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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
May 11, 2014  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Ezekiel 34:23-31, Revelation 3:1-6  
Hymns: 27; 783; 410; 631 (426:1-4 – Gloria)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 10:1-11

“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. 2 But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” 6 Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

7 Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 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.

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Risen Savior, dear fellow Redeemed.

**INTRO: Are You Being Taken Care of?**

Now you may have been asked that question in a store or in some other business when the clerk, or associate sees you wandering around the store. They want to make sure that you will be satisfied with the service in the store, that you will actually buy what they have for sale, and that it will make you a satisfied customer who will return again. That 's good business.

However, in the spiritual realm things are different. It isn 't commerce, even though there are those who equate things spiritual with commerce and good business. The Lord sees His interaction with us in a much more personal way. He presents Himself to us as our Shepherd. He also warns us in the Scriptures to avoid those who are bad at being shepherds. He warns against those who care for themselves, and run away when danger threatens the flock. He condemns those shepherds who give false assurances to those who are in grave danger, telling them there is no danger. Jesus stands in sharp contrast to these false shepherds. He declares Himself to be the Good Shepherd. The pic ture of Jesus as our Good Shepherd is treasured by us all, but why? May the Spirit open our understanding to –

**THEME: What makes Jesus the Good Shepherd.**

In this very special address recorded in John 10 Jesus communicates to us the depth of His love for us. From the very beginning of this sermon we are led to comprehend --

## **I. The Good Shepherd's Personalized Care of the Sheep.**

Jesus wants us to understand that not everyone who claims to be a shepherd of the sheep is to be trusted. The true shepherd comes in by the door. Others don't. They sneak in over the walls. Those who are sneaking in some other way than by the gate of the sheepfold are not to be trusted. They are not to be trusted because they are up to no good. Why else would they come in some other way than the gate that the builder of the sheepfold has provided? It is because they are wolves in sheep's clothing.

Jesus is the one who has come in by the gate of the gospel of God's love and forgiveness. Jesus is the only one that the One guarding the gate to the sheepfold allows in to tend the flock of God.

The difference is seen in the personal relationship between the shepherd and the sheep.

**John 10:3-4** To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

There is a real familiarity, an intimacy in this relationship. Jesus knows each of His sheep and lambs personally. He calls them by them all by name! That continues to this day. This is just as true for each of us here this morning as it was for the 12 disciples who followed Jesus and listened to His voice for over three years. We also hear the voice of Jesus, for He speaks to us in His Word. He speaks to us in comforting words like these which we have before us this morning. These words speak to us of His genuine concern and care for the

flock of God, that flock of which we are a part. And yet He speaks to us in our individual need, with the assurance of His love and protecting care.

We hear the voice of our Savior through the hearing of His Word and we follow where He leads. And this is in itself such a wonderful point. He doesn't drive us where we are to go in life. He leads us. He goes before us, all the way through life and even into death. Our Lord Jesus has gone before us and leads us by His loving guidance. It is not an accident that these words serve as a wondrous commentary on the 23 Psalm. In that psalm we are reminded,

**Psalm 23:3-4** "He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.<sup>4</sup> Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

Yes, it is in the paths of righteousness that the Good Shepherd leads His sheep. He guides us so that we stay on course through this life, shunning the evil and the death of this world that is found on the broad and easy path that leads to destruction. And when the days seem dark, and we pass through scary shadows, we know our Savior has already walked this path. Even at death's dark door, the Good Shepherd never walked a different path. He passed through death and the grave that we might be assured that with Jesus by our side, watching over us and protecting us, we need fear no evil!

What a great gift of grace that we comprehend the beauty, and more importantly, the grace found in these words of our Savior. It is the Spirit of God that has opened our hearts that we might believe and know Jesus as our Good Shepherd. Those who were gathered about Jesus on that day when He first presented this wonderful sermon didn't understand the picture He drew for them. They would not believe. And so our Lord turned to a little different picture, a parallel picture

about the sheepfold, the pen where the sheep are gathered and how Jesus keeps them secure. And so we learn that --

## **II. The Good Shepherd Is the Way to Eternal Life.**

**John 10:7-10** Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 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.

In this associated picture in which Jesus is still dealing with the safety of the flock, Jesus presents Himself as the door of the sheep. He is the one and only way for anyone to enter the sheepfold. The Lord comes to us through His Word. When others bring us a message about life and salvation the Word is the test to which we must submit their teaching. If they abide by Jesus’ Word then they are true messengers of God. If they do not abide by His Word then they are thieve and robbers.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and Jesus is the door to the sheep, for He is the message of God’s Love and forgiveness sent down to earth to bring us to God. What do we know of Jesus as the Word of God? We know that He was present with the Father and the Holy Spirit when all things were made, and that without the Word nothing was made that was made (John 1:3). And then we are also told in John’s first chapter:

**John 1:14** “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Grace and truth is what the Lord Jesus brings us from God. He is the way to God. He is the Door to the sheepfold of the

Lord. He declared this truth plainly to His disciples on the night before Jesus died.

**John 14:6** “Jesus said . . ., ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”

Those words make it abundantly clear that without Jesus we cannot come to God, and that only through faith in Jesus we are brought to the Father in peace.

What a dramatic difference in purpose and intent is evident. So many in the world claim to lead people to personal fulfillment and completeness with the divine, when in fact they are leading people farther and farther away from the Lord . Jesus says they have come “**to steal and to kill and to destroy**” (v.10) No, they are not going tell you that. They may not even understand that they are victims of the same deceit which they peddle, but it is the intent and purpose of the father lies, who is the devil, to kill and destroy your soul. There is no doubt about that.

Jesus has a different intent and purpose. He has come to bring us life, and not just ordinary life as people think of life in this world, but what Jesus calls abundant life. It begins with the spiritual life which comes to us through Jesus when the Lord casts the darkness of sin and death out of our hearts. This life brings us to the sure and certain hope of resurrection and eternal life. Jesus brought this hope of life to Mary and Martha after Lazarus had died and was buried. Jesus didn't deliver empty words or false hopes to Martha in a vain attempt to comfort her, but rather the reality of resurrection unto eternal life. Listen again to that exchange.

**John 11: 24-26** Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” 25 Jesus said to her, “**I am the resurrection and the life.** He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” 27 She

said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

This is true for us also. All who know and believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God have life in His name. Beginning right now, during this pilgrimage on earth we also possess the gift of eternal life, and with the hope of resurrection unto life in heaven. However, this gift of abundant life did not come without cost. And that is the revelation of the ultimate way that Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

### **III. The Good Shepherd Gives His Life for the Sheep.**

That is the greatest most wondrous truth of all. It was necessary for **The Good Shepherd** to sacrifice His life in order for the sheep to be saved. It was the sheep who in their foolishness had wandered from the paths of righteousness into the way of sin and death. But the Lord, in the greatness of His love for us, rescued us and delivered us from death. This deliverance came with a great personal cost for the Shepherd. It would cost Him His life. It required the sacrifice of His blood upon the cross. It required that He be separated from God, that He endure the wrath of God toward sin, all because of OUR sin.

This Jesus willingly did. He did it because He submitted to the Father’s will, the Father’s desire to save us from our sins. He did it, He suffered and died and was buried, because the Shepherd **loves** the sheep. He laid down His life to redeem us, and then He rose again to establish that the debt of mankind’s sin was paid, and death has been defeated, and resurrection is real, and in our future. Jesus explained all this saying:

**John 10: 17-19** “Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, cares for us all the way from the beginning of life and on into eternity. He made this hope of the resurrection to eternal life a reality by rising from the grave. We too shall rise and we shall be gathered together before the throne, and our Good Shepherd will receive us to Himself, saying, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He gave His life for us, weak and wandering sheep that we are. He gave His life for us because He chose us to be His sheep and showed us the way into the sheepfold through the door of the gospel. As our Good Shepherd He cares for us like no one else ever could. He knows us all by name. He knows all that we need and provides for every need spiritual and physical, temporal and eternal. How blessed we are to know Jesus as our Good Shepherd. How very special and reassuring it is that we too can confess with David,--

**Psalm 23:1,6** "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want ... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever."

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.