

Known by the Shepherd

"[The shepherd] calls his own sheep by name and leads them out...I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me." John 10:3b, 14

Across the street from my home stands the largest and oldest cemetery in my small Midwestern town. Amid the grave markers dating back to the 1800s is one recently erected, rather ornate granite tombstone bearing the inscription: "Someday, somehow, my name will be known...just watch." When I saw this stone, it sparked my curiosity. Who was this individual? What had he accomplished during his lifetime? Why was he so confident that his name would be known to others after his death? I circled the gravesite, but it contained no clues.

My curiosity turned to sadness. This man held close as his dying hope that recognition by others would enable him to overcome death and live on, at least for a time. The gravestone bore no evidence that he understood the only way to overcome spiritual death and live forever in heaven: to know and be known by the Good Shepherd.

"I know my sheep and my sheep know me," Jesus, our Good Shepherd, tells us.

We, the sheep who recognize his voice, listen to our gentle Shepherd call us by name. In that voice we hear infinite tenderness and the sacrificial love that opened heaven to us. Each Good Friday, we watch our faithful Shepherd give his own life to rescue his powerless flock from the devil, our own sinful natures, and death itself. Each Easter, we touch the scars of our mighty resurrected Shepherd. The wounds inflicted on him when he did battle in our place are now the praiseworthy marks of victory.

We rest our hope of overcoming death not on recognition by others for our accomplishments, but instead on the certainty that our names are known by the Good Shepherd who accomplished everything for us. Knowing him and all he has done for us, we closely follow his voice of love, tenderness, authority and power as he guides us through each day. Trusting him and all he has done for us, we continue to follow his voice when he calls our name at the end. He, and only he, can lead us into the pastures where we will enjoy the ultimate fullness of life our trustworthy Shepherd has promised.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, we thank and praise you for overcoming death by laying down your life for us. This Easter season, give us strength to follow you, our Good Shepherd, as we listen to your voice in your holy Word. Reassure us with the truth that when we die, you will call us by name to be with you in heaven. Amen.

For Further Reading:

John 10:1-16

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