

**Good Shepherd Sunday**  
**April 25, 2021**

**Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church    Pastor Tyson Labuhn**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Did you hear about the man who was charged with sheep stealing? He insisted that the sheep he had taken was one of his own. He said that it had been missing for days so when he found it in a pasture, he simply went and retrieved it. But the owner of the pasture saw him taking it and called the authorities. But even though the man kept insisting the sheep was his, the authorities didn't believe him. So, the case went before a judge who didn't know how he was going to decide whose sheep it was.

Finally, the judge had an idea. He brought the sheep into the middle of the courtroom. Then he ordered the plaintiff to step outside and call the animal. While the sheep looked up when the plaintiff called, it hardly moved. Then the judge told the defendant to go outside and call for the sheep. When the accused man started to make his call, the sheep got up and went right out of the courtroom

to the man. The sheep simply recognized the voice of his master.

As we continue our sermon series this morning on the last part of our mission statement – “Sharing God’s Love,” it might be good for us to ask ourselves how well do we know the voice of our Good Shepherd? Knowing His love and His distinctive voice, it’s easy to share God’s Love. But let’s face it, the world is full of information that’s available to us any time of the day or night. And because of that, it can be somewhat hard to hear His voice through all the distorted voices calling out to us. That is unless we pay attention to God’s Word. So, how well do we know the voice of the Good Shepherd? Will you recognize it from all the other voices when He comes again?

You know, Scripture is filled with shepherd imagery. If you recall Abraham, the father of many nations, was the keeper of great flocks of sheep. Moses was tending the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro, when God called him into a special service. King David was tending flocks as a boy when he was called in to be the King of Israel. Psalm 23, attributed to him, has been referred to as the shepherd psalm. The prophet Isaiah wrote, ***“He will feed his flock like a***

***shepherd! He will gather His lambs into His arms."***

But before you start thinking that all shepherds in the Old Testament were good, take a look at chapter 34 of Ezekiel later this afternoon. He prophesies against the Shepherds of Israel, who cared more for themselves rather than the sheep. And God's flock became scattered, but He says that He, Himself, will look for them as a shepherd seeks out his flock. He says, ***"I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken."*** (Ezekiel 34:22-24)

Once a rabbi and his student were talking about God's Word. The Rabbi said, *"Do you know the sacred scriptures?"* The student replied, *"Yes, teacher, I have been studying them."* So the rabbi said, *"And, do you know the phrase, 'Thus have I heard?'"* To which the student said, *"Oh, yes, that's throughout the scriptures."* Then the rabbi said, *"What have you heard?"*

Just before our Gospel reading for today. The Pharisees, who did deeds to be seen by others, who loved the places of honor, the best seats in the synagogues, and the greetings they received in the marketplaces (Matthew 23:5-7), were the ones who had just kicked the blind beggar out of the fold of his synagogue. But it was Jesus, who had healed the blind man and allowed him to be part of His sheepfold. So the scribes and the Pharisees wanted to know what Jesus had to say for himself about these things. This was when Jesus told them, as well as all those who were listening, that He is the Good Shepherd.

You know, once there was a pastor who took a group of his parishioners on a tour of the Holy Land. He had just read them the parable of the good shepherd and was explaining it to them so that, as they continued their tour, they would see shepherds on the hillsides just as in Jesus' day. He wanted to impress them, so he told them what every good pastor tells his people about shepherds. He talked about how, in the Holy Land, the shepherds always lead their sheep, always walking in front to face dangers, always protecting the sheep by going ahead of them. And he barely got the last word out when, sure enough, they rounded

a corner and saw a man and his sheep on the hillside. There was only one problem: the man wasn't leading the sheep as the pastor had said. The man was behind the sheep and seemed to be chasing them.

The pastor, whose face had turned red with embarrassment, ran over to the fence and yelled out, *"I always thought shepherds in this region led their sheep -- out in front. I just told my people that a good shepherd never chases his sheep."*

Somewhat out of breath, the man yelled back, *"That's absolutely true... you're absolutely right... but I'm not the shepherd, I'm the butcher!"*

If we don't pay attention or ignore the voice of our Good Shepherd, we only have ourselves to blame and sooner or later, we'll fall prey to the one who wants to destroy us. But if we listen and follow Jesus as our Good Shepherd, we'll be able to flee from untruths and ungodly beliefs.

Once there was also a man who asked a shepherd to put on his clothes, take his crook, and call his sheep to see if they might come to him. But when He did so, most of the whole flock ran away from him. So, he asked the shepherd, *"Will any of them follow me when I call them?"* The shepherd said,

*"Yes, some might; they're the sick sheep who will follow just about anyone."*

Jesus didn't risk His life for the sheep just to set some kind of noble example, but being the object of the Father's Love, He came in perfect obedience in order to lay down His life for the sheep. He came to His own, but His own did not recognize Him. And yet, so that you and I might be made whole again, and according to His abundant love, grace, and mercy, He died and rose again so that we might be brought into His fold. He doesn't run away when the wolf comes to scatter and destroy us. Rather, He willingly lays down His life and takes it up again, for us. Because He loves us and knows each of us intimately, and we come to know Him, just like the Father knows Him and He knows the Father.

When we ignore our Good Shepherd and don't listen to His Word, we don't know Him as well as we should. And like sheep, we tend to wander away from His fold. And during this pandemic, over the past year, we've all gotten a little out of our routines, been out of sorts, and as a result, have wandered in our faith. And yet, today, He's calling us back to Him, one by one, so that we might hear

His voice clearly, and experience His love, grace, and mercy, once again.

Jesus also says in our Gospel reading today that He has other sheep, not of this fold, who will also listen to His voice. These are the ones, who have been predestined to be part of the fold, because He'll bring them to life, out of His abundant love, grace, and mercy. It's no wonder that in some of the other Gospels that we hear about Jesus' parable of the lost sheep...If you recall, the shepherd in that parable has 100 sheep, but one of them goes astray. And while we might think that a 99% return on our investment is still a pretty good deal. The shepherd leaves the 99 to go in search of that one lost sheep. And when he finds it, he lays it on His shoulders, calls all His friends and neighbors together, and rejoices.

Each of us can be thankful when He calls for us and brings us back into the fold. It's comforting and reassuring that He loves us with everlasting love. And yet, as members of His fold, by His love, grace, and mercy, we're also His hands and feet in this world. As He calls us, we listen and obey His voice. And that voice has given us a mission, and that mission here at Our Savior's Way, is to glorify God

and make disciples for Jesus by: Forming Relationships, Experiencing Jesus together, and Sharing God's Love. So, I encourage you today to go out and share God's Love with those in need.

In Jesus' name, Amen.