, he runs.
He leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The sheep are scattered because the hireling has no real connection to them.
[2:18] He doesn't know them. They're not his. And because he doesn't know them, he won't risk anything for them. Jesus was pointing at the Jewish leaders of his day, the ones who should have been caring for God's people but weren't.

They didn't know the people that were entrusted to them, and they couldn't really know them because they were hirelings and not shepherds.
Jesus says, I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and am known by my own. As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father.
Notice what our Lord is saying here. He's drawing a parallel between two relationships. The first is between himself and his people.
The second is between himself and the Father. And he says these two relationships are alike.
When our Lord says he knows his sheep, he doesn't mean he just knows things about them.
[3:32] The language that he's using here describes an intimate, personal relationship. The kind of knowing that involves real presence with another person.

And when he says he is known by my own, he means the same thing in return. There's a relationship at work here.
And then he tells us where that relationship comes from. He says it's patterned on the knowledge between himself and the Father. The intimacy that exists within the life of the Holy Trinity.
The eternal communion between the Father and the Son is the model for how Christ relates to us and how we relate to him.
Then Jesus says, And I laid down my life for the sheep. He already said something similar in verse 11, but there he spoke in the third person.
[4:33] The good shepherd gives his life. Now he says it directly. I laid down my life. And it comes right after the statement about mutual knowledge.

Now this is a very important connection that our Lord is making here. Jesus lays down his life precisely because he knows his sheep.

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He knows the sheep who belong to him the way he belongs to the Father. The one who reaches up to the Father in perfect knowledge reaches down to us in love.
Even to death on the cross. Jesus says he is known by my own. He's describing what's true of his people.
They recognize his voice and they follow him. And that means this knowledge of Christ is something we grow into throughout our entire lives.
[5:41] We know Christ through the means he's given us. We know him in the scriptures. We know him in the scriptures. Where his voice speaks to us.

Week after week. In the readings. And in the songs. Every time we hear the gospel read aloud. The shepherd is speaking. We know him at the altar.
Where he gives us his own body and blood. And we receive him into ourselves. We know him in prayer.
Where over time. We learn to recognize his presence. Even in the silence. These are all means by which we hear our shepherd's voice.
Some of us may be dealing with hurt right now. And we might feel alone. Like nobody really understands what we're going through.
[6:42] But the good shepherd sees. He knows. He knows us amid our loneliness. And amid our grief.

Even in the things we haven't told anyone. That's why this passage is telling us this message today. The same Christ who knows the father.
And is known by the father. Knows each one of us. And he never leaves us. This is the promise. The entire message of Eastertide. Because the shepherd who laid down his life. Has taken it up again. He's alive. The relationship he's describing.
Is happening right now. This is the message. John's gospel presents to us this morning. Christ knows us completely.
[7:39] And he calls us to know him. In return. To hear his voice. And to let that knowing. Shape every aspect.

Of how we pray. How we love one another. And how we live. Amen. In the name of the father. And of the son. And of the Holy ghost.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

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