

Dear sheep who hear the voice of the shepherd, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Voices are recognizable. Children know the voices of their parents. From their time in the womb they have heard their voices. Instinctively, children know and trust and find comfort in their parent's voice. When they are awoken with terrors at night, when they are in fear, when they feel abandoned and alone, they cry out for them and expect to hear their voices and be comforted.

On the other hand, if the voice is different from the parent's there is no comfort. Fear can increase, feelings of abandonment and loneliness increase, for they expect the voice of the one they know and trust.

So it is for you dear flock. You know the Shepherd's voice. There are many who will climb over the wall, many robbers and thieves who will come through any way that is not the door. They come only to kill and steal and destroy you. They will come with claims of a more relevant Gospel, a Gospel that offers prosperity and a better life now, a Gospel that will promise to answer all your questions of what your purpose in life is to be, a Gospel that something other than the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

These things are attractive for many reasons. It doesn't take much to look around, look at our communities and friends, look at our families, and look at ourselves and see that something is terribly, terribly wrong. We see the death and corruption spiraling all around us. We know things are not as they ought to be. And so, we want to know how things can be made right.

Dear flock of Christ, beware and flee from the thieves and robbers who would climb over the walls, digging through and promising some sort of self-motivational religion, promising that if you do all the right things God will give you whatever you want. These false shepherds are deceptive. Often times they are genuine and believe they are proclaiming the truth rather than leading people astray. Knowingly or not, they come as thieves and robbers who will kill and destroy.

Things are indeed terribly wrong. There is a need for things to be made right. Our Lord has come for you, dear sheep, to be your shepherd. He himself is the door. He uses language that is clear in what he is saying, ego eimi, I am. He is first declaring who he is, he is Yahweh, I am. He is the one who was, who is, and who will be. The one who promised and delivered his people throughout history.

And he is the door. Doors seem ordinary at times. We pass through so many that we don't even think about their functionality and realize what it is that doors actually do. Just this morning to walk in this sanctuary you exited at least one, perhaps two or more doors from your own room in your home. In this building you entered through at least two sets of doors, and depending on where you came in from, perhaps more.

Yet, doors have a huge function. Doors inherently change things. Depending on the room and the direction, you go from being either on the inside or on the outside. And Jesus is the door. He brings you through and takes you from the outside, as condemned sinner, and brings you inside as dear saint, into his sheepfold. It seems so simple, yet is so miraculous. Brought from the outside in. At one time you were worse than lost sheep of Israel, and you did not know the voice of the Shepherd. "For you were like straying sheep.... Now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Peter 2:25)

The question remains though, how can you distinguish between the voice of the Shepherd and that of the thieves and robbers? You know the voice of the Shepherd for he has told you and promised how he comes to you and brings you. He comes and brings you through himself, the door. He brings you in for some of you have heard his voice from the womb, some are currently hearing the voice from the womb, some have only heard it for a short time. Yet, for all of you he has promised to bring you in through himself, the door, here in this place. As you confess your sins, you hear his Word proclaimed, and brought through for your sins are forgiven. This Jesus, who is the door and shepherd, has laid down his life for you.

You know the voice of the Shepherd for he gives himself to you. As a child in fear of the dark, lost and alone and away from his parents, so you hear the voice of the Shepherd who brings you through the door and calls you by name, baptizing you in his name and redeeming you from this valley of sorrow and delivering to you the green pastures of eternal life.

He leads you, brings you through the door. And the door is more than just something to go through. The door also keeps and preserves you. Things are indeed terribly wrong, Satan has incredible reign and will seek to climb over to kill and destroy you. But the door keeps you in.

You know the voice of the Shepherd as he comes and keeps with his Word and promises. Delivers to you the fruits of the cross in the breaking of bread, giving himself to you for the forgiveness of sins, keeping you in true faith. Comes and delivers His Word in the prayers of the church, delivering his Word through worship, this is

the Divine Service, God coming to you, bringing you through the door, delivering you, forgiving you, and keeping you. He brings you all the way through. He comes and gives you life, and gives it abundantly.

His is the voice that comforts you in your darkness, brings peace in times of fear and temptation. His is the voice that closes the door of sin and death and brings you to life. When the fears and terrors of this world surround you, when you are terrified because you see no escape, when every earthly voice is shaken, hear the voice of the Shepherd. He is the eternal I am, He brings you through the door, for He is the door, and He shepherds you to hear his voice and gives you forgiveness and life.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, unto life everlasting. Amen.