

## Fourth Sunday of Easter

### FIRST READING – Acts 4:1-12

**And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. 5 On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

**4:1** *priests.* Those who were serving that week in the temple precincts. (CSB)

*captain of the temple.* A member of one of the leading priestly families; next in rank to the high priest (see 5:24, 26; Lk 22:4, 52). (CSB)

Chief of temple police, a Levite second only to the high priest in the temple hierarchy. (TLSB)

*Sadducees.* A Jewish sect whose members came from the priestly line and controlled the temple. They did not believe in the resurrection or a personal Messiah, but held that the Messianic age—an ideal time—was then present and must be preserved. The high priest, one of their number, presided over the Sanhedrin (see 5:17; 23:6–8; Mt 22:23–33). (CSB)

Although they were like “freethinkers” in religion, the Sadducees were very conservative in political matters. They were satisfied with things as they were under Roman rule, and they did not want any preaching that might in any way disturb the status quo. That was why they had conspired against Jesus. (PBC)

*Sanhedrin* – Was made up of seventy (or seventy-two) rulers, elders, and teachers of the law. The rulers were those who supervised the temple with its priests and administered the temple treasury. The elders were laymen of mature age, respected for their piety and wisdom. In the gospels they are usually mentioned last and may have been the least influential. Many of these were Pharisees. The teachers of the law were professional interpreters of the Scriptures. Many of these, also, were Pharisees. The Jews still recognized Annas as high priest, although the Romans had deposed him 15 or 16 years before. Annas’ son-in-law Caiaphas was the officially recognized high priest from A.D. 18 to 36. (PBC)

There was a group ready to be used by Satan. They were called the Sadducees and were members of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court. Though small in number, they were powerful and influential because the family of the high priest and a number of other priests belonged to their group. They claimed that this life is the whole of existence and that souls die with the bodies, that there are neither angels nor spirits, and that there is no resurrection of the dead. Perfect tools for Satan, but what a sad commentary on the state of true faith among the Jewish leaders! (LL)

Pharisee was a member of a Jewish religious party which originated in the time of Maccabees; taught immortality of soul, existence of angels, union of fate and human will, strict adherence to divine law; avoided contact with non-Pharisees; laid great stress on oral law and observances such as washing, tithing, and fasting. (Concordia Bible Dictionary)

The temple authorities are the first opponents of the new mission. An indication of their reasons appears in 4:2. they were disturbed because the apostles “were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.” Probably the offense is a double one. The apostles were usurping authority to teach in the temple, and the content of their teaching conflicted with denial of the resurrection by the Sadducees, an important group in the temple leadership. (Tannehill)

**4:2** *proclaiming...Jesus...resurrection* - Many Jew (especially the Pharisees; had expected the resurrection of all the dead at the end time. Jesus’ resurrection proved that the end had already appeared in one man. (TLSB)

**4:3** *evening*. The evening sacrifices ended about 4:00 P.M., and the temple gates would be closed at that time. Any judgments involving life and death must be begun and concluded in daylight hours. (CSB)

**4:4** *many...heard...believed* - The temple authorities could not destroy the Spirit’s work. (TLSB)

*men*. Lit. “males.” (CSB)

*five thousand*. A growth from the 3,000 at Pentecost (2:41); see later growth (5:14; 6:7). (CSB)

The result of this clear preaching of the Law and the Gospel? Exactly what the Lord intended. Without the Word the Holy Spirit doesn’t work, but give Him the bridge of the Word to walk into people’s hearts and watch out! (LL)

This does not mean people. It means “males.” With women and children, therefore, the number of Christians must have exceeded 10,000. These statistics are not given by Luke to bolster the reputation of the apostles. Rather, they are a testimony to the power of the gospel. (PBC)

**4:5** *rulers, elders and scribes*. The three groups making up the Sanhedrin, Israel’s supreme court (see Lk 22:66; see also notes on Mt 2:4; 15:2; Mk 14:55; Lk 5:17). (CSB)

**4:6** *Annas*. High priest A.D. 6–15, but deposed by the Romans and succeeded by his son, Eleazar, then by his son-in-law, Caiaphas (18–36), who was also called Joseph. However, Annas was still recognized by the Jews as high priest (Lk 3:2; cf. Jn 18:13, 24). (CSB)

*John*. May be Jonathan son of Annas, who was appointed high priest in A.D. 36. Others suggest it was Johanan ben Zaccai, who became the president of the Great Synagogue after the fall of Jerusalem. (CSB)

Likely son of Annas, Caiaphas’s successor. (TLSB)

*Alexander*. Not further identified. (CSB)

Unknown from other sources. (TLSB)

*priestly family* - Hasmoneans. From Greek Hasmonaios, which likely refers to a place-name associated with the priest Mattathias, who led his family in revolt (BC 167) against Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Mattathias’s son, Judas Maccabeus (“the hammer”) became the leader of the movement and

established the Hasmonean dynasty (167 BC-AD 63) over Judea. Hasmonean rules also served as high priests. (TLSB p. 1556)

**4:7** *power* - Perhaps echoing the accusation that Jesus performed miracles by sorcery (cf. Mt. 12:24). (TLSB)

**4:8** *filled with the Holy Spirit*. The authorities' force is powerless against Peter's prophetic inspiration, a fulfillment of Luke 12:11-12; 21:14-15. (TLSB)

"filled with the Holy Spirit." Peter speaks respectfully before the Sanhedrin; he does so by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gave him courage as an unlearned fisherman to speak to these rulers. There was no question, no doubt, and no hesitation. Openly and frankly, Peter explained that the cripple was healed by the power of Jesus' name. He was unafraid to blame them for the crucifixion, and he was certain that Jesus rose. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

Jesus had told the disciples (Matt. 10:19-20): "When they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking. But the Spirit of your Father speaking through you." Luke wants us to know that there is a difference this time in Peter being filled with the Holy Spirit. (LL)

*rulers...elders* - Peter is standing before the Sanhedrin in fulfillment of Jesus' words in Mt 10:19-20 and Lk 21:12-15. Though formerly he had cringed before a young woman in a courtyard, now he is filled with the Holy Spirit and testifies before the Jewish leaders. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

**4:9-10** Peter points to as evidence the formerly crippled man who now stands before the court. In answer to the question of v 7 ("By what power or what name did you do this?"), Peter responds that it was through "the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" that this miracle had been worked. Note that the emphatic *humeis* of v 7 is matched with Peter's bold *hēmeis*, indicating that there was no shame for the disciples to be associated with the name Jesus. "Jesus of Nazareth" was the title placed over his head when he was crucified (Jn 19:19); "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" indicates his full status as God's anointed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

"the name of Jesus." There are numerous references to the Jesus' name in the text and context (3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 12, 17, 18, 30). A miracle was performed, an act of kindness, a good deed (*euergesia*). The Sanhedrin should investigate crimes and not good deeds. This healing act was accomplished under the power and authority of Jesus, who still lives and is everything he claimed to be. God has nullified what the Sanhedrin had done. It had intended to abolish Jesus, but God raised him and established him. The evidence is certain: the healed beggar standing before them. "The name of Jesus" refers to his total activity and revelation as the Son of God and promised Messiah. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**4:11-12** "no other name." Here, Peter centers his attention on Jesus, on the unbelief of the Jewish leaders in rejecting him (Ps 118:22, which Jesus himself had quoted to the chief priests and Pharisees and which they had clearly understood at the time [Mt 21:42-45]), and on the deed of God in making him the Savior. Christ's sacrifice was not only comprehensive in its effect (objective justification, 1 Jn 2:2), but also exclusive in its claim (subjective justification). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**4:11** *the stone ... rejected.* Fulfillment of prophecy was an important element in early Christian sermons and defenses. Jesus had also used Ps 118:22 (Mt 21:42; see 1Pe 2:7 and cf. Ro 9:33; Isa 28:16). (CSB)

The Holy One was treated as accursed (Gal. 3:13), as sin itself (2 Cor. 5:21). (TLSB)

*cornerstone* - Jesus burst forth from the tomb as the Second Adam, able to support the whole spiritual temple, the Church. (TLSB)

In a building the keystone is at the top of an arch, without which the arch and the building would collapse. It may also be the cornerstone, which in ancient architecture determined the lines for the whole building. Without a cornerstone or with a badly laid cornerstone there could be no sound construction. (PBC)

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**4:12** *no other name.* Christianity is the one true faith because Jesus, the only source of salvation, rescues us from the evil one. He delivers all people from a verdict of damnation and heals ills of body and soul. “Christ’s name is received only by faith. Therefore, we are saved by confidence in Christ’s name, and not by our own efforts.

Jesus comes to us by means of His Name (Word). That Name creates faith. And by faith in His Name, He saves us. No second, no substitute, no alternative – faith is that Name alone, “given to men,” for all people, for all time. Again, beyond any shadow of a doubt, we are included! “One little Word” and Satan was stopped for now. The Sadducees, who had caused the arrest, were literally left speechless. (LL)

The name of “Jesus” means “Savior.” What his name means is what he does. Salvation is surely found in him. It is found in him alone. Without this conviction there can be no evangelism, no home missions, no world missions. Without this certainty the church would lose its reason for being. (PBC)

The name that brought healing is also the name that brings salvation. Note the emphatic of *oudenī*, which underscores the futility of trying to find salvation in another name. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

#### EPISTLE – 1 John 3:16-24

**16** By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **17** But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? **18** Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. **19** By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; **20** for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. **21** Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; **22** and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. **23** And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. **24** Whoever keeps his commandments

**abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.**

**3:16** *he laid down his life* – The source of all love and the ultimate example and pattern for love is, of course, Jesus Christ. His magnificent self-sacrifice on Calvary’s cross not only bought for us the forgiveness we needed to be God’s children again. It also inspires us to love and forgive people in our lives. Jesus parable of the unmerciful debtor (Matthew 18:21-35) shows the comparative size of the debts we owe and are owed. What a joy it is to honor Christ by showing compassion to other people! His sacrifice is the motivating fire that drives all we do. (PBC)

Jesus showed God’s love when He laid down His life for all people. So, as Jesus laid down His life for our salvation, Jesus wants us to use our lives—to lay down our lives—that our brothers and sisters might be blessed and saved. (TLSB)

We may be called on to sacrifice life, but never to give up our salvation, for the good of others. (Concordia Bible)

**3:17** *sees his brother in need* – The very opposite of Cain’s murderous hatred is a Christian’s willingness to sacrifice himself for a brother or sister. It is no coincidence that Christians have been leaders in developing ministries of mercy in many communities all over the world – hospitals, schools, orphanages, food pantries, and safe places for the handicapped and elderly. Christians with resources who won’t help people in need better check for a spiritual pulse. (PBC)

The possession of property involves high responsibilities, increases obligation, and multiplies duties. By the manner in which men use it they show their character. (Concordia Bible)

*closes his heart* – He feels no compassion, but turns away from a brother in need even when he has the means to help him. Luther: “God is merciful. Yet He is no idle. He does not let sinners go unpunished. To the humble, who fear Him, He is merciful... There are several degrees of love: an enemy must not be offended, a brother must be helped, a member of one’s household must be supported. You Christ’s commandment concerning love for one’s enemies. But you owe more to a brother who love in return” (AE 30:278). (TLSB)

*God’s love.* God’s kind of love, which he pours out in the believer’s heart (Ro 5:5) and which in turn enables the Christian to love fellow believers. Or it may speak of the believer’s love for God. (CSB)

To communicate one’s earthly goods to the brother in need is an evidence of brotherly love. Giving which requires self-denial is a token of love. Whoever is not ready to practice self-denial to help the brother suffering want shuts up his heart against him. (Stoekhardt)

Hand and heart are very closely related. Some Christians thin that giving is unimportant. But here we see by one’s giving one can tell what is going on in the heart. Whoever gives generously open his heart wide, and whoever gives niggardly, does not open his heart at all, but rather shuts it up, and finally strangles every germ of spiritual life. It takes sincere love to move one to willing, generous giving. (Stoekhardt)

It is the love of God which has transferred Christians into a new life, into fellowship with the Father and the Son. And it is this love of God in Christ which preserves this new life. But this love of God cannot find a place to stay where the heart is closed. And a heart that offers no place to love, offers no place to faith. Therefore, he who refuses to give and to bring sacrifices is living in a mortal sin. (Stoekhardt)

**3:18** *little children* – Means “my beloved children,” this is a very affectionate greeting by a father to children whom he tenderly loves. His darlings.

“Dear children”: An endearing term that John uses frequently. (See 3:7; 4:7; 5:2, 19.) They have fellowship with God and with John and other believers (1:3). They are born of/from God and believe that Jesus is the Christ (5:1). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

*love* – agape - Love in an unconditional sense.

Love is prompted and proceeds from the truth and is carried out in actual deeds done for the benefit and blessing of another. Whatever tends to our brother’s salvation is done “in truth.” Luther: “To love a brother who is kind and pleasant in return - this is a trivial matter. This is the way the world also loves. ‘The crowd judges friendships by their usefulness.’ Accordingly John does not say: ‘Let us love those who are saintly, agreeable, and rich.’ No, he says: ‘Let us love the brethren,’ in such a way that then nothing but the brotherhood is loved and regarded; for a brother loved out of a sense of duty, not because of usefulness and not because of praise. All the gifts we have should serve those who do not have them. For example, he who is learned should serve him who is not learned; he who is rich should serve him who is poor; he who is sensible should serve him who is foolish, etc.” (AE 30:278-79). (TLSB)

“Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth”: To speak and *not* to act is like the Pharisees, who “do not practice what they preach” (Mt 23:2). (See James 2:15–17; 3 in 3, 4. Note v 17 for love in action.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

*in deed* – To speak and not act is like the Pharisees, who “do not practice what they preach” (Mt. 23:2). (See James 2:15-17; 3 John 3:4) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

*in truth* – In faithfulness, sincerity, from the heart. Hypocrites may imitate love, but it is not genuine. Genuine love is both from the heart of faith and hands in action. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

This verse is a passionate plea for Christians to get rid of double-mindedness. Talking the talk without walking the walk doesn’t fool too many people. Even unbelievers – especially unbelievers – can smell religious hypocrisy from an astounding distance. As James pointed out in his second chapter, if you have a spare blanket, and all you can do for a shivering brother or sister is say “Keep warm,” your so called faith must be dead. In the sports world, it is common for agents to say to owners, “Show me the money.” In other words, don’t praise my client and say how important he is for your team and then offer peanuts. Your cash offer shows what you really think. (PBC)

**3:19-24** These verses are not moralizing or legalistic nagging. John has total confidence in the gospel. He believed in his heart that:

1. God passionately wanted to win people back to Him, was sending His Word out everywhere, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, was making new believers all over the place.
2. The Spirit, working through Word and Sacrament, would cause people’s hearts and minds to grow spiritually.
3. Christian hearts are eager to please God and are open to guidance.

