

*11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."*

"I know my own and my own know me." A mother could have said it. "I know my own and my own know me." For who knows a child as a mother? Her life is connected to the rhythms of the newborn – experiencing those rhythms even when the child grows within. Who learns how a child reacts to hunger and pain and colors and lullabies as a mother learns? Who trims those nails for the first time, dresses and changes and feeds so often as a mother? A mother knows her child.

And a child knows her mother. The folks at work or sisters or brothers may know a woman but not in the same way that her children know her. They learn firsthand how she will react in danger, how she reacts when she is exhausted or how she reacts when the child throws a tantrum. Her children see her tenderness and hear her laughter. They learn deep down inside of themselves what really matters to her – what makes her eyes sparkle – what makes them grow dark. Her children hear her complaints and praises and thanksgiving.

"I know my own and my own know me." A mother could have said it. It would be true. But these are Jesus' words.

"I know my own." Jesus knows you. He knows you in all the ways you know yourself. He sees through your eyes when you look into the mirror – sees what you see when you walk in a room. He remembers all the memories that come back to you and he remembers all the ones that do not as well.

Jesus knows you. He said he knows you in the same way the heavenly Father knows Jesus and is known by Jesus. He is talking about love.

A judge may come to know the accused. In hearing witnesses a judge may come to know a great deal about the accused. But a judge sees with eyes very different from the eyes of a mother. A judge is deciding – seeking justice. But a mother’s heart is decided no matter what the evidence shows. For justice is not a mother’s concern but love.

A teacher may come to know the student. A teacher wants to increase knowledge in the mind of the student – to enable a student to think and to understand and to use what is learned. And when the test comes the teacher evaluates the learning – fairly –objectively. A mother knows how a child thinks, what a child learns but not in order to give a grade. A mother loves.

A boss may come to know a person. A boss will learn how this person performs under pressure, when she may take a shortcut, when he can be relied upon and when not. Most of all there is the bottom line, what gets produced – no excuses. A mother may come to know all that a boss knows about her child but love is the bottom line.

“I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.”

Jesus is known by the Father in love. Jesus knows the Father in love.

“I am the good shepherd,” Jesus said. “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Jesus might have said, “I am the good mother. The good mother gives her life for the child.” The meaning would have been the same. What Jesus says is not about gender, but about love. Just as being a mother is not so much about gender –being a woman – as it is about love.

“I know my own and my own know me.”

Jesus speaks of a two way relationship.

Sometimes a mother does all the giving and providing and loving and the child does all the receiving and taking. At first that is healthy. A newborn has nothing to give – no way to respond. But when a fifteen year old gives nothing back – no love – no effort – no help then something is deeply wrong with the relationship.

“I know my own and my own know me.”

Jesus wants to be known by you - loved by you - served by you. He gives, you receive. You give, he receives just as Jesus received from the Father and gave to the Father.

“I know my own and my own know me.”

Jesus knows you and calls you his own. He is not deciding – he has decided. He is not evaluating – he is loving. He is not waiting to see whether you will be productive for him – he gave his life for you. How will you show your love for Jesus?

The second lesson offers a suggestion: “We know love by this that he laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children let us love not in word or speech but in truth and action.”

How will you show your love for Jesus? In showing love to those who have need - sharing, listening, caring and trusting in Jesus, praying to Jesus, loving Jesus.

“I know my own and my own know me.” Amen.