

“SERMON NOTES”

John 10:22-30; Acts 9:36-43; Psalm 23; Revelation 7:9-17.

Synod Sermon: Easter 4, Yr C, Mother’s Day

INTRO:

Dear Siblings in Christ, I greet you in the name of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I'm Bishop Timothy Graham, called to serve the Indiana-Kentucky Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. I also bring greetings from our Synod Staff.

This is our synod's sermon for the fourth Sunday of EASTER, May 11th, 2025.

GREETING:

P Alleluia! Christ is risen.
C Christ is risen, indeed. Alleluia!
P We gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son \pm , and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

P Let us pray: O God of peace, you brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep. By the blood of your eternal covenant, make us complete in everything good that we may do your will, and work among us all that is well-pleasing in your sight, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

GOSPEL READING: John 10:22-30

P The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the tenth chapter.
C Glory to you, O Lord!

²² At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. ²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” ²⁵ Jesus answered, “I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; ²⁶ but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ The Father and I are one.”

P This is the gospel of our Lord
C Praise to you, O Christ!

BISHOP'S SONG: SOFTLY AND TENDERLY

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling
Calling for you and for me

See on the portals He's waiting and watching
Watching for you and for me

Come home, come home
You who are weary come home
Earnestly, tenderly Jesus is calling
Calling, "O sinner (Christian) come home"

O for the wonderful love He has promised
Promised for you and for me
Though we have sinned He has mercy and pardon
Pardon for you and for me

PRAYER:

SERMON:

Dear Beloved Ones, grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today, we applaud and remember our Moms. Yet, it's essential to expand this celebration beyond just biological mothers. Motherhood takes on many forms! From adoptive and foster parents who generously open their hearts and homes to children to teachers and mentors, deacons and pastors who help guide us through life's challenges, each of these persons plays a crucial role in our lives.

Consider that aunt who is always in your corner or the family friend who felt like a second mom to you. These relationships are equally powerful and deserving of recognition! Throughout my life, I have encountered numerous motherly figures who have shaped and influenced me in countless ways.

This Mother's Day, let us express our appreciation for all the mother figures who nurture, love, and support us and embody the true essence of motherhood!

This morning's text highlights how Jesus embodies the qualities of a loving mother through the Good Shepherd analogy. He might just as easily be referencing a nurturing parental figure. Jesus expresses a personal love for each of us, as well as for us as a community. God's love is intensely personal, as shown when Jesus says, "My sheep recognize my name, and I know them."

Though my mother isn't my biological mom, she is undoubtedly my mom. She embodies everything I cherish about motherhood and mother figures. I can easily identify her voice; it's always gentle and filled with love when she calls my name.

Growing up, there were times when she used my full name, Timothy Mark Graham, and in those moments, I knew I was definitely in trouble! Yet, in every instance, I recognized her voice.

There were also times when I couldn't hear her voice, especially if I had distanced myself from her, and I found myself yearning for her voice and love, and yet she called me back. She knew me then, and still knows me today, and can sense when I struggle. Today, I treasure her voice because it comforts me and reminds me of how deeply I am loved.

In a world that often feels isolating, it's all too common for love to feel superficial, making us believe we hold little importance. We speak of love, but the sincerity is sometimes lacking. When we declare our love for everyone, it often comes with conditions: we love everyone but... or except... or if... As a result, our words and actions often contradict our feelings. Our voices fall short of the genuine love that Jesus represents for us, even within our homes and churches.

However, God's love elevates us beyond mere numbers or faces in a crowd. God loves us with an intensely personal love, even counting the very hairs on our heads. This truth is beautiful: God's love is profoundly personal.

We remember this connection through baptism, where God calls us by name. We are reborn and welcomed into God's family through water and Spirit. The resurrected Jesus appears before us, breaking through our locked doors, entering our fears and doubts, and healing our wounds with messages of peace. This truth applies to each of us as individuals and collectively as the body of Christ!

Moreover, God's love, as shown in and through Jesus, is characterized by its generosity and abundance. Jesus reassures us, saying,

"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand."

At the heart of God's nature is an outpouring of generosity. God blessed us with life from the very beginning and continues to enrich our days with wonderful gifts from the earth, from its people, and from Godself. And when our time in this world comes to a close, He offers us the promise of eternal life, life that never ends.

Jesus once beautifully posed the question, "Which of you, if your child asks for bread, will give them a stone? Or if she asks for a fish, will give her a serpent? If you, then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:9-11)

Our God is wonderfully generous. God graciously gave God's one and only Son, Jesus, and through Jesus, God invites us into new life and love—both here and for all eternity! And God's all-encompassing love will protect, keep, and guide us in this life's journey and into the next.

Indeed, Jesus reminds us of this truth in our passage when he declares:

"No one will snatch them out of my hand.²⁹ What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it from the Father's hand."

The Father has given the Son ALL things, including us, God's children, and nothing can snatch or kidnap us from God's hand or care. The apostle Paul said, "Nothing in all of creation will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus." And that is truly good news.

God has named and claimed you! There is nothing more or less that we can do to alter God's love. That is Grace by faith. We don't deserve it and we can't earn it; we simply trust it; we trust the promise. And even when we struggle to do so, God keeps loving us. In the distance, God will lead us to hear Jesus' voice, calling us to love, always drawing us back to that love and reminding us we are cherished. God's love flows through the cross of Christ, generously and abundantly, forever.

Why does Jesus do this? How does He achieve it? Those are important questions, and Jesus' answer to us and the Jews who inquired about his identity is clear: Jesus and God are one. They hold us in the palm of their hands and have sent the Holy Spirit to call us, gather us, enlighten us, and unite us with them—both for our sake and for the world's. The Spirit, working in unity with the Father and the Son, sends us forth to proclaim this unity rooted in God's love and the forgiveness revealed through Christ's cross.

Friends, these are such exciting times! We have the most wonderful news to share: the gospel and the incredible victory of our crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ. And guess what? This Jesus knows each of us by name and lovingly invites us into the beautiful embrace of God's love. His voice gently calls, "Follow me. Come with me, and you will experience and receive abundant life."

As the song said:

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling
Calling for you and for me
See on the portals He's waiting and watching
Watching for you and for me. Come home

Thanks be to God. Amen

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray the words you have taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing

The Triune God,
who was, who is, and who is to come,
Sovereign, † Savior, and Spirit,
light your way with resurrection dawn,
now and always. **Amen.**

Dismissal

P Go in peace. In Christ you are made new. Alleluia!
C **Thanks be to God. Alleluia!!**