

# THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

## MISERICORDIAS DOMINI

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. Roberto E. Rojas, Jr.



### John 10:11-16 ESV

#### Author and Date:

The Holy Spirit caused the words of this Gospel to be written by John the Apostle around AD 90. This text has recorded Jesus' first proclamation that He is the Good Shepherd in the presence of the Pharisees and His own disciples.

<sup>11</sup> **I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.**

- “Good shepherd”—There is no other good shepherd except Christ alone (See also 1 Peter 2:25). Dr. Luther says, “In this single little word ‘shepherd’ there are gathered together in one almost all the good and comforting things that we praise in God.” (*Luther’s Works* 12:152)
- “[Jesus] portrays Himself to be a true, faithful Shepherd. He purchased His sheep at great expense. He gloriously grazes them. He leads them with great care and brings them safely home. This ultimately serves us as a potent comfort, as is brought out in Psalm 23: ‘The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall lack nothing.’ Since the Lord who has everything, who is Life, Salvation, and total Satisfaction...since He is my Shepherd, what should I, or might I, ever need? ‘If I only have You, Lord, then I ask for nothing else upon heaven or earth’ (Psalm 73:25).” (Johann Gerhard, *Postilla*, 378)

<sup>12</sup> **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.** <sup>13</sup> **He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.**

- “Why did Christ call wicked shepherds ‘hired hands’? Because they do not much care about the sheep. If the sheep perish, it does not touch their heart, nor will they endanger themselves for the good of the sheep. As long as things are enjoyable, they remain, perhaps, but when the enjoyment is gone, they flee, totally unconcerned if all the sheep should fall prey to the wolf.” (Johann Spangenberg, *The Christian Year of Grace*, 182)

<sup>14</sup> **I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.**

- “I am the good shepherd” – Christ stands upon these prototypical portrayals and sayings of the Old Testament [Numbers 27:15-17; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24; Micah 5:3; Zechariah 13:7] when He calls Himself the Good Shepherd in today’s Gospel...” (Johann Gerhard, *Postilla*, 371)
- “What does Christ mean when He uses the words, ‘I know My sheep’? With this He intends to show us what great concern He has that His sheep may be sustained and given adequate pasture. And to make us certain, He says that He knows us just as the Father knows Him. And this is a great thing. For if Christ knows us as His Father knows Him, and there is one undivided substance in Christ and the Father, then we must clearly be one body, one church, and one with Christ also, so that even if we fall among wolves, there is no danger for us.” (Johann Spangenberg, *The Christian Year of Grace*, 183-184)

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- “My own know Me” – The Church consists of those who hear and follow the voice of the Good Shepherd. Dr. Luther says, “Thank God, [today] a seven-year-old child knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd [John 10:11-16]. For the children pray, ‘I believe in one holy Christian Church.’ This holiness does not come from albs, tonsures, long gowns, and other ceremonies they made up without Holy Scripture, but from God’s Word and true faith.” (*The Smalcald Articles: Article XII, 2-3*)
- Dr. Luther says, “But if a wolf, the devil or a false teacher, comes and alleges that it isn’t enough that you believe in Christ and faithfully perform the routine, your vocation and station, but must run to St. James, become a monk, and so on . . . The little sheep replies: I do not know that voice; I hear a wolf, a devil, and a false teacher, each of whom wants to tear me from my Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and devour me; from them I flee away and refuse to listen to them. . . . Thus we Christians know Christ through the voice of his gospel, and Christ knows us by our hearing, that we hearken to his gospel which proclaims to us that he died for our sins. In this way Christ’s sheep are differentiated from all others.” (Martin Luther, *Luther’s House Postils II, 83, 84*)
- “The church is invisible; that is, the gathering of the saints is clearly visible not to human eyes but to the eyes of God. . . . though false teachers may subvert many in the visible church, the true and invisible church nevertheless is preserved in those who cling to God by true faith, people whom God alone knows. The judgement about who the true, living members of the church are cannot be from any other source than from the inner renewal of the heart. But now, this knowledge belongs to God alone. . . . Therefore the true, living members of the church are visible to God’s eyes alone, or, what is the same, the true church of the saints is invisible” (Johann Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces: On the Church, XXV, 124*)

**<sup>16</sup> 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.**

- “Not of this fold” – There are other sheep among the Gentiles, those who did not descend from Abraham and are not part of Israel. God gathers the elect not apart from the Word, but through the Word: “...and they will listen to my voice.”
- “The Father, along with His Son and the Holy Spirit, made an eternal decree about gathering the church to Himself from the human race. This decree is carried out in time through the ecclesiastical ministry that God has instituted and preserved. That is, it is carried out through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. . . . The Holy Spirit, through the Word, is effectual in the hearts of people for their illumination, sanctification, regeneration, and renewal to eternal life.” (Johann Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces: On the Church, XXV, 57*)
- “[The Church] has even existed from the beginning of the world, and it will endure forever.” (Ibid., 53) See also Matthew 16:18; 28:20; John 10:28; 1 Corinthians 11:26.
- “The Church is *one (una ecclesia, John 10:16)*, since all the members of the Church, in spite of all differences in their earthly circumstances, believe one and the same thing, namely, that God remits their sins by grace, for Christ’s sake, without the deeds of the Law. . . . All who lack this faith, either because they refuse to believe in Christ altogether (1 John 2:23; 5:12), or because they want to supplement Christ’s merit by their works, are not within, but outside the Church (Galatians 5:4; 3:10).” (Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics III, 410*)



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