4. Fruits of faith (good deeds) will flow out of a living Christian.
5. Whenever our hearts condemn us (that is, when Satan massages our sense of guilt and fools us into thinking that we are worthless failures), we can find real comfort and satisfaction in real deed done from love.
6. God is greater than our hearts, that is, even when our own self-analysis is too confused and weak to think straight, God has us figured out and knows that we are still Christians. And He will help us find the internal assurance we need.

John links this whole discussion to prayer. Believe it or not, your spiritual self-confidence has a lot to do with your prayer life. As James wrote, a person praying with a doubtful heart better not expect anything from the Lord – such a person is double-minded, unstable (1:6-7). John’s point is that God apparently finds it insulting if people approach Him halfheartedly, unsure of His love of their relationship. (PBC)

What a string of powerful incentives in these verses to live our faith! We obey the Lord and all kinds of good things happen: we worship and please God, we bring some kind of benefit to our neighbor, we grow in our sense of inner peace, we grow in self-confidence, and – we receive from Him anything we ask. Amazing! (PBC)

**3:19** *we are of the truth* – This means absolute truth. This truth is closely connected to Jesus and is always the same because Jesus does not change. It is the truth about our salvation. When we know this there is absolutely no doubt in our hearts.

“This then is how we know that we belong to the truth”: Jesus is the truth (Jn 14:6); God’s word is truth (Jn 17:17); the Spirit leads into truth (Jn 16:13); those who have fellowship with Christ live by the truth (1 in 1:6); the person who says he knows Christ but does not do what Christ commands is a liar and the truth is not in him (1 Jn 2:4); the truth sets one free (Jn 8:32); we are to be faithful to the truth and walk in the truth with consistent lives of love (3 Jn 3). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

By our love “with actions and in truth” we know we belong to the truth. Love in action is a fruit and evidence of faith. “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death” (v 14). Our actions of love will be cited on the final day of judgment as evidence of faith (Mt 24:34–46). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

“This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us” (vv 19–20). The heart of the believer is troubled and restless when we think of how we fall short of consistent love in action in our life. John is quick to reassure us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

*reassure our heart* – This means to have an inward certainty that is not shaken by anything that happens in life. Ordinarily when we are in the presence of greatness we feel very self-conscious. But, because we know that God knows all about us and has redeemed us anyway, we can be totally at ease in his presence.

To love one another as Jesus loved us flows from genuine, saving faith. Believers are reassured as the Lord keeps His promises to bless them through His means of grace. (TLSB)

**3:20 heart condemns** – To find fault with or to blame and condemn. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. Our consciences are over-active because we continue to live under the burden of the Law when God has already freed us from that load. When this happens we live defensively hoping not to make mistakes rather than boldly serving the Lord.

“If our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God”: Our confidence is that “we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us” (v 16). “The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 In 1:7). Our confidence is in the Father’s lavish love (3:1). We are the children born of God (5:1). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

The more earnestly Christians strive for perfection in love, the more they come to realize their lack of it. It takes an especially dear heart of love to be sensitive to the many failures in love. (Stoekhardt)

*God is greater than our heart.* An oversensitive conscience can be quieted by the knowledge that God himself has declared active love to be an evidence of salvation. He knows the hearts of all—whether, in spite of shortcomings, they have been born of him. (CSB)

“For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything”: “An oversensitive conscience can be quieted by the knowledge that God himself has declared active love to be an evidence of salvation. He knows the hearts of all—whether, in spite of shortcomings, they have been born of him” (*Concordia Self-Study Bible*, note on 3:20). His grace is “much more” than the condemnation of sin (Rom 5:15–17). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

One caution, we must not judge someone’s faith by measuring how much love that person shows by action. Nor ought we to spend time counting up our own loving actions to see how much faith we have, (LL)

When we Christians are now condemned for falling short in so many things, so that we may feel that we are no longer the children of God, then the acts of love performed towards the brethren rise up in our defense and persuade our hearts to believe that in spite of our many sins we are yet true children of God. And this conviction is based on the ground that God Himself approves us as His children by working in us such works of love. And obviously God’s judgment overrules any other, because God is greater than our heart or anyone who might condemn us. (Stoekhardt)

This action of God at the same time implies to troubled souls the divine assurance that wherever they have fallen behind in love, out of weakness, their faults and failures are all covered up with the mantle of Christ’s righteousness. (Stoekhardt)

The situation here described is similar to the one in chapter 2:1, 2, where Christians are assured that when they commit sin in their weakness, they have an Advocate with the Father. It is that love in Christ which again and again covers up all our guilt. As we Christians, then turn to Christ, we receive comfort against the strongest reproaches of our conscience. Even all our shortcomings in brotherly love have been full atoned for by the blood of Christ. (Stoekhardt)



We are baptized. God has put His mark on us. We are His. We get constant “do overs.”

This means not only larger or greater but doing so because of being more experienced and knowledgeable.

*He knows everything* – This word has the meaning that there is absolutely nothing that is excluded. Perfect knowledge which only God can have.

God knows our heart, our thoughts, knows that we are sincere and that we do not deliberately offend our brother. It can happen to the best Christians that without intention he says or does something which hurts the feelings of the brother. The offended brother cannot look into the offender’s heart, but God can. That is then our comfort. God knows everything, and so He is also aware when inadvertently we have wronged our brother. But the greatest comfort still is this that God actually covers these unintentional lapses with the broad mantle of His love in Christ. (Stoeckhardt)

The condemnation of the Law burdens a believer’s conscience. God, who knows everything, gets the last word by affirming that on the cross Christ Jesus removed the guilt and condemnation of all. (TLSB)

**3:21 WE HAVE CONFIDENCE** – This is a type of confidence that is so self-assured that there is nothing that can be said that is too extreme a statement. In a Christian’s life it is based on a complete trust in the Lord and is used for positive purposes.

The Law always accuses, and the Gospel always pardons and comforts. After God has forgiven us all our sin because of Jesus we have reassured ourselves with the promise that “God is greater than our heart” (v. 20), then we have confidence before God to ask for anything. (TLSB)

Our confidence is that we know what love is: “Jesus laid down His life for us.” “The blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Our confidence is in the Father’s lavish love (3:1). We are the children born of God (5:1). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

God covers our sin with Christ’s righteousness. And when, as a result, our hearts no longer accuse us, we look to God with confidence and are unafraid. A Christian tells his heart that God has forgiven all sins according to His great love, and then the heart has peace. It no longer disturbs the Christian with reproaches. (Stoeckhardt)

**3:22 receive from him** – “And receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands [original language, ‘are keeping his commandments’] and [‘are doing’] do what pleases him”: “We are constantly receiving from him whatever we keep asking.” “Every answer to our petitions is thus the clearest factual evidence that he treats us as children” (R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* [Columbus: Wartburg, 1945] 479). It is to be understood that children would ask only what pleases the Father: “Thy will be done.” John clearly states this in 1 Jn 5:14–15, and Jesus promises in Jn 15:7, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.” (See Mt 7:8; Mk 11:24; Jn 14:13; 16:23.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

According to His will and His Word. (TLSB)

When a Christian thus has again gained a good conscience, he now approaches God with boldness and assurance in prayer. Then prayers flow forth freely and with fullness of joy. While a Christian feels disturbed in his conscience, his prayer life begins to halt and to hesitate. But when he then remembers the forgiving grace of God, he can again freely pour out his heart to his Father in heaven and can joyfully accept what He grants him in answer to his prayer. The blessed relationship destroyed by sin has again been fully reestablished with his God. He calls and God answers; he asks and God gives; and so it becomes evident that he stands right with his God. (Stoeckhardt)

*do what pleases him* – The good works of Christians are really good in the sight of God. A Christian is born of God and so he has a new life. And from this life flows forth his works. The blemishes which may be attached to them are a foreign matter, but the substance, as deeds of love, is something good. And what is good pleases God. And because God is pleased with such works of love, He indicates to Christians that He is pleased with them by hearing their prayers. So the heavenly Father is kindly disposed toward His children on earth. He is happy to see that His children are glad to please Him. And so His heart flows over by bestowing His benefits upon them. (Stoeckhardt)

Those who have been born of God can walk in the light through faith. Through this God-given faith, all one does is pleasing and perfect in Christ. (TLSB)

**3:23** This command has two parts: (1) Believe in Christ (see Jn 6:29), and (2) love each other (see Jn 13:34–35). The first part is developed in 4:1–6 and the second part in 4:7–12. (CSB)

*his commandment that we believe* – To have faith in God.

To believe in God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and all that He has done and still does to this day for salvation. (TLSB)

“And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.” What is God’s will and command? Believe (Jn 6:40; 2 Thess 4:3); love (Jn 13:34; 15:12, 17). “We cannot believe without loving and love without believing” (Lenski, *ibid.*, 479). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

“Believe in the name”: All that Jesus is—Messiah, Son of God, Word of Life, etc. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

First we must believe in the name of Jesus, and then we come to love each other. The love to which the Apostle exhorts flows from faith. (Stoeckhardt)

**3:24** *he abides in us* – This happens when we are baptized. Then we can obey his command to believe and if we have faith we can do great things for God. It is really not us doing them but Christ who lives in us.

There is a reciprocal indwelling between Jesus and all believers. (TLSB)

“Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them”: (original language, “remains in him, and he in them”). Cf. Jn 15:5, “remain” or “live” as in text. “Whoever claims to live [(*menein*)] in him must walk as Jesus did” (1 Jn 2:6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

“And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us”: See 1 Jn 5:6–7. The Spirit testifies through the testimony of John, an eyewitness, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who came by water (Baptism) and blood (crucifixion). (Cf. Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6–7.) The Spirit is our assurance through the Word, not by our changing subjective feeling. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

The possession of the spirit of Christ, and its manifestation in the fruits of the Spirit, prove that one is born of God, and an heir of heaven. (Concordia Bible)

The Apostle does not intend to convey this meaning as if one through observing His commandments abides in Him. It is by faith alone that we apprehend Christ, and it by faith alone that we hold Him fast. It is by faith alone that we abide in Christ. The Apostle here merely wants to describe the person who by faith abides in Christ. It is such a person who keeps the commandments and abides in love. In other words, one gives evidence of being in Christ, of moving in His communion, and of abiding in Him by obedience towards His commandments, especially and also the commandment of brotherly love. And if we see then that we love the brethren and keep God’s commands, we gain assurance that we truly believe on Him and so by faith abide in Him. (Stoeckhardt)

*He has given us.* All true believers receive Christ’s Spirit at the time of their conversion. The Holy Spirit Himself grants us to know His Word and abiding presence. (TLSB)

**3:11–3:24** Our heart condemns us when we look at our brother, see his needs, and yet excuse ourselves from acting in love. However, in Christ we know that we have passed out of death into life; that is, we have true saving faith, because we love our fellow Christians. Jesus laid down His life for us. His love for us has covered all our sins. God is greater than our heart, and His sure and certain promises of salvation give us confidence to come before Him. • Heavenly Father, forgive my lack of real love for my brothers and sisters, and enable me to love everyone as Jesus has loved me. Amen. (TLSB)

#### GOSPEL – John 10:11-18

**11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing 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 And I have other sheep that are not of 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 that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”**

**10:11-18** Beginning in ch 7 and continuing through 10:21, we see what Jesus said and did in Jerusalem during the Festival of Tabernacles (Booths) occurring in the month of October. This is taking place a mere six months before his crucifixion and death. Jesus in 10:7 calls himself the “gate for the sheep.” He is the “gate,” and anyone who enters otherwise is a thief. Here we again see the growing tension between Jesus and the religious leaders, because they are the “thieves and bandits” who by their crafty ways have

come to “steal and kill and destroy” God’s people (cf 10:8–10). These leaders bring death; Jesus brings life and even more abundant life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

In the immediate context (John 9), Jesus heals a man who was blind from birth. The Pharisees, in typical fashion, reject this man (v 34) and the One who healed him (v 28). Finding the rejected man, Jesus asks, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (v 35). This man, healed of his blindness, confesses, “Lord, I believe” (v 38). Some of the Pharisees, having heard this conversation between Jesus and the man who was blind from birth, ask, “Are we also blind?” (v 40). To which Jesus replies, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains” (v 41). The Pharisees are in the dark, they are blind, they are sinners, but they will not confess their blindness (sin). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

This is the context that leads into two of the great I AM statements from Jesus. In the verses leading up to our text, he declares, “I am the door of the sheep” (Jn 10:7). Then, in our text, he declares, “I am the good shepherd” (v 11). The Pharisees who reject Jesus will not enter into the sheepfold through the door (Jesus). Instead, they seek to “[climb] in by another way” (v 1). Such self-righteousness shows them to be thieves and robbers of God’s grace, which is revealed and given to us in Christ Jesus. The sheep of God’s flock, on the other hand, hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and follow him (v 3). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

John 7:1-10:21 is devoted to what Jesus said and did in Jerusalem on the occasion of the Festival of Tabernacles (or Booths) in Jerusalem in the month of October, just six months before His crucifixion and death. The growing tension between Him and the Jewish authorities is reaching a climax. In John 9, we have the account of the healing of the blind man, a remarkable miracle which also serves as parable to show the Pharisees their obstinate spiritual blindness. The audience on the occasion of our text is Jesus’ disciples, the formerly blind beggar, the Pharisees, and other Jews. The Pharisees are spiritually blind. In this parable, verses 11-18, Jesus offers both stern warning and sweet comfort. (Buls)

We rightly think of this text as a very comforting one. But it is amazing that very often such comforting texts of the Gospel are found in a context of danger, hostility and anger toward Jesus. Most of the great "I AM" passages are found in such a context of hostility, apathy or danger. That's life. We live in a world which is apathetic and hostile toward the Lord Jesus and His comforting Gospel. And that's the reason why we must preach and teach this Gospel ever more assiduously. (Buls)

The 26th edition of Nestle/Aland Greek text divides our text into three major paragraphs: verses 11-13; 14-16; and, 17-18. Perhaps a simpler division would be a two-fold one: verses 11-13, Jesus' relationship to His sheep; verses 14-18, Jesus' relationship to both His Father and His sheep. Central to both divisions is the fact that Jesus lays down His life for the sheep. But in the second part the act of laying down His life for the sheep is presented more fully, both in Jesus' relationship to the Father and in the result for the sheep. (Buls)

Reformed theology uses this text for proof of a limited atonement. (Buls)

Hendriksen: It is for the sheep, *only* for the sheep, that the good shepherd lays down his life. The design of the atonement is definitely restricted. (Buls)

But that cannot be supported by Scripture.

Bengel: It cannot be inferred from this that He did not die also for the rest of mankind. (Buls)

Lenski: When saying that he lays down his life 'for the sheep' the sacrifice of Jesus, which is for the world and all men, is viewed with reference to its actual final result, which appears in the saved. This view is taken repeatedly in the Scriptures and never furnishes the least ground for the idea of a limited atonement. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The first feature which distinguishes Him as the true Shepherd of souls is that He gives His life, His own soul, as a ransom, as the one complete sacrifice, for the guilt of all sinners, who have earned eternal damnation. He becomes their Substitute. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: From these words a person sees that in this entire pericope Jesus is speaking of the elect children of God. . . The fact that Christ lays down His life for these sheep does not exclude His propitiation for the sins of the whole world. (Buls)

**10:11** *I am*. Note emphatic "I am" both here and in verse 14. Subject and predicate are interchangeable. In all the "I AM" statements in John, all other possibilities are eliminated. He is unique. First Jesus stated *Who* He is. (Buls)

2 Timothy 2:13, "if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself."

This is one of the seven "I AM's" in the Scriptures: (1) Bread of Life (John 6:35), (2) Light (John 8:12 & 9:5), (3) Gate (John 10:7,9), (4) Good Shepherd (John 10:11,14), (5) Resurrection and Life (John 11:25), (6) Way, Truth and Life (John 14:6), (7) Vine (John 15:1,5).

The text begins with Jesus describing his relationship to his people. No longer does he describe himself as a "gate," but now he is their "Good Shepherd" and as such he does what a "good" shepherd ought to do . . . he lays down his life for his sheep. The text begins with the great *eJgwv eijmi*, "I AM." The article in the phrase *oJ poimh;n oJ kalov*, "the good shepherd," indicates that this isn't your average "good shepherd" but that he is *the* Good Shepherd. Why? He "lays down his life for the sheep." No other "shepherd" in any religion does such a thing. Notice Jesus lays down his life *uJpevr*, "on behalf of or in place of," *tw'n probavtw'n*, "the sheep." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

A shepherd was someone who made a living looking after sheep. He led his sheep to pasture and water. He looked after them and protected them from danger. When a sheep was lost, the shepherd went out to search for it. At night, he brought the sheep home, checking to see they were all there by counting them as they passed under his shepherd's rod or staff. (Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2)

*Good Shepherd* – kalos - good, that is, valuable or virtuous, good, or worthy. This indicates that this much better than the average “good shepherd.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 2)

*egō eimi ho poimēn ho kalos*, “I am the good shepherd.” Jesus leaves no doubt that he alone is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep and gathers them into the sheepfold. The adjective *good* is emphasized by the repetition of the article. What Jesus means when he says that he is the *Good Shepherd* will be fleshed out for us in the rest of our text. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

The "good" is made emphatic twice by the repetition of the article. The word "good" is carefully explained, verses 11-18. It means "excellent." The word "good," like the word "love," is a martyr among men because its meaning is often meaningless. (Buls)

Jesus uses "good" in its very highest sense. Forms of "life" are found five times in this pericope. It is in the present tense. (Buls)

Luther: “In this single little word “shepherd” there are gathered in one almost all the good and comforting things that we praise in God” (AE 12:152). (TLSB)

The shepherd had feed as well as protect the flock. That meant he had to travel some distance, especially in the hot summer. Each night he counted the sheep into an open fold and himself lay across the opening so become the “door of the sheep.” He had to watch for wild animals (lions in the OT). The title sums up so much: the close, personal relationship between himself and each of the sheep; the absolute security we have in him; his leadership and guidance; his constant company’ his unflinching care; and his sacrificial love.

The whole life of a shepherd must be completely given over to meet the wants of the dependent, needy, hungry, foolish creatures that have been made his responsibility. Jesus held nothing back or looked out not for his own interests.

Jesus is the “good” – “beautiful,” ‘noble,” “excellent” – shepherd. This shepherd excels in every respect beyond any other shepherd. He is unique. (PBC)

*lays down his life.* A Palestinian shepherd might risk danger for his sheep (see Ge 31:39; 1Sa 17:34–37), but he expected to come through alive. Jesus said that the good shepherd will die for his sheep. (CSB)

Bengel: The whole life of Christ is a going to death. (Buls)

"For" found again in verse 15, means "in the stead of," the vicarious use. He takes their place. The prophets foretold Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Read Isaiah 40:11 and Ezekiel 34:11-26. Psalm 23, in its entirety, immediately comes to mind. Hebrews 13:20 is a parallel passage. Read. Isaiah 53:6 where our desperate need but also the vicarious atonement is clearly portrayed. And although Isaiah 53 does not speak of a Shepherd, verse 10 pictures His death for us. "He will see His offspring" clearly teaches what John 10:16 says. And "the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand" reminds one of verses 17-18. (Buls)

Jesus did not risk His life for the sheep merely to set a noble example; He gave His life as an atoning sacrifice for them. (TLSB)

*tithēsīn huper tōn probatōn*, "[he] lays down . . . for the sheep." Five times Jesus says that he lays down his life (vv 11, 15, 17, and twice in 18). The preposition *for* is to be understood vicariously. Jesus lays down his life *in place of* or *on behalf of* the sheep. Jesus lays down his life upon the altar of the cross, as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. See also Heb 13:20 and Isaiah 53. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

A good shepherd set himself between the flock and potential problems. Danger of any kind can only reach them over his dead body. If it is necessary, he will die to save them. This Christ did for us.

Using the figure of the shepherd, Jesus prophesies His death at Calvary, which was just months away. Three times in this account He mentions laying down His life on behalf of and in place of His sheep. He explains a little more about what He means each time. The figure fully merges with the reality by the third time. (PBC)

The whole life of a shepherd must be completely sacrificed to meet the wants of the dependent, needy, hungry, foolish creatures that have been put into his keeping. Jesus held nothing back or looked out for His own interests. (IB)

John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Sermon illustration – commitment – The mother of the family was celebrating a birth and the rest of the family was treating her to a party. When the time for the presentation of the gifts arrived, she was instructed to sit in her favorite living room chair. One by one, the father and the two older children came in from the kitchen bearing their gifts on a tray, solemnly presenting them to her as to royalty. The smallest girl, really too little to have had much of a role in the gift selection, had been left out of these joyous plans. But watching the process, she rose to the occasion. For when the others thought the party was over, she appeared from the kitchen bearing an empty tray. Approaching her mother she placed the tray on the floor, stepped upon it herself, and with a childish wiggle of joy said, “Mommy, I give you ME!

Sermon illustration – commitment – Overheard as a man was leaving his companion at the entrance to the IRS office: “As your tax consultant, I said in case of an audit I would accompany you to the IRS. I said nothing about going in.

**10:12-13** The Good Shepherd sacrifices his life for those who are his. For the Good Shepherd bought his sheep at a price. Clearly Jesus is referring to the devil, and all that he brings, as the wolf. The hired hand can be seen as a false pastor who poses as a true pastor. The second the wolf comes, this false pastor flees. This hired hand, along with the wolf, is to blame for the scattering of the sheep. The true and faithful pastor resembles the Good Shepherd in that he loves and cares for the flock even when the wolf comes. Just as the Father sent Jesus to be the Good Shepherd, so too does Jesus send all true pastors as “under-shepherds” (*Lenski, 728*). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

**10:12** *wolf* – Devil.

*hired hand*. He is interested in wages, not sheep. In time of danger he runs away because of what he is (v. 13) and abandons the flock to predators. (CSB)

Shepherding was often dangerous work. Wild animals of every kind could attack at any time. It was the shepherd’s job to protect the sheep from these animals even at the expense of his own life. Those who did not own the sheep but only did to earn some money might well run away during that time. (Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2)

The versions and commentaries offer a variety of punctuation for verses 12-15. Rather than discuss all of that here, a translation is offered. Note the utter difference and contrast between the “hired hand” and “the good shepherd.” Emphasized words are an attempt to give the proper nuance to the word translated “and so, namely, and:” (Buls)

The hired person, *namely* one who is not a shepherd, of whom the sheep are not his very own, if (or when) he sees the wolf coming, he *both* abandons the sheep *and* flees, -- *and* so the wolf seizes them and



scatters (them) -- because he is a hired person, *namely*, he cares nothing about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, *first*, I know my sheep and my sheep know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, *and secondly*, I lay down my life in the stead of the sheep. (Buls)

In summary, the contrast is as follows: The hired person is not a shepherd, does not own the sheep, sacrifices the sheep in self-interest, and cares nothing about the sheep. Jesus is here describing false teachers and false messiahs of all ages, especially the Pharisees who were listening to Him. By way of contrast, Jesus is the Excellent Shepherd, Who owns the sheep, Who knows His sheep as intimately as the Father knows the Son and vice versa, and, basic to all, He sacrifices Himself in the interest of the sheep. (Buls)

*ho misthōtos*, “the hired hand.” The hired hand is paid to do a job. The Good Shepherd is not. Take note of the other contradictions between the hired hand and the Good Shepherd in vv 12–13. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

This includes Israel’s leaders who were motivated more by self-interest than care for the sheep. (TLSB)

Could be a false pastor who is only in it for the glory, honor or money.

Ordinarily shepherds protect sheep, but they do not die for their sheep. The Good Shepherd is extraordinary. In contrast, the hired hand won’t take any risk. When trouble comes, he disappears. (PBC)

*leaves – theōrei ton lukon . . . aphīēsīn . . . pheugei*, “[he] sees the wolf . . . [he] leaves . . . [he] flees.” The hired man is not blind. He sees the wolf and knows the danger. Once again, the contrast with the Good Shepherd is seen, for the hired man leaves the sheep and flees in order to save his own life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

"Sees, abandons, runs." These three verbs are axiomatic of the self-server. "Sees" is more than mere seeing. It means he consciously views, is fully aware of the great danger. Its object is "the wolf," an apt metaphor for the devil. He is constantly approaching. The object "abandons" is "the sheep," denoting lack of principle and courage. The hireling "flees." He is a coward. (Buls)

*wolf snatches and scatters – ho lukos harpazei . . . skorpizei*, “the wolf snatches . . . scatters.” Left to themselves, the sheep are at the mercy of the wolf. Once again, these words are set in contradiction to the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

The devil seizes and scatters. By way of contrast, Jesus gathers and leads, verse 16. The word "pastor" is the Latin word for "shepherd," Woe to the pastor who proves to be a hireling!! See Matthew 7:15 and Acts 20:29-30. (Buls)

Lenski: Due to the portrait here drawn by Jesus the term 'hireling' has come to stand for a base type of character, one that is venal, mercenary, utterly selfish. (Buls)

Here Jesus identifies Satan and all his agents. They are so rampant in the world today in the cults, the sects and those organizations which plainly do church work only for earthly gain. And membership in the LC-MS does not make us immune to all of this. (Buls)

**10:13** *because - hoti*, "because." The hired man flees *because* the sheep are of no concern to him. He cares only for the well-being of his own life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

Jesus is not speaking of a person who forthrightly tells another: "I don't care about you." He is speaking of a person who *poses* as one who cares but in actuality does not. Compare John 12:6. Under the guise of suggesting that the money be given to the poor, Judas was actually a thief. (Buls)

**10:14-15** The close relationship of the Good Shepherd and His sheep finds a direct comparison with the intimate relationship between God the Father and God the Son. (TLSB)

**10:14** *I am the Good Shepherd* - Just in case you didn't get it the first time, Jesus again emphasizes *eigwv eijmi oJ poimh;n oJ kalov*, "I AM the Good Shepherd." This is coming on the heels of v 13 in which Jesus says, "a hired hand . . . cares nothing for the sheep." Jesus contrasts the action of the hired hand with himself. The hired hand runs; the Good Shepherd stays and even dies for the sheep (only to rise again three days later). The Shepherd knows the sheep and the sheep know him because they were purchased at a price. The sheep are not their own, but belong to the Good Shepherd. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

The first six words are repeated from verse 14. And it's the third time that we find the expression "I am the good shepherd." (Buls)

Bengel: Always the beginning of every good thing originates with God and Christ. (Buls)

That is an astounding statement but it is true. The word "good" is now explained by two verbs: "know" and "is known." "Know" and "known" occur four times in 14-15. The Good Shepherd both knows and is known. Lenski quotes the Lutheran dogmaticians who define "know" as *noscere cum affectu et effectu*, "to know with love and appropriation as one's very own and to reveal that loving ownership by all the corresponding actions." Compare 2 Timothy 2:19 and Matthew 7:23 where, by contrast, the meaning comes out. (Buls)

The love of the Savior for the sheep is a reflection of the relation existing between the Father and the incarnate Christ. Note that in both verses 14 and 15 the *mutuality* of knowing is stressed: The Shepherd and the sheep *mutually*; the Father and the Shepherd *mutually*. (Buls)

*egō eimi ho poimēn ho kalos*, "I am the good shepherd." The repetition of this phrase clearly distinguishes the work of the Good Shepherd from the hired hand. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

*I know my own.* A deep mutual knowledge, like that of the Father and the Son. (CSB)

*ginōskō*, “I know.” This word appears four times in these verses. Jesus knows his sheep and they know him, “just as,” *kathōs*, the Father knows the Son and the Son knows the Father. The relationship of the sheep to the Good Shepherd is equated with the relationship of the Father to the Son. This strikes a note of absolute certainty that is heard throughout the text. It is certain that the wolf will come, and we know what he will seek to do. It is certain what the hired man will do when he sees the wolf. And it is certain what the Good Shepherd will do. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

A good shepherd has intimate knowledge of each of his flock. He knows then at a glance, their characteristics and idiosyncrasies.

*My own know me* – A good shepherd opens himself up to his sheep so that they trust coming to him at any time or in any circumstance. He also teaches them about who he is and what they can expect.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, does not lose His sheep. He knows us, and He has led us to know the Father and Him. This knowledge surpasses just recognizing each other; even the devil recognizes Jesus. This knowledge binds one to the other in love. (PBC)

**10:15** *just as the Father knows and I know the Father* – This was the highest of all relationships. They were of one mind. They were not only “like one” but were “one.”

"Just as" means *exactly as*.

Bengel: Often the relation of believers towards Christ is derived from the peculiar relation of Christ towards the Father. Compare 14:20; 15:10; 17:8.21; Matthew 11:27; Luke 22:29; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 15:28; Revelation 3:21. (Buls)

All of these passages should be read at this point. It is breath-taking to realize that the relationship between Christ and me is as close as that which pertains between Christ and the Father. (Buls)

The final "and" in verse 15 gives the second and basic reason why Jesus calls Himself The Good Shepherd, repeated from verse 11. The Father's love for and relationship to His Son saw the latter through much suffering and death. Likewise, the Son's love for and relationship to me sees me through much suffering and death. (Buls)

Lenski notes that in verses 11-15 the wolf is mentioned twice, flanked by two observations concerning the hireling, flanked by two observations concerning the Good Shepherd. That can hardly be an accident. In our text all is utter certainty: the certainty of the coming, nature and activity of the wolf, the devil; the certainty of the character and activity of the hireling; and, the certainty, character and activity of the Good Shepherd. (Buls)

“just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.” The Good Shepherd knows the sheep and they know him just as the Father knows the Good Shepherd and the Good Shepherd knows the Father. The relationship between the Good Shepherd and the sheep is a reflection of the love-relationship between the Father and the Son (*Lenski*, 736). This should help in grasping the gravity of the crucifixion as the Father turned his back on his beloved Son so that our sins could be atoned. The Father would do anything, even forsake his beloved Son, just to win us back from the grip of the devil. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

Matthew 11:27, “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

*I lay down my life.* See v. 11; the fact of central importance. (CSB)

**10:16** *other sheep.* These already belonged to Christ, though they had not yet been brought to him. (CSB)

Gentiles, people not descended from Abraham and not part of Israel, who would be integrated into the one flock. Cf Rm 11:17–18. Hus: “Other sheep he had by virtue of predestination, which are not of this fold and of his church according to present righteousness, which sheep of his grace he brought to life” (*The Church*, p 25). (TLSB)

"And," in Greek but not translated, means "furthermore." The verb "must" of this verse is as certain as the "must" in verse 18. "This sheep pen" is an adjectival phrase, denoting the Old Testament Covenant believers. In His omniscience Jesus foresees a much larger group, which includes the Gentile believers, you and me. "I must bring" in the sense that it is God's foreordained will in Christ. "Bring" as opposed to the seizing and scattering by Satan, verse 12. How does Jesus "bring" them? By His suffering and death. This is the cause of their hearing His voice. This is the cause of their being only one flock, one Shepherd. See Ezekiel 34:23; Zechariah 14:8.9. Jesus is speaking about the *Una Sancta*, the Communion of Saints, the invisible Church. This verse is both a prophecy and a promise. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: There shall therefore be one fold, one invisible church, one living communion with the one Shepherd, Jesus Christ, as Head and Overseer. Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11; Ephesians 2:11ff. (Buls)

And it is remarkable that He mentions the one flock before He mentions the one Shepherd. The *one* flock and the *one* Shepherd stand or fall together, but they are individualized. We have no assurance that individual denominations will continue to the end of time. But we do have Jesus' assurance that there "will be one flock." (Buls)

In our darker moments we must comfort ourselves with the great *ones*, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one flock, one Shepherd. Furthermore, from this text we know that this "one" is not confined by ethnic, linguistic, cultural or racial limitations. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for all nations. The Gospel is to be preached to all nations. In heaven all nations, all tribes, all peoples will be represented. (Buls)

Except for what is said about the hireling and the wolf in verses 12-13, this whole pericope is purest Gospel. (Buls)

*alla probata echō*, “I have other sheep.” This is a reference to all who have not yet heard the voice of the Good Shepherd, and especially a reference to the Gentile believers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)  
Samaritans and Gentile Christians.

It is generally understood that *alla probata*, “other sheep” is referring to the Gentile Christians and *th' aujhl' tauvth*, “this fold,” refers to the Jewish Christians. God’s plan of salvation included both Jews and Gentiles. Notice that Jesus *ajagei'n*, “brings” or “leads,” the sheep. They don’t come to him. He comes to them. Notice that the sheep become part of the fold by hearing the Word. “And there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (cf Eph 4:5–6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

*not of this fold*. Those outside Judaism. Here is a glimpse of the future worldwide scope of the church. (CSB)

*bring them also* – They don’t find him, he finds them. Today we are a part of that bringing process.

*dei*, “it is necessary.” This denotes a divine mandate. The willingness of Jesus to lay down his life in order that his sheep might be gathered into his sheepfold is beautifully expressed in Paul Gerhardt’s Lenten hymn “A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

1 Timothy 2:3-4, “This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

This He did and continues to do by the power of His gospel in the Word and Sacraments. His sheep everywhere hear His voice, His Word, and become one flock under the one Shepherd. (PBC)

*listen to my voice* – *tēs phōnēs mou*, “my voice.” The living voice of Christ is the means by which the sheep are gathered into one flock. “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

*one flock*. All God’s people have the same Shepherd (see 17:20–23). (CSB)

The one flock is the holy Christian church, the sum total of all believers, which we will see in all its unity when it enters heaven with the Good Shepherd. For now it is invisible to us, because true faith lies in the hearts of people. (PBC)

**10:17–18** That Christ would die for his people runs through this section of John’s Gospel. Both the love and the plan of the Father are involved, as well as the authority he gave to the Son. Christ obediently chose to die; otherwise, no one would have had the power to kill him.

Jesus is determined to accomplish the task that was set for him. He knows what it involves. *ejgw; tivqhmi aujth;n ajpΔ ejmoutou*, “I lay it down of my own accord.” This indicates the willingness of Jesus to do his task. This is done of his own free will. Jesus has the authority to lay down his life and to take it up again. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

**10:17** *my Father loves me – dia touto*, “on account of this.” The Father loves the Son because, *hoti*, he lays down his life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

"The reason" does not point backwards, but rather forwards to the causal "is that" clause. Jesus was sure of the Father's love, even in death. (Buls)

Bengel: The love of the Father is to be kept in sight, in the passion of Christ, not only towards us, but also towards Christ. (Buls)

Of course, the Father loves His Son irrespective of His atoning work. But, as Lenski says: "The Father's whole heart goes out to his Son as he lays his life down in the sacrifice of death." This does not contradict the fact that God forsook His Son on the cross, Matthew 27:46. The Father's great love for His Son caused the Father to forsake His Son because of our God-forsakenness. (Buls)

*lay it down my life that I may take it up again* – If He would have died and not risen His shepherd functions would have ceased. In retaking His life, He is able to continue perfectly the shepherding of His people. (PC)

For the third time in this pericope Jesus says "lay down my life" but this time He adds emphatic "I Myself." He did it willingly. No one compelled Him to do it. The "lay down" clause is closely bound to the "take it up." He died willingly for the purpose of rising spontaneously. Meditate on that thought. In the person of Christ, God died willingly and man rose again spontaneously, the greatest marvel and miracle in the Scriptures. (Buls)

Note again that "lay down" is in the present tense. Of His own free will Jesus gave Himself into the hands of sinful men to die. John 18:4-11; 19:28-30; Matthew 26:52-54; Luke 23:46. Many times His enemies wanted to kill Him but did not allow it until His hour came. And even then He knew exactly what would happen before they knew it. The Jews availed themselves of the power of Rome, a mighty Empire, to keep Him in the grave. But they could not. On this willingness of Jesus read Hebrews 10:1-14. (Buls)

Verse 9 stresses the will of the Father. Verse 10 stresses the will of Jesus which was consonant with that of the Father. The animal sacrifices in the Old Testament, performed again and again, were done contrary to the will of the animals which obviously resisted death. But the sacrifice of Jesus, happening only once, was performed willingly to bring us to God's intended goal, verse 14. (Buls)

**10:18** *authority* – *ezousia* - force, capacity, competency, power, right, strength. – Same word as in Matthew 28:18. It means to have an ability to the extent that there are no hindrances in the way of accomplishing the task that needs to be done.

*exousian*, “authority.” This is the authority that the Father has given to his Son. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

Jesus went to the cross voluntarily. His obedience to the Father and His love for the sheep moved Him to lay down His life. (TLSB)

The antecedent of "no one" is not the Father, but hostile powers: the devil, his agents, the world, sin, death. Jesus was surrounded by enemies, both physical and spiritual, while He was on the cross. None of them took His life from Him. The negative here, is very strong: "quite to the contrary." (Buls)

Another emphatic "I Myself." For the fourth time we have "myself." The words denote manner, how He laid down His life, spontaneously. In the next sentence we have "I lay" and "I take" which denotes the right, authority, power given to Him by the Father. Pilate claimed this "authority" for himself, John 19:10, but Jesus corrected him by saying that Pilate had this "authority" only to the extent that it was given to him from God Himself. Jesus had the inherent "authority" to ask the Father to extricate Himself from trouble and death, Matthew 26:53, but "how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled as to the fact that this was necessary to happen?" (Buls)

Jesus foretold His death and resurrection not only to His disciples but also to His enemies who were standing right in front of Him. Compare verses 19-21. Jesus closes by saying: "this injunction I have received from My Father," the injunction to die willingly and to rise spontaneously. Compare Hebrews 10:1-14 again. (Buls)

Verses 17-18 explain each other and refer specifically and only to Christ. His enemies denied all the statements. They denied that the Father loved Him. They denied that He had right and authority. They denied that the Father had commanded Him to do and act as He did. (Buls)

The third stanza of Paul Gerhardt's great Lenten hymn comes to mind here:

Yea, Father, yea, most willingly I'll bear what Thou commandest;  
My will conforms to Thy decree, I do what Thou demandest.  
O wondrous Love, what hast Thou done!  
The Father offers up His Son! The Son, content, descendeth!  
O Love, how strong Thou art to save!  
Thou biddest Him within the grave Whose word the mountains rendeth. (Buls)

Note the absence of particles and conjunctions at the beginning of sentences in this text. Normally each sentence begins with a particle or conjunction. This does not indicate that here we have poor Greek. There is no such thing as poor Greek in the Scriptures. But it does denote the intensity with which Jesus spoke to His enemies, not because He hated them but because He loved them. He was offering Himself to them. But note their reaction in verses 19-21. His plain words cause a second *division*. On the first compare John 7:43.

Several quotes from the Book of Concord are in place here: (Buls)

In the *Smalcald Articles*, XII, Luther says: We do not concede to the papists that they are the church, for they are not. Nor shall we pay any attention to what they command or forbid in the name of the church, for, thank God, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd. (BULS)

F.C., S.D., Article XI: Thus the entire holy Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, directs all men to Christ as to the book of life in whom they are to seek the Father's eternal election. For the Father has decreed from eternity that whomever he would save he would save through Christ, as Christ himself says, 'No one comes to the Father but by me' (John 14:6), and 'I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved' (John 10:9). (Buls)

In other words, if anyone wants to determine whether or not he is among the elect he should simply read John 10:1-18 and apply to himself what Christ did for him.(Buls)

F.C., S.D.: In order to preserve the pure doctrine and to maintain a thorough, lasting, and God-pleasing concord within the church, it is essential not only to present the true and wholesome doctrine correctly, but also to accuse the adversaries who teach otherwise (1 Timothy 3 :9; Titus 1 :9; 2 Timothy 2:24; 3: 16). 'Faithful shepherds,' as Luther states, 'must both pasture or feed the lambs and guard against wolves so that they will flee from strange voices and separate the precious from the vile.' (John 10:12-16; Jeremiah 15:19). (Buls)

No mention is made of the Holy Spirit in these verses. But the Holy Spirit pervades this text. He who believes what Jesus says in these verses, is spiritual and has the Holy Spirit. There is no higher spirituality among men than to believe the Gospel. Anyone who claims that he has a higher spirituality from the Holy Spirit, sealed by a special gift of tongues (or its equivalent), quite apart from the will of the Father and the sacrifice of the Son, is self-deluded and a great detriment to the church. Such a person is an hireling, a self-server, who detracts attention from the Gospel, the only hope for sinful mortals. (Buls)

“No one,” Jesus stressed, took His life from Him. His was a true sacrifice out of His boundless love. He had the authority and the power (note here another claim of divinity by Jesus) and the directive from His heavenly Father to give the sacrifice and show the proof. He was determined to die and rise again. (PBC)



Isaiah 40:12, “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?”

John 19:11, “Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

**10:1–21** Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd to describe His intimate relationship with His followers and the love that moved Him to lay down His life for them. Sheep who ignore the Good Shepherd’s voice (His Word) have only themselves to blame and will fall prey to Satan. Unlike human love motivated by self-interest, Christ’s love for His own moved Him to voluntarily endure even death on a cross for our sake (Php 2:8). • My dear Shepherd, watch over me that I may never stray from You. Amen. (TLSB)