



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

**Sermon for Easter 4**

April 26, 2026

# What Do You Know?

## John 10:1–10

<sup>1</sup> “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” <sup>6</sup> Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

<sup>7</sup> Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. <sup>9</sup> I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

What do you know when don't know anything? When you don't know yesterday and you don't know tomorrow? When you don't know your parents or your children or your brothers or your sisters, or your husband or your wife, or your pastor? What do you know when you don't know why you're where you are?

What do you know when you don't know?

All you really know beloved, is today. Today is all you know because today is all you remember. And when today is all you know, everyone you meet you meet for the first time. Everywhere you go you go for the first time. Everything you hear you hear for the first time. When today is all you know, today is the first day of every day and it can be heaven – full of surprises and joys and reunions – or it can be hell, full of doubts, sorrows, and frustrations.

What do you know beloved? The world thinks it knows more than it has ever known before – because everything we know is readily available right on our phones. Yet, this same world goes on to say that no one can really know anything for certain. What is known now is transient, changing, constantly in flux because humanity continues to know more. The truth, however, is that we don't know more. With all our mass media, we actually know less. The world is not getting smarter. Everything there is to know is no longer in our minds or our hearts, but now resides in the cloud, cyberspace, out there



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somewhere over the rainbow.

So, what do you know? In the truest sense of the word, what do you know at your core? What do you know so well that you will never not know it? Sheep know nothing but wandering. In our fallenness, humanity knows nothing but wandering. Today's Gospel calls us sheep. Forgive my saying so, but sheep . . . aren't very smart. Sheep love to wander off. They're ignorant – they don't know the dangers of thieves or wolves, or towering cliffs, or slithering serpents. Sheep are kind of stupid; they know next to nothing.

When Jesus calls His disciples sheep, He's not being complimentary; he's reminding them – and us – of our depravity, our humiliation as creatures fallen from grace. Isaiah says, "All we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way." Sheep foolishly go their own way. That's what sin is. People stupidly going their own way. Yes, I said it: sin is stupid, especially sinning intentionally. Scripture likens such intentional sin to a dog returning to its vomit or a sow, having been washed, wallowing in the mud (1 Peter 2:22). Sinning is doing stupid things like dogs and pigs do.

When sheep go their own way, they do stupid things, because they're listening to the voice inside of them and neglecting the voice outside of them. When Christians listen to their hearts, they're behaving like silly sheep wandering off. When another's word is leading or guiding us away from the sheepfold, we're being led into danger. When you go off and sin, when you lust, when you commit adultery, or steal, or lie, or gossip, when you hurt or harm someone else – or harm yourself – when you chase after money, sex, or some other fantastical sensual experience, you run the risk of doing stupidly dangerous things that make you unclean like a pig. You can trust me on that.

Beloved, when we neglect to listen to the voice of our Good Shepherd, our ears are inevitably filled by the voice of another, either your own or that of a thief. Neither of those is a good alternative. Every word you hear must be tested against the Word of the One who redeemed you. If you don't know His Word, you can't make a trustworthy comparison. You don't know what you're hearing, you don't know what you're doing, and you don't know the consequences of your actions. When you listen to words that are not in harmony with the Word of the Living God, you don't know what you're getting yourself into.

But, despite the stupidity of sheep, our Lord – our Good Shepherd – has great affection for His lambs . . . for you. This why He speaks so kindly to us. His desire is to save rather than judge, to seek His lost lambs and gather them into His fold, where all are kept safe and secure under His watchful care. In our fallen condition, we don't know who we are, where we are, or even why we are, because we don't know our Good Shepherd. Ah, but the Great Shepherd of the sheep know us. "I know my own" He says. Knowing



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us, knowing each of you here today, He loves you. He loves you with all your scars, your wounds, with all the mud caked up in your matted wool because of all the stupid sins you've done. He loves you and He draws near to you to deliver you, to wash you, to bind up your wounds and take the burden of your sin upon Himself. He is the Good Shepherd and the Good Shepherd loves His Sheep. That's what makes Him so Good. He loves His sheep. And loving them, He gives His life for them. He takes on the thieves, the wolves, the roaring lions. He takes on our wounds, our sins, our brokenness, our messy, unclean baggage that we've clung to all our lives, our death and our hell – all of it; He takes them and bears them up for us – for you. He is the Good Shepherd and the Good Shepherd climbs the tree, is nailed to it, and dies there to redeem you and all the world; the poor, little lambs whom He loves with all His heart, soul, mind, and strength.

In order that we may know Jesus as our Good Shepherd, He speaks to us. Like a shepherd winning the hearts of His lambs, He speaks tenderly in our ears. He doesn't shout. He points no fingers. He uses no force, no violence. But in quietness, gentleness, and great humility, He approaches and speaks His Word. He knows you and makes Himself known to you by His Word and His Sacraments. This Word happens to you right here in this sheep pen, this gated community of lambs called Christ's Church. Within these hallowed walls the Good Shepherd greets each and every one who enters . . . giving His Word to create and sustain faith in those who will listen. He seeks your heart through your ears by His Word. Thus, through water and the Word He cleanses you of all unrighteousness and makes you pure and holy, without spot, stain, or blemish. His Word takes away your baggage in the absolution spoken from His under-shepherds – baggage that is deposited in the tomb from which He arose, baggage never again to rise up and accuse you before God. Under the bread and wine the Word which became flesh nourishes lambs with His body and blood. The Good Shepherd still gives His life for the sheep, hidden under and given through the blessed elements, given to you and me and all who eat and drink trusting in Him who is the resurrection and the life.

These are given, beloved, so that you may know what you did not know before you knew you were known by Him. Did you get that? [repeat] Jesus gives you His Word and sacraments so that you may know Him, so that you may be sure and certain of HIM – His heart toward you, His love for you, His promise of grace and mercy poured out for you, His death for you, His resurrection for you, and the hope of the day when He comes to take you home to be forever and always with Him in eternity!

Dear friends in Christ, what do you know when you don't know anything? When you don't know yesterday or tomorrow? When you don't know the people around you, the people you've loved, the people who love you? What will you know when you get old,



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when your mind doesn't work the way it should, when Wikipedia can't tell you what you need to know? When Alzheimer's or some other form of dementia strikes? What will you know when you don't know anything?

I'm reminded of Ailey Meister, a woman in my vicarage congregation, who was suffering with Alzheimer's. She didn't know the people she'd lived with for years, she didn't know her daughters, she didn't even know her own name. But when we prayed the Lord's Prayer, she knew every word. She may not have known herself, but she knew the One who knew her and loved her and gave Himself for her. I can only pray that should the time come when my memory fades like the color of Autumn leaves, that the last thing I remember is the One who will never forget me: my Lord Jesus Christ. In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen