

## ***“Truth, Truth, I say to you”***

Are you having a hard time figuring out what is true – with so many words, reports, models, and predictions flying around? How serious is this COVID-19? What is the mortality rate? How long does the virus linger? Is one immune after contracting the virus? I’ve been telling people lately that I talk with experts everyday – because everyone I talk to seems to be an expert.

Into this chaos comes Jesus saying – “TRUTH, TRUTH, I say to you.” In the Greek it’s AMEN, AMEN – and as you have learned, “amen” means true. When you give your “amen” to something, you are saying – “this is most certainly true!”

When Jesus first spoke these TRUTHS – there were many experts saying, “I know what is true” – but they were not all saying the same thing. And more importantly, they were not saying the same thing that Jesus says.

Jesus speaks the TRUTH and “the sheep hear His voice, and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out ... the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice.”

Those who try to climb into the sheepfold (that is, the holy Christian Church) by another way – bypassing Jesus the Door – are thieves and robbers – strangers, with strange voices. The sheep will not follow the stranger, “but they flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

Some of the voices you as Christians have to contend with today are those of the governing authorities. Now let me be clear, the governing authorities are God’s servants to do you good – that is why God commands us to honor them. They are God’s instruments, who have been given God’s own authority, to serve all citizens.

But like everyone else, they don’t always know what is true – they too are limited – they too are sinners, like us, who are not always faithful. They overstep their God-given authority when they speak and act contrary to God’s Word. When their dictates and mandates do not teach what Christ the Good Shepherd teaches – that is a strange voice. The sheep, the Christian, does not follow strange voices – they flee.

For good, health-related, reasons – the governing authorities impose restrictions on churches passing bulletins and offering plates and things around the congregation. However, such restrictions don't apply everywhere. For example, you can go to Menards and take something off the shelf, handle it, and put it back. There is no, "You touch it you buy it" mandate in effect.

In some places, people are ordered to stay home – but our Lord tells us "not to forsake gathering together" for worship (Heb. 10). In some places, the Lord's Supper is "forbidden" because it is not part of "core worship."

Who is the One to determine what is a "core" part of Christian worship? In the Scripture reading from Acts, we hear that Christians "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Where did the Church get the idea that such things were at the "core" of the Christian Church – that such things were essential for God's people?

They got it from the Good Shepherd Himself. The sheep know His voice, and they follow Him. They hear His Word – and believing – give their "amen."

Anyone who would contradict the voice of the Good Shepherd Jesus is "a thief and a robber." To climb into the Church by another door – is to reject Christ, His mandate and institution – His voice, His TRUTH. The sheep do not know the voice of the stranger – so they do not follow – they flee.

I get it when the authorities don't understand what Jesus is saying – but we, as His sheep – should know His voice, and follow Him.

"So Jesus again said to them, 'TRUTH, TRUTH I say to you. I AM the Door of the sheep.'" When Jesus says "I AM" – He is revealing that He is the great I AM of the Old Testament (the One who spoke to Moses from the burning bush). Jesus is the God of the Old Testament "in the flesh." Just as God has always led His people of old – so He still leads us today.

It is not an easy thing to balance public health concerns – the wants and desires of citizens in many different places and situations – including the beliefs and devotion of Christians. However, what Christ teaches is ALWAYS good – and Christ has not come just to benefit Christians – He has come for the salvation of the world!

And that's what we are talking about here – salvation. Yes, there are public health concerns, temporal concerns – but Christ is also concerned about the spiritual and eternal welfare of all people. “I AM the Door. If anyone enters by me, he will be SAVED and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

Dearly beloved, Jesus is the Door of salvation – He is the way, the TRUTH and the life. Let us hear His voice – and be devoted to His mandates – to His Gospel which saves. He is the Door by which we enter into the Church, finding refuge in this sin-fallen and sin-ravaged world.

You hear Jesus' voice today – He calls you by name – gathering you to Himself, so that in Him, you might have forgiveness, life and salvation. He leads you to His Table – to the rich pasture of His Body and Blood, given and shed “for you” – for your salvation.

Hearing His voice, we follow Him – that we might have life – abundant life – now, even in the midst of all of this, and forevermore. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.