

“One Shepherd, One Voice, One Flock”

John 10:11-16

Sermon for the Third Sunday of Easter 2022; May 1, 2022

Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Rifle, Colorado

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God’s word talks to us about the kingdom of God today in the terms of shepherds and sheep. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God says; “[T]hus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Ez. 34:11-12 ESV). In the Gospel reading, Jesus says: “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11). The Apostle Peter, moved by the Holy Spirit says: “For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25 ESV), Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Gospel reading today is taken out of John chapter 10. The chapter starts out with Jesus speaking in a figure of speech or a parable. Jesus says, “Truly, truly I say to you: the one who does not enter into the courtyard for the sheep through the door but climbs up some other way, that one is a thief and robber” (John 10:1).

Jesus goes on to say, “The one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep” (John 10:2). Then Jesus talks about the door-keeper. The door-keeper opens the door for the shepherd. The sheep recognize the voice of their shepherd. The shepherd calls His sheep by name (John 10:3).

John calls these words of Jesus at the beginning of the chapter a “figure of speech” or parable. There are couple of important features of this parable.

The first has to do with the door-keeper. I am thinking here of a Roman villa. There were actually servants in the household whose job it was to tend to and guard the front door. This servant was called the door-keeper. Since the Romans had conquered Palestine at the time, Jesus may have been thinking of a Roman villa.

The second thing has to do with the place for the sheep. The ESV translation uses the term “sheepfold.” It might be more descriptive for us to recognize that the word John uses there is the word for courtyard. It is the same word used in the context of Jesus’ trial before the chief priest and where Peter denied Jesus three times. It says there that Peter entered the courtyard of the high priest, where the servants of the chief priest were warming themselves by the fire (Mat. 26:58).

So in these words from John 10, Jesus is talking about a fenced-in or walled courtyard like area that is where the sheep are kept. It is the place for the sheep. Thus, He can talk about someone climbing up some other way, and not going through the door. Today, we would probably just talk about a sheep pen.

After speaking this parable, Jesus spoke more directly. He said, “Truly, truly I say to You: I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7). So now it is not that the door-keeper opens the door for Jesus as the shepherd. Jesus Himself is the door. The only way to get in to where God’s sheep are is to go through Jesus.

Jesus attaches great promise to this. The person who enters through Jesus will be saved. And that person shall go in and out and find pasture. Saved from what? Saved from the wolf. Saved from starvation. Saved from the death that comes from being without the necessary food for the soul. Saved from starvation for the truth.

Jesus says that He came to give life with God and give it abundantly. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. The thief speaks with a different voice. The thief asserts things as truth that are different than the voice of the shepherd. A thief tries to get in some other way. But the sheep do not follow the thief's voice (John 10:5).

This leads to where the reading we have today from John chapter 10 begins. "I am the good shepherd," Jesus says. "The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). This is to say that the good shepherd risks His life for the sheep. He puts His life on the line in the face of danger. What is the danger? The wolf. The good shepherd does not turn away when the wolf comes.

The wolf is yet another voice. Jesus tells the truth against this voice. But this is risky, because the wolf does not like what the good shepherd says. So the good shepherd puts His life on the line against the wolf for the benefit of the sheep. In this, the good shepherd demonstrates that He is true and what He says is true. In this, the sheep hear His voice. And there is one flock: One shepherd; one voice, God's word; one flock.

In verse 16 Jesus speaks about having other sheep who are not of this fold and that He must bring them also, and there will be one flock, one shepherd (John 10:16). He is talking here about Jew and gentile. There is the people of Israel. Then there is the sheep that are not of this fold, this fold being a reference to the people of Israel. These other sheep are the gentiles, the nations. Jesus has sheep among the people of Israel and among the nations. But there is one shepherd. One flock gathered in the voice of this one shepherd.

Jesus goes on to say that the Father loves Him because Jesus lays down His life, so that He may take it again. Why does the Father love this? It is because Jesus gives His life for the glory of the sheep.

Jesus adds, "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of my myself. I have the authority to lay it down. I have the authority to take it again. This command I have received from my Father" (John 10:17-18). He laid His life down and took it again so the sheep could live.

Here is why He is the good shepherd. Here is why He is the door, the way in. Here is why anyone who enters through Jesus obtains salvation and is led in and out by Jesus and finds pasture; that is, finds the necessary food for the soul that gives life with God.

Jesus has given His life for you and taken it again for you. In this you have forgiveness in the framework of God's word. In this you have life in God as Jesus took life again. In this you are rescued from the wolf, your ancient adversary the devil. In this, Jesus rescues you from the day of clouds and thick darkness, and brings you into the glory and light of life.

We rejoice today, therefore, in our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, who has reconciled us to the Father and leads us on to the green pastures of eternal life, to dwell in the house of the LORD forever (Psalm 23:6). Amen.