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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 12, 2019  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Acts 13:15-16a, 26-33, Revelation 7:9-17

Hymns: 11; 426; 783; 51

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

Sermon Text: John 10:22-30

<sup>22</sup> Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. <sup>23</sup> And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. <sup>24</sup> Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

<sup>25</sup> Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. <sup>26</sup> But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and My Father are one." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

In Christ Jesus, our Good Shepherd, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: "Who's looking out for you?"

We live in a time when that is an important question. It comes to the forefront of a great many different conversations. Some of them are political. People do rely upon government officials to look out for them. Government is supposed to keep us safe from foreign invaders, and from criminals in our own society. In this modern time we expect government to do more and more of looking out for people. Sometimes it results in people taking less and less responsibility for their own welfare. We do need to look out for ourselves, being careful in how we behave or what friends may make. We need to behave responsibly or we will suffer adverse consequences. But we know that people aren't always so good at behaving responsibly and find themselves in bad situations when they may need help. It happens to all of us.

Who is looking out for you in times of trouble? It is easy for us to answer that the Lord tells us that we should be looking out for each other, but we aren't always very good at that either. We aren't dependable enough, or powerful enough, or wise enough. Sometimes people that are supposed to be looking out for the welfare of others just don't do it. At other times they may tell people what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear. Sometimes people that need guidance just don't hear what they are being told, what they don't want to hear. They stop up their ears. The result is quite a mess.

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday. What lies at the heart of our worship on Good Shepherd Sunday is the answer to that question, the ultimate answer to that question, **"Who's looking out for you?"** And all those issues I just mentioned above are descriptive of the situation we are in because of our sin; the situation the Good Shepherd has chosen to take on by looking out for the welfare of the people of this world.

Where there is a shepherd then there are also sheep. The flock of sheep are those that actually belong to the shepherd. He has an investment in these sheep. He cares about his sheep. On the other hand sheep are often wayward, and get themselves needlessly in jams, even in dangerous situations. This picture which was so familiar to the Jesus' audience 2000 years ago still works very well for us today.

Of course the spiritual component to all this is of the highest consideration. So this morning with rapt attention that we are --

### **THEME: Hearing the Voice of the Good Shepherd.**

Many

#### **I. Fail to Heed His Clear Message.**

In our text Jesus is confronted by a gathering of the Jews who challenged Jesus to declare Himself to be the Christ. It is significant that this incident occurred in the temple during the Feast of Dedication, a festival that commemorated the up rise of the Maccabees against the abuses of the Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes who had defiled the temple with pagan idols.

After this up rise the temple was purified and rededicated to the worship of the true God. This festival commemorated those historic events. However this festival also incited an intense patriotic fervor among the Jews who longed for a Messiah who would cast off the shackles of Rome. The challenge thrown at Jesus was that He declare Himself to be such a political savior.

Jesus' response was direct. He had already plainly told them that He was the Christ. He had declared that the kingdom of God was at hand. He called people to repentance. His message was authenticated and reinforced by the works, the miracles that Jesus had done in His Father's name. Jesus is the Christ of God! However

that wasn't what they wanted to hear. They wanted something more political, something more nationalistic. They wanted to hear that Jesus was going to make the Jews great again, as in the days of David and Solomon.

This wasn't Jesus' purpose. Jesus declared that they were not of the His flock, they were not His sheep because they did not hear the voice of Jesus. They certainly weren't interested in following where Jesus would lead them. They had determined their own way, their own agenda, their own religion and it was to "*wander on pathways unholy.*" (The Lutheran Hymnal 366:7) Jesus said, "*Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*" <sup>35</sup> *For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.*" (Mark 8:34-35). Jesus followers are to deny self, not dote on self.

There remains many today that would use the church to advance their own agendas, their own social/political causes. Does Jesus want us to care about our neighbor? Of course He does. He emphasized the importance of the second table of the law time and again. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Indeed we are taught that we are to put our neighbor interests before our own. But this does not change the Lord's direction for our lives being spiritual. Even as Jesus called sinners to repentance He has commissioned us to proclaim His message of repentance and salvation to the world.

As our Shepherd Jesus would lead us to heaven, and not to the fulfillment of the desires of the flesh, or the pursuit of the riches of this world, or the championing of social justice as the mission of the church. But there are many false shepherds who would entice the flock of God to turn away from following Jesus down the paths of righteousness. Tune your ears to --

## **II. Hearing and Following the Voice of our Shepherd.**

Jesus offers something so much better than anything the world can offer. Hear the voice of the Good Shepherd:

**John 10:27-29** My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand.

There is safety and security for the sheep as they hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. He leads His sheep on the paths of righteousness. He will never lead them astray. He knows His sheep. This relationship between Jesus as our Good Shepherd and us, His sheep, is personal. Many emphasize this is the wrong direction, that it is personal for me, like when it is declared Jesus is my personal Savior. The emphasis is on the individual knowing Jesus. Jesus is saying something far better. Jesus knows you. He knows you better than you know yourself. Yes, that can be scary when we think about the evil thoughts we may have or the things that we have done, or the times we wandered on pathways unholy. If we feel some shame, it is undoubtedly well deserved, but that is not what our Shepherd is focused on. When we wander off the path of righteousness, the Good Shepherd seeks us out to rescue us and bring us back safe and sound into the sheepfold. He again calls us to repentance.

Jesus' cares for us and it is His desire that we be safe and secure unto eternal life. That is what He secured for us by His death and resurrection. That is what He desires for you. He will keep you safe in His hand. There are no enemies that are able to snatch us out of our Savior's hand! Jesus adds to that by reminding us that this is the will of God the Father. God the Father sent His Son into this world to save us. God gave us to His Son as His children, and so we are Jesus cherished possession. Jesus reminds us that the Father is greater than all! He is the

Almighty God, and we are secure in the Father's hand. We are safe from the old evil foe. This is the picture God's grace and salvation that brings calm to the troubled heart and peace to the anguished soul. God revealed this as a picture of His grace already to the Prophet Isaiah where we read:

"He will feed His flock like a shepherd;  
He will gather the lambs with His arm,  
And carry *them* in His bosom,  
And gently lead those who are with young." (Isaiah 40:11)

This all came to fulfillment in Jesus who loved us and as our Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep. Jesus laid down His life for us and then Jesus took His life up again that we might have life in His name. So He feeds us with this gospel message. He gathers us up safe and secure in His loving arms. When we need special care, Jesus knows, and in His gentle ways He leads us in the paths of righteousness.

So how shall we respond? As dumb sheep or as faithful sheep?

We know that Isaiah also wrote "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way." (Isaiah 53:6) and for that our Shepherd paid. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all!" (Isaiah 53:6) Yes, even then the Lord delivered us from the curse of the law! So how shall we who have been brought to realize the magnitude of the Shepherd's loving care respond?

The words of the psalmist flow so well also from our hearts and our lips: "So we, Your people and sheep of Your pasture,  
Will give You thanks forever;  
We will show forth Your praise to all generations". (Psalm 79:13).

We do give thanks. We praise His name not only with our words but also with our actions; with our behavior. Let us

praise His name and glorify Him whose lovingkindness endures forever!

**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. (Romans15:13)