

Dear Friends,

John 10: 11-18

Jesus is the good shepherd who says, "I know my own and my own know me". We are looking at what it means for Jesus to "know" his own, for him to "know" you.

We have seen that the Greek word "know" suggests a knowledge that is complete. It also suggests that the one knowing and the one being known have a connection, a relationship, that they are in some way bound together. Jesus has this kind of relationship with God the Father. He says, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me". He also says, "I and the Father are one".

As Jesus knows and is united with the Father, so he also knows and is united with those who are his own. He is bound to them in a relationship of love. This is one of the differences between the good shepherd and the hired hands. The hired hands are mainly interested in themselves and in getting paid for what they do. If they see a wolf coming for the sheep, they run away because they do not have a bond with the sheep. Jesus does. The sheep belong to him and he belongs to them. He passionately cares for them, so that when they suffer, he feels it. When they celebrate, he shares their joy. Unlike the hired hands, he lays down his life for the sheep.

Jesus lays down his life for his own. He lays down his life for you. In laying down his life, he puts all his skill and craft as the good shepherd at your disposal. In laying down his life, he gives who he is, his heart, the centre and core of his being, for you. He says, "this is my body given for you ... this is my blood poured out for you". In laying down his life, he risks himself, he risks his skin; ultimately, he dies for you as the crucified one on the cross.

For Jesus to know the sheep is to be united with the sheep. And you are Jesus' own. He knows you and is bound to you in a relationship of love.

The word "know" suggests even more. It suggests that the one knowing values, approves of, knows the importance of the one who is known. It suggests that the one knowing enjoys, takes pleasure, takes delight in the one who is known. Once again, this kind of knowing is seen in the relationship between Jesus and The Father. It is summed up in the words of God to Jesus at his baptism. God says, "you are my beloved son. I am delighted with you".

Jesus knows the sheep. He is delighted with them. Jesus knows you. He is delighted with you. He carries you in his heart. Your name is engraved on the palm of his hand. He knows your beauty and what in you is not quite so beautiful. He has complete knowledge of you and continues to value and cherish you. He wants the best for you. He grieves when you take wrong paths which damage you. He feels delight when you make good, life giving choices. He considers you worth laying down his life for, so that you may flourish and be abundant.

Jesus knows his own. His knowledge of them is complete. He is connected with them in a relationship of love. He cherishes them.

You are his own. Jesus knows you. His knowledge of you is complete. He is connected with you in a relationship of love. He cherishes you.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN.