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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
April 29, 2018
4th Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Acts 4:23-33, 1 John 3:1-2
Hymns: 2; 783; 426; 51 (238:3-5)

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

Sermon Text: John 10:11-18

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ¹²But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. ¹⁵As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd. ¹⁷“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. ¹⁸No 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.” (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: The Good Shepherd

Surely this picture of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is a favorite among Christians. Many have a depiction of Jesus as a shepherd holding a lamb, or leading a flock of sheep hanging in the homes. It is a precious reminder that Jesus is present with us, not only in our homes but everywhere we go. Again, a favorite psalm is the one we read responsively as our introit this morning. When we read or recite the 23rd Psalm we think of Jesus, and rightly so, and a simple reading of this precious psalm calms the troubled heart. That is indeed a special blessing of the Holy Spirit. So it is little wonder that this Sunday is among the favorite Sundays in the church year. Appropriately it is placed as one of the Sundays in what we consider the Easter season of the church year. It is appropriate because the truth of Jesus being the Good Shepherd is not empty poetry. It is based upon certain truth, indeed what is for us historical as well as spiritual truth. When we think of Jesus as the Good Shepherd there are two words in that title that we consider, they each command our attention in our meditation.

First, Jesus is our SHEPHERD. Then also Jesus presents Himself to us as the GOOD Shepherd. As our Shepherd we know that Jesus leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. That didn't just happen. To accomplish this act of grace Jesus had to be the *Good* Shepherd. Good here doesn't mean adequate; it means **excellent**. He is our Shepherd, the GOOD One! Our text lays out for us the basis of this high quality, what it is that makes Jesus our Good Shepherd. "*The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep!*" (v.11) That is the truth that moves our hearts to both love and trust in Him. So let us consider what it was that moved the Lord Jesus to be --

THEME: The Good Shepherd who Gives His Life for the Sheep.

The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep because --

I. He Cares for the Sheep

Jesus said:

John 10:11-15 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ¹²But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not

care about the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. ¹⁵ As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Jesus draws out the distinction between the hired keeper of the sheep and the true shepherd of the sheep. When the tough and dangerous times come the hired hand skedaddles. He runs away because he cares much more about himself than he does for the sheep. Sheep! They are just sheep! Any reasonable individual would conclude that sheep can't be worth losing your life! The hired hand doesn't really care very deeply about the sheep. He's in the shepherding line of work to get a paycheck. He cares about himself.

That is not the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd cares about the sheep. He cares very deeply about the sheep. He knows them, really knows them as individuals; and they know Him. They depend on Him. He cares so deeply for the sheep that He lays down His life for the sheep. Jesus put His life on the line for dumb sheep like us who are constantly straying off the paths of righteousness, who have gotten themselves in such a mess that there was no other way to save the sheep than for Jesus to sacrifice His own life.

Recently there was a terrible incident in a restaurant in Tennessee where a gunman came into a diner shooting and killing, apparently just because he could. A man in the restaurant jumped up and wrestled the gun away from the man and threw it out of his reach when the killer was trying to reload. Many instantly called the man a hero. He would have none of that. He said he wasn't a hero because he was acting in his own self-interest. He charged the armed man because he knew if the gunman successfully reloaded he himself would likely be killed. He acted to save his own life. The fact that others were saved because of his action was wonderful, but he insisted that he wasn't heroic. Hero or not, many were extremely grateful that the man had the courage and the presence of mind to act when he saw the opportunity.

Jesus saw that it was the time to act. He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem to suffer and die so that He might disarm the enemy that intended to kill the flock. But Jesus didn't act in His

own self-interest. His life was not at risk, and yet He sacrificed His life for others. He didn't act to save Himself, but to save others. The enemy could not condemn Jesus. It was purely out of loving care for the sheep that Jesus gave His life, that the flock might be saved. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep simply because He cares.

Remember that always. The devil and our own weak flesh would tempt us to doubt the care of the Lord, at least the depth of His care for us. But here we see the depth of His care and concern for us; He sacrificed His own life for the sheep, *for the sheep*. Yes, the flock is defenseless and vulnerable and in need of a hero, but to lay down one's life for just sheep? That is the depth of Jesus' care.

And we also need to comprehend the breadth of the care of the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep because with His sacrificial death --

II. He Unites the Flock.

Yes, even during His ministry among the Jews Jesus looked beyond Judea and Galilee. Jesus was even looking beyond that region of the world, and beyond that point in time. His care extended to all the flock throughout the world. Jesus said:

John 10:16 “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.”

In laying down His life for the sheep Jesus provided redemption for the whole flock throughout the world for all time. We can be so certain of this because His atoning sacrifice was not limited only to those who believe, but was great enough for all! That clear truth is declared by John in his first epistle where we read of our Good Shepherd:

1 John 2:2 “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

Jesus provides the gospel through which we also were called to faith in Him alone as our Redeemer. The Spirit led us through the

Word to come into the fold, to be a part of the flock of God. This gracious call of the gospel is not a blind call, but an intimate call. Jesus cares for **you**. He knows you, He would have you hear His voice, know His love and His care for you in the gospel call. He cares for **YOU** as an individual with the struggles you have in your life. Yes, those struggles you have not only with life's trials, but also with life's temptations and the deadly consequences of our sins. He reaches out to us and delivers us from sin. He reaches out to draw us back to Him that we might be safe within the flock, under His loving care.

Jesus' desire is inclusive, drawing in people of all nations, all tongues, all races. We are precious in the eyes of the Lord for He shed His blood for us. It is His desire that there be one flock made up of those whom He has called from all the nations of the world. And indeed we do know the voice of the Good Shepherd; the One Shepherd who brings us the hope of everlasting life.

This is why we observe Good Shepherd Sunday in the Easter season of the Church year. The Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep because –

III. He Alone Conquers Death for His Flock.

John 10:17-18 “Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. ¹⁸No 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.”

It is not only about Jesus laying down His life for the sheep, It is also, and so very significantly about Jesus *taking up His life again!* Jesus died for us to pay for our sins. Jesus rose again on Easter morning so that we might know the truth and power of the resurrection! Jesus had power, that is the authority entrusted to Him from God the Father to lay down His life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. Jesus also possessed the power to rise from the dead. God the Father authorized the resurrection that we might know that Jesus has conquered death by destroying sin's power, by destroying the curse of the law which is death. Even as one man's sin brought death into the world and death

passed upon all men for all have sinned, so Jesus conquered death for all in His resurrection! Paul teaches us in --

Romans 5:17-18 “If by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Therefore, as through one man’s offense *judgment came* to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life.”

Life! WE have life in His name. Jesus is THE Good Shepherd because He leads us from death to life. He has conquered death by His resurrection. The grave has lost its sting. The last enemy to be defeated is death, and Jesus has shown us and leads us through the grave to everlasting life. There is no other shepherd who can do that. Jesus, only Jesus is the Shepherd who can lead us through death’s dark valley so that we also shall, with King David and all others who know the Lord as their Shepherd, “ *dwell in the House of the Lord forever.*” (Psalm 23:6)

Jesus as our Good Shepherd guides and directs us according to His truth, in His truth unto eternal life. In a favorite hymn we sing:

“Jesus lead Thou on Till our rest is won;
And although the way be cheerless,
We will follow calm and fearless.
Guide us by Thy hand To our fatherland.

“Jesus lead Thou on Till our rest is won.
Heav’nly Leader, still direct us,
Still support, control, protect us,
Till we safely stand In our fatherland.” (The Lutheran Hymnal 410:1,2)

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans 15:13)