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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 3, 2020  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Psalm 23, John 10:1-10  
Hymns: 10; 783; 409; 51 (237:2-4)

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

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 2:19-25

For this *is* commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. <sup>20</sup> For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God. <sup>21</sup> For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

<sup>22</sup> “Who committed no sin,

Nor was deceit found in His mouth”;

<sup>23</sup> who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; <sup>24</sup> who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. <sup>25</sup> For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

In Christ Jesus, Our Living Savior and the Shepherd of our souls,  
dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Following your own ideas can lead to big trouble. “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6) That is how life in Israel during the time of the Judges is described. There was no king in Israel so everybody just did whatever they thought was right for them. What was right for one was not the same as what was right for another. Before long the ways of the Lord were neglected or even forgotten, and the ways of the idolatrous nations who had previously lived Canaan, in the Promised Land before Israel, were accepted, or at least incorporated along with the worship of the true God. The many sins of idolatry and lusts of the flesh seemed just fine for the people of Israel; it was right in their eyes. They wandered on pathways unholy, and were delivered time and again into the hands of their enemies. Then, when suffering the consequences of their foolish and sinful ways, they would seek the Lord and cry out for deliverance, and the Lord would deliver them. Before long the cycle of sin would begin again. It’s a lesson in the weakness, folly, and sinfulness of human nature.

The same phrase fits American society every bit as well as it fit for Old Testament Israel. Human nature hasn’t changed. Even in an America that is called a Christian nation, “everyone *does* what is right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6) People still wander down pathways unholy. How does Jesus respond to all this spiritual wandering? Mark records this response: “*Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.*” (Mark 6:34)

On this 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Easter we consider Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and Jesus reminds us that the Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep. He died that we might live. He gave His life **for us**, sheep that loved to wander. He gave His life that He might take it again. He gave His life and rose again that we might know the path of life. Jesus our Good Shepherd knows us as His sheep. He calls us by name. Jesus knows us and having called us to faith, we now know Him as our Good Shepherd who guides and directs us in life into the green pastures of salvation, to the still waters where we might know peace with God, the peace of sins forgiven.

As we are led by the Spirit to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, may we be found living our lives --

**THEME: Following the Good Shepherd's Lead.**

Peter wrote this epistle in which we find our text because of the persecution that Christians, many of them new to faith, were experiencing. It was important that they that follow the Good Shepherd while --

### **I. Enduring Persecution.**

**1 Peter 2:19-21** “For this *is* commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. <sup>20</sup> For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God. <sup>21</sup> For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”

No one likes to suffer for doing good! We can all appreciate injustice when it appears in our own lives, and our human nature would lead us to complain that it is unfair. We consider it grossly unfair that we should suffer for following the Lord's way, for holding to His truth. And yet that is what the Lord Himself told us to expect. On the night before He died Jesus told His disciples:

**John 15:18-20** “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. <sup>19</sup> If you were **of** the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are **not** of the world, but I chose you **out** of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.”

For many this seems to be a great disappointment and a discouragement for continuing to follow where the Good Shepherd leads. We need to consider what this actually involves. If one chooses to blend in with the world one can easily avoid persecution. However that does also include avoiding Jesus and a real Christian life. Jesus did not choose the easy path even though He was fully aware of what lay before Him. He spoke these words to His disciples just hours before He was betrayed and arrested and His sufferings for our salvation began. And that is actually what

following the Good Shepherd is all about; laying hold on that salvation Jesus won for us at the cost of His own blood.

Christ suffered for us, **leaving us an example**. He suffered for us enduring the pain and the curse of the law that was **not** due Him. He suffered for us that we might be delivered from death. He did so **willingly**. He would have us take up our cross and follow Him, denying self, forsaking the world, and clinging to Him, following where our Shepherd leads. (Matthew 16:24)

Our text also reminds us that it was to this that we were called. We were called to faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. He is our Lord and Savior. As our Lord we are His disciples, we are the ones who follow, follow Him, and learn from Him, and serve Him. We are not only called to faith, we are called to discipleship. We are called to be lights of truth and righteousness shining in a dark world. *We are called to suffer here with Jesus.*

It took some time and a special measure of the Holy Spirit for the Apostles to get to this point in their faith life, but by the Spirit's grace they did. This same Peter who wrote the words of our text had denied the Lord three times on the night Jesus was arrested. It was only a few weeks later that Peter spoke boldly of Jesus as God and Savior before the same high Jewish council that condemned Jesus. When beaten for proclaiming the truth Peter along with the rest of the apostles glorified God that they were found worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' name. We read in the book of Acts:

**Acts 5:40-42** "When they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. <sup>41</sup> So they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing** that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. <sup>42</sup> And daily in the temple, and in every house, they **did not cease** teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."

Same Peter, but a Peter who by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit was no longer ashamed of Jesus, but rather rejoiced to suffer a beating for Jesus, and persisted in being a bold witness to the gospel of a crucified and risen Savior. **It is to this that you were called.** May the Lord grant us such a measure of His Holy Spirit that we may follow where the Good Shepherd leads!

Jesus, our Good Shepherd leads us in --

## II. Walking in the Paths of Righteousness.

Our text reads --

**1 Peter 2:21-24** For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

<sup>22</sup> “Who committed no sin,

Nor was deceit found in His mouth”;

<sup>23</sup> who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; <sup>24</sup> who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.”

Jesus didn't sin. He bore **our** sins in His own body on the cross. Even when people mocked Jesus, reviled Him, Jesus didn't sin. He didn't return curse for curse. **He forgave**. He didn't threaten when others hurt Him, telling them that they would get what's coming when He entered into His kingdom. At the end of His suffering, He committed His spirit into the hands of His heavenly Father. He committed His life into the hands of His Father.

**To this you were called**, that you might follow the Good Shepherd. His sufferings and death are not a license to sin but the greatest reason of all to die to sin, that is to declare that sin, especially willful sin, has **no place** in my life! He died so that we might be empowered to live **for righteousness**. That is possible because of His stripes. He suffered to cure us from a corrupt and sinful heart and life.

Follow Jesus. Follow where He leads. We know the words King David wrote in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm so very well. We are not to just recite them, we are meant to live them. “*The Lord is my Shepherd! ... He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*” He doesn't lead in the ways of the world. He doesn't lead me in pathways unholy. He leads me in the paths of righteousness so that in my life and in my behavior Jesus' name might be glorified before the world. It is the healing power of His wounds, His stripes, His death, His resurrection that brings righteousness and life to me, and then to my life and my behavior.

There is a wonder of grace found in following after our Good Shepherd,

### **III. Returning to the Good Shepherd's Care.**

**1 Peter 2:25** “For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

We too, along with all the rest of this sinful world, were like those sheep that loved to wander, wandering far and wide from the safe pastures of our heavenly Father. We just go wherever our corrupt little minds will take us! That is the nature of the human beast. Nothing has changed in the sinful human nature. It is as the Lord saw and declared from days of old: “*The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.<sup>3</sup> They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.*” (Psalm 14:2-3)

And yet in His compassion God sent His Son to gather us into His fold that we might be safe from eternal death. By His grace we have been called back, returned to the Lord who cares for us, to the Good Shepherd who gave His life for us, and who in all things cares for us. This is the wonder of God's grace in Christ Jesus.

On this Good Shepherd Sunday we rejoice in the grace of Christ Jesus the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep, sheep that loved to wander.

“Perverse and foolish oft I strayed, But in His love He sought me.  
And on His shoulder gently laid And home, rejoicing, brought me.

“And so through all the length of days Thy goodness faileth never.  
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise Within Thy house forever.”  
(The Lutheran Hymnal 431:3,6)

**AMEN.**

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