

John 10:11-18 4th Sunday of Easter

Good Shepherd Sunday

Hymns: 36, 391 105, 387, 289, 440.

Introit: Psalm 23.

P The LORD is my shepherd.

C I shall not lack anything.

P He makes me lie down in green pastures.

C He leads me to water where there is quiet.

P He restores my soul.

C He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

P Even though I walk through the valley of deep darkness, I shall fear no evil. For You are with me.

C Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

P You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

C You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows.

P Surely, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life,

All: and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Collect: Almighty God, merciful Father, since You have wakened from death the Shepherd of Your sheep, grant Your Holy Spirit that when we hear the voice of our Shepherd we may know Him who calls us each by name and follow where he leads; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns will You and The Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

1st Reading: Acts 4:1-12.

Epistle: 1 John 3:16-24.

Gospel: John 10:11-18.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for the sermon is the Gospel heard before, John 10.11-18.

11 “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12 When the hired man, who is not the shepherd, and who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; and the wolf catches them and scatters them. 13 He runs away because he is a hired man, and does not care about the sheep. 14 I am the Good Shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 I also have other sheep, which are not in this fold. I must also lead them, they will listen to My voice, and there will be one flock and one Shepherd. 17 The reason why the Father loves Me is that I lay down My life, in order that I may take it back again. 18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it back again. This command I have received from My Father.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us in your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Peace be with you.

When Jesus uses word pictures like parables, metaphors, or other figures of speech, He often represents God as someone who is eccentric. In the parable of the sower, the sower throws seed everywhere, not just on the good soil. In the parable of the unforgiving servant, the king forgives a debt of 10,000 talents which is just an unimaginable amount of money. In the parable of the vineyard, the owner pays everyone the same wage regardless of how long they worked. In the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, the Land Owner sent His own Son to collect the rent from tenants who had already killed His servants. These are just a few of the eccentric characters who represent God in Jesus' parables.

Today, we heard Jesus describe Himself as the Good Shepherd. We are so used to hearing about Jesus as the Good shepherd that we don't truly examine what Good Shepherd Jesus said about Himself or about us.

When we listen more closely we discover that Good Shepherd Jesus is a very eccentric shepherd. Greek has more than one word that translates as 'good' in English. One word is ἀγαθός, [*agathos*]. It means competent, professional, skilled, and so forth. The other word is καλός, [*kalos*]. This word means

noble, heroic, excellent, and so on. When Jesus refers to Himself as the Good Shepherd, He means that He is the excellent, noble, and heroic shepherd. He's not merely competent, professional, or skilled. This kind of shepherd would seem very eccentric to the average shepherd in first century Israel.

Shepherds in first century Israel were not raising flocks full of beloved pets. They exploited the sheep. They used the sheep primarily for wool, mutton, and sacrifices. The reason they watched over the sheep was not because they loved the sheep, but because sheep were the source of their income. They had families that needed food, clothing, and shelter. Sometimes there would be a group of families who would combine their money to buy the flock and appoint a couple of family members to look after them, and that led to resentment, sometimes they didn't do a good job. The sheep were the source of those things. When a predator began stalking the flock, the shepherd was NOT really concerned for the sheep directly. He was concerned because the predator was taking food off his children's table and the clothes off their backs. That predator was affecting his income which was affecting his family's standard of living. When a shepherd was good or competent, his sheep were healthy so that they produced plenty of wool or so that they gained plenty of weight when it was time to sell them to the butcher, he took a personal interest in them.

Shepherds have always defended their flocks from predators, but they don't do it because they love the sheep. They kill or drive off the predators because they want to provide for their families. A shepherd might get killed by a predator, but it's usually an accident, and he doesn't go down without a fight. He most certainly DOES NOT willingly lay down his life for the sheep.

We recently heard Jesus describe Himself as the Good Shepherd ... that is the noble, heroic shepherd. He said, **"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.** Jesus described Himself as the shepherd who loves His sheep by willingly surrendering His life for them. This sets The Good Shepherd Jesus apart from all other shepherds.

Indeed, we can place all religions into one of two categories. All of the false religions teach self-salvation, that means you must do something in order to provide all or part of your own salvation. There are a wide variety of activities in these religions like meditations, quests, self-punishment, fasting, right thinking, right talking, self-improvement, moral character, and on and on and on, but they all boil down to you saving yourself. The true religion, Christianity, is the only religion where God takes on human flesh and then declares that He will surrender His life in order to save His creation.

Furthermore, the shepherd who is merely a competent shepherd cares for his sheep because of what he can get from the sheep like food and clothing, - but Good Shepherd Jesus doesn't need anything from the sheep. He defends the sheep with His life simply because He loves the sheep. It's good that Good Shepherd Jesus loves His sheep and surrendered His life for them. Because we are the sheep that He speaks of in His figure of speech, and we have powerful enemies.

We just heard Good Shepherd Jesus speak of the wolf. Now I don't care how much time the sheep spends in the weight room and at the martial arts dojo, he is not going to be able to take on this wolf. If the sheep has to defend itself, the wolf will have them for breakfast! The wolves that come after us are sin, death, and the devil.

Sin, death, and the devil are allies. Death is the result of our sin; **for the wages of sin is death.** [[Romans 6:23.](#)] That is one of the many sad facts of death. It's our sin that opened the door to let death into our world. Every time we make ourselves more important than God, - anytime our feelings are more important than God's Word, - anytime we exploit our neighbour instead of loving him, - anytime we refuse to forgive, anytime we listen to gossip, anytime we murder with thoughts of hate, anytime we want our way instead of God's way, anytime we rationalize our sin, these are all ways that we open the door to this world and allow death and the devil to rule. It's as the Apostle Paul told the church in Rome: **Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.** [[Romans 5:12](#)] Death is one thing that we have in common with everyone. Everyone dies. Good Shepherd Jesus said, **When the hired man, who is not the shepherd, and who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; and the wolf catches them and scatters them. 13 He runs away because he is a hired man, and does not care about the sheep.**

With these words, He illustrates the value of false religions. As far as the false religions are concerned, when death comes, you are on your own. If the religion has an afterlife, then it teaches that you are judged by your own merit and worthiness, - who you are and what you have done. If you have failed in this life, well then, "too bad, so sad!" Some false religions are so deceptive that they try to teach us that the wolf is our friend. Our current culture wants us to believe that the wolf of death is our friend and presents elective abortion, euthanasia, and assisted suicide as valid solutions to the problems of life.

Good Shepherd Jesus, on the other hand, fought with sin, death, and the devil, and He did it in a most unusual way. First of all, the Heroic Good Shepherd Jesus became one of the sheep. That's what Christmas is all about. The Son of God took on human flesh, - Good Shepherd Jesus in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes. Who ever heard of a shepherd becoming one of the sheep in order to save the sheep?

Nevertheless, Good Shepherd Jesus became one of us in order to battle sin, death, and the devil. When the time came for Good Shepherd Jesus to battle death, He gave death the home ground advantage! He suffered and died on a cross. As He hung on the cross, Good Shepherd Jesus endured the eternal punishment that our sins deserved. Instead of leaving us to face the wolf of death by ourselves, He faced death for us. He faced the death of this world and the eternal death of hell. The Good Shepherd Jesus faced all this so that we can be sheep in His eternal flock.

Good Shepherd Jesus has a special message for us in the Gospel we just heard. He said, "**I also have other sheep, which are not in this fold. I must also lead them, they will listen to My voice, and there will be one flock and one Shepherd.**" Since Jesus told these words to the Jews who were listening to Him at the time, these words inform them that Jesus has sheep that are not part of the Jewish flock. That means that we gentiles are also sheep in His flock. The entire flock of Good Shepherd Jesus is the Holy Christian church that has both Jews and Gentiles in it. This means that Good Shepherd Jesus laid down His life for all people in all times and in all places. Jesus is the Good Shepherd for everyone. He laid down His life for US.

Good Shepherd Jesus proclaimed that He will lay down His life for the sheep. As we work through the Gospel, we hear Him say even more. "**He said, I lay down My life, in order that I may take it back again. 18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it back again. This command I have received from My Father.**" With these words Good Shepherd Jesus promised not only to lay His life down for the sheep, but He also promised to take it up again. It means we know He defeated our sin with His death because death couldn't hold Him. He rose from the dead. He said, "**I lay down My life, in order that I may take it back again.**" and He kept His promise. Good Shepherd Jesus rose from the dead and the disciples saw the holes of the nails in His hands and feet.

The resurrection of Good Shepherd Jesus is the promise for our last days on this earth. The day will come when the wolf of death will eat you and me, but we won't stay dead. Instead, Good Shepherd Jesus will come on the Last Day and bring us all back to life. "**The day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will pass away with a roar, burning will destroy the elements, and the earth and the works that are on it will become evident.** [[2 Peter 3:10](#)] "**Rather, according to His promise, we look forward to new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.**" [[2 Peter 3:13](#).] All of us who believe will come together as one flock. We will share in the joy of eternal bliss. We will share in all the blessings that Good Shepherd Jesus earned for us when He laid down His life for us. Then we will live forever with Him where there will be one flock and One Shepherd. Amen
The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
Amen.

3rd Hymn: 105,

Prayer of the Church 4th Sunday of Easter April 26, 2015

P Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Brief Silence,

P Heavenly Father, You gave Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Good Shepherd. He became the Lamb of God to redeem us wandering sheep. He laid down His life for us and has taken it up again. Lead us and Your whole flock to hear and follow His voice in the blessed Word and Sacraments, and so want for nothing.....Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Merciful Father, by Your Son You always give to Your Church on earth faithful shepherds to guide and feed Your flock. By Your Holy Spirit encourage all pastors and those who read Your Word to Your people that they may faithfully proclaim only Your truth, and grant Your people wisdom that their souls may be restored in the green pastures and quiet waters of Your salvation..... Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Lord of all, You sent Your Son as the Good Shepherd, to seek and to save all lost and wandering sheep. Send Your Son's voice throughout the world to reach those who have gone astray, including those in prison and those misled by false teaching. Encourage and defend Your missionaries and their families.....Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Almighty God, protect the leaders of this and all nations of the earth, and guide them in wisdom, that peace and justice may abound..... Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Father, Your Son conquered death, and He leads and shepherds His sheep so that all may dwell in Your house forever. Keep us, mindful of Your presence here in the valley of the shadow of death, and give Your promised comfort of dwelling in Your house forever..... Lord, in Your mercy

C hear our prayer.

P God of love, through the anointing of Holy Baptism, Your Son gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart. Guide our children and young people throughout their lives to follow their Shepherd's call that in fear and faith they may grow in love for You and for others. Give diligence and courage to those who teach Christianity and the schools of Your Church, so that Your lambs may continue to know Your Son's voice and grow in useful knowledge..... Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Lord, Your Son knows His sheep. He knows our frailties and weaknesses, our burdens and temptations. Visit, comfort and relieve those who suffer from illness, injury, or brokenness, *[including*

], Keep them in Your hand, restore their souls, and comfort them with Your rod and staff. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Abide in us, Good Shepherd, that we may abide in You, that we may receive for our blessing of Your Holy body and precious blood in this Sacrament and be kept blameless and holy to the day of His coming.

Lord, in Your mercy:

C hear our prayer.

P Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen,

4th Hymn: 387,