



Sunday May 8, 2022
John 10:22-30 (Fourth Sunday of Easter)

Ascension Lutheran Church
Edwin Aparicio, Pastoral Intern

Grace and peace from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Amen. This text reminds me a lot of my origins. When I had lived here for a year, someone asked me, “Edwin, what do you miss most about your country?” Without thinking twice, my answer was, my cows. Those who have farms, and those who had farms, know the affection that one has for all animals. I was very passionate about cattle. We lived in a city but despite living in the city, in my house we had three cows plus their offspring. I will do that if my wife and the city allow me to do it, but I do not think so.

The land we have around our house is small, those who have visited El Salvador and have gone to our house know well that the place where we lived was very small. It was surprising because despite having a small house and living in the city, our house looked like a farm. We had many animals, cows, chickens, pigs, dogs, cats, birds and there was a time we even had rabbits plus their offspring. You can already imagine the work required to take care of all of them, but we were very happy with all those animals. Especially me.

I liked all the animals, but for me the special ones were my three cows with their three offspring. Whenever a delegation from the United States arrived, I always asked them to come to our houses in the afternoon to show them my wonderful cows. I was very proud of my cows, and you know the weird thing that happened? I never saw admiring eyes in the delegation. Later some of them told me, “Edwin, we are from Wisconsin. In our area there are many farms with cows. We are known as a place where large amounts of cheese are produced.” When I heard that, I said, “Ah, that explains why they didn't admire my beautiful dairy cows.”

Let me tell you another story. At the time I was a teenager, a long time ago. It was normal that during the rainy season people took their animals to the volcano area. The animals could move around all the fields without any problem. The animals stay there for 3 or 4 months. My mom bought a small bull, and after a year in our house, my she decided to send him to the volcano during the rainy season so that he could grow more because he would have food all the time. But the community recommended that if you were taking some of your animals to the volcano, you should go to see them every 8 days and bring them salt.

Every 8 days I went to the volcano to see the small bull and give it salt. The wonderful thing was that the animal waited in the same place every time I went to see it. I do not know if he stayed in the same place during the three months, but I always found him there. I knew him from afar and he knew me. Sometimes I whistled at him from a distance and he recognized my whistle and approached the place where I always gave him the salt.

Today's gospel is one of many debates between Jesus and the religious leaders. After having healed a blind man on the Sabbath day. Jesus tells them that he is the good shepherd, the shepherd who gives his life for his sheep, I know my sheep and my sheep know me.

Many of the leaders got into a disagreement with each other, saying, ‘Hey, come on. This guy doesn't know what he's saying, this guy is possessed by a demon, don't listen to him,’ But others said, ‘Um, no. I don't think this guy is possessed, his way of speaking and the things he does are not characteristic of a possessed human being.’ Apparently, some of them were the ones who finally came to believe and be part of the first Christian communities. When they heard the word of the Good Shepherd they believed, just as we do wherever we hear the Good News.

As the people celebrated the Festival of Dedication (This festival was held by the Jewish people to celebrate the re-consecration of their temple after it had been under Syrian rule), it was a big and very significant holiday for them. While this was happening in the city, Jesus surely wanted to de-stress and enjoy the festival a little. He



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decides to walk sound the temple, and suddenly the leaders who were divided in their opinions about what Jesus represented approached him, surrounding him and they asked him, 'How long are you going to keep us wondering? Come on, really, tell us are you the Messiah or are you not?' Apparently, they wanted to intimidate Jesus.

But Jesus answered them: 'I have told you, and you do not believe me. The very works that I am doing in my Father's name bear clear witness to who I am. But you don't believe me because you don't want to be part of my flock. My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them and they know me.' A relationship between the flock and God had been re-established through Jesus. Jesus began his ministry and throughout his journey, he gets to know his listeners as they listen to him and talk with him. And because of that experience, they also begin to know him.

Brothers and sisters, this morning's gospel reminds each of us that God came down from heaven through Jesus our Good Shepherd to restore our personal relationship as sheep with God. He as our Good Shepherd who knows his sheep, gave his own life to pay in full for all our sins. He has made us free. He denied himself to give us his love, as our Good Shepherd he suffered humiliations, heat, tiredness, thirst, and hunger, only for the love of us his flock. He knows us and we as faithful sheep continue constant learning about what God is and about what the Good Shepherd has done for you, for me and for all humanity.

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen