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Christ the King Lutheran Church – Cody, WY
Second Sunday of Easter – Quasimodo Geniti
April 14, 2024
Text: John 10:11–16

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

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

One of the most enduring and beloved poetic images in the Bible is that of sheep with a shepherd. That beloved image is part of God's revelation of Himself. God is our shepherd. And we are His beloved sheep. One of the most often quoted and frequently memorized psalms is Psalm 23, written by Israel's great shepherd-king, David, the son of Jesse. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me besides the still waters...." (Ps. 23:1–2). Notice the dual claim David is making, keeping in mind that his words are now our words of prayer, worship, and devotion.

First, the Lord God of heaven and earth is the divine shepherd who watches over His people with the love and dedication seen only in shepherds of the ancient world. According to ancient literature, both secular and Biblical, shepherds typically loved and protected their sheep with an unparalleled devotion. God's care for His sheep is absolute and perfect, "I shall not want." David proclaims the almighty God is that shepherd! And we are His sheep. We belong to Him.

Did we not hear of such divine, holy devotion in the prophet Ezekiel?
"Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out...and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered...I will feed them with good pasture...I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God" (Ez. 34:11-12, 14, 15). God the Holy Trinity is our shepherd. He protects us, corrects us, and

loves us with His steadfast love that fills the world! (Ps. 33:5b; Introit). The totality of our lives, from birth to death and into eternal life, is under the watchful, loving care of our divine Shepherd. Such is the first claim of Psalm 23. The Lord God is the divine shepherd who cares for His beloved sheep.

The second claim is, in many ways, the most remarkable. “The Lord is *my shepherd*.” Even as the Lord God claims me as His own dear sheep, so I claim Him to be my Shepherd. Not the devil, not the world. I am not my own shepherd, living under independent, self-rule. No, God belongs to me for He has claimed me as His own.

It always begins with God seeking and finding His lost sheep. Though we sheep are prone to wander off into danger and get into unnecessary mischief, the Good Shepherd of our souls brings us back safely. Because He gives of Himself so fully and graciously, we are able to claim Him as our own. Did we not hear last Sunday in John 20 that frightened, skeptical sheep named Thomas says to the resurrected Jesus, “My Lord and my God.”

Yes. God is the Shepherd of His people. And by His steadfast love and faithfulness, we sinners – sheep – can rightly and confidently confess before heaven and earth, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” As I belong to Him, so He belongs to Me. No greater honor can be given. No more exalted status can be conferred than this divine privilege of claiming God to be our Shepherd-God.

The Bible teaches that David was a prophet (Acts 2:30). Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David saw and wrote about the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 23 is about the Lord Jesus Christ even though David composed it about 1,000 years before Christ’s earthly ministry. Jesus, the great Son of David according to His human nature, says He is the divine Shepherd of Psalm 23. This is recorded in John 10:11, “I am the good shepherd.”

The two claims from Psalm 23:1 with which I began this sermon must be understood most fully and completely in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd” – twice, once in vs. 11 and then

again in vs. 14, He is claiming to be the Lord described by David as well as the shepherd of Ezekiel's prophecy. The man Jesus Christ claims to be God in human flesh and blood. Jesus is the Shepherd of your souls.

The Lord Jesus describes how He gives Himself for the sheep. Vs. 10, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." And then in vs. 14–15, "I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." In the death and resurrection of Jesus we see and know Jesus as our Good Shepherd. Through Him, we know Father and the Father knows us. No greater intimacy can be known. I know my sheep as well as I know the Father, says Jesus. In other words, Christians are brought into the eternal life of God the Holy Trinity. I know my own sheep, says Jesus. And my sheep know me. Each of you can rightly say, I am a Christian, redeemed by the blood of God's Son, Jesus Christ. He is my Lord, my God, and my Savior. I belong to Him and He belongs to me. The Lord is *my shepherd*.

Saints of God, in the waters of Holy Baptism Jesus claimed you to be His own. He forgave you your sins, filled you with the Holy Spirit, delivered you from the dominion of death and the devil, and saved you from eternal condemnation and hellish judgment. This holy faith in Jesus is the Father's great gift given to you by the Spirit.

Christ's care and love for you, however, did not stop at your baptism. The Shepherd of your souls calls you to Himself through His holy Word, read, proclaimed, heard, and believed. God's Word, the Bible, is the green pasture where we are fed by Jesus, the Good Shepherd Himself. Our baptism and the hearing and believing of God's Word also leads us to Holy Communion, the table of the Lord where Jesus gives us His true body and blood. As Jesus lives in us, so we live in Him.

Every Sunday, the Holy Spirit leads, guides, and directs us to gather together in Christ's name. For where two or three are gathered in Christ's name, there He is in their midst. Shepherd and sheep together as one flock. With Christ

always among us, He feeds us His holy Word and directs us to the feasting table of Holy Communion so that we may dwell with Him forever. This communion fellowship naturally and gloriously leads to worship, praise, hymns, and songs offered in joyous worship of our Good Shepherd who laid down His life for us. A most hearty thank you goes to Cindi, our choir members, and all our musicians for giving us words and melody to glorify and praise our Savior. And a hearty thank you also goes to you, the members of this congregation, for singing to the Lord. You do so wonderfully. According to the Bible, singing and making melody to the Lord in song and music is simply what Christians do. It's what the angels do in heaven. In our worship centered around God's Word and Sacraments, Christ Jesus reminds us, "I know my own and my own know me. I am the Good Shepherd.

This holy fellowship between Christ Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and His beloved Sheep forms the basis of all church ministry. Jesus said (vs. 16), "And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd." In every meeting, every Bible study, all activities, our support of missions at home and abroad, all efforts to evangelize people who do not yet know Christ Jesus as Lord, our preschool mission, in every worship service, in all that we do, we earnestly pray the saving voice of Jesus is heard clearly so that new-born sheep are called to Him. And thereby, the one holy Christian and apostolic flock of Jesus continues to grow and mature.

I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. To these glorious words, we sing and confess unto the ages of ages, "The Lord is my shepherd."

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT READING*Ezekiel 34:11–16*

¹¹“For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. ¹²As 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. ¹³And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁶I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.”

EPISTLE*1 Peter 2:21–25*

²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

HOLY GOSPEL*John 10:11–16*

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the tenth chapter.

C: Glory be to Thee, O Lord.

¹¹[Jesus said:] “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”