**The Bad Wolf and The Good Shepherd**

Based on [John 10:11-18](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn10.11-18)

Preached on Easter 4

“Good Shepherd Sunday”

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Good Shepherd Sunday is an annual observance in the church on the Fourth Sunday of Easter. That is today. And we have Jesus’ Gospel words from John chapter 10 where he says “I am the Good Shepherd.” And the words he uses here are a figure of speech. It’s like when he teaches a parable, but it’s not. A parable tells a story “A man planted a vineyard” or “a sower went out to sow.” But today Jesus' figurative words don’t tell a story. It’s more like they paint a picture of a single scene, not a full story, a vignette maybe.

A parable is a full movie; today’s teaching is only a picture. And this picture involves a set of characters. There is a Shepherd, Sheep, a Hired Hand and a Wolf. Sounds like we have the setup for a good fable. "The Bad Wolf and the Good Shepherd." But this is no fable. Jesus is speaking of real people. Jesus himself is the Good Shepherd; You are the sheep; Satan is the Wolf, false shepherds are the Hired Hand.

The picture Jesus gives us is of the Good Shepherd...and he tells us what he means by a "good" shepherd. This is why it is important for you to listen to the voice of Jesus, because your worldly wisdom is no help here. Your worldly wisdom tells you that a good shepherd is one who tends the sheep, why?, for the sake of using them, shearing their wool and eventually slaughtering them for lamb chops. The sheep are a commodity and if you only listen to Jesus picture and not his words about the picture, you're going to misunderstand. Because Jesus says the good shepherd "**lays down his life for the sheep**."

Could you imagine a rancher that not only fed his cattle, herded his cattle, and protected his cattle, but that also spoke as though he was willing to die for his cattle? He'd be fit for a different kind of farm...the funny farm. We'd call the authorities to have him locked-up, because that kind of talk is not in touch with reality...and he might be a danger to himself or others. It says in John 10:19-20, that there was a division among the hearers of these words, and many of them said, "He has a demon, and is *insane*." You can see why. The Lord says in Isaiah 55:8, "**My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways**."

And so in Jesus' thoughts, a Good Shepherd is not just a "competent or skilled" shepherd. Nor does he simply mean a "nice" or "gentle" shepherd. For some reason it seems, when Jesus talks of sheep and shepherding, we think of a carefree "flower-child" Jesus who loves to sit around and pet animals all day and frolic with them across verdant pastures. A beautiful picture, no doubt, until you realize there is a wolf about. Then this nice, gentle man is then shown to be a positively incompetent shepherd who is so lost in his own love and sentimentality that he'd naively invite the wolf to join his little animal farm. And when the wolf begins to bear his fangs and shatter the sheep, all he can do is scream and wail and flee because it's too late.

No the Good Shepherd is not a competent shepherd, nor is he a nice shepherd. Jesus says, the Good Shepherd "lays down his life for the sheep." And that's exactly what your Good Shepherd did. On the cross of Calvary, Jesus Christ laid down his life for you as a sacrifice, and he did so willingly and obediently. " Isaiah 53:7 "**He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth." For you are his sheep, he is your shepherd, he owns you and he love**s and takes care of his own.

No the Good Shepherd is not a *competent* shepherd, nor is he a *nice* shepherd. Jesus says, the Good Shepherd "lays down his life for the sheep." And he has to, because there is a wolf about. Have you ever seen a wolf? I have…on YouTube ☺, and stuffed on a mount. They're are built to be predators. Sharp fangs and claws meant for ripping and tearing and clamping on to live flesh that is resisting it! Fast and lithe so as to overcome prey quickly from a distance. And yet, a wolf is a timid, and will avoid a man rather than meet him, especially in the daylight. The wolf, he seeks his prey at night, in the darkness where one with a will for treachery and deception have the advantage. He prefers to sneak upon his prey and take it unawares rather than openly and boldly, because he is a hunter, out for blood. No sense of fair play, no sense of mercy or compassion he lives to kill the weak and consume them for his own.

With the wolf, Jesus gives us a picture of Satan, and really of the character of his servants on earth. There are evil people in the world because there is the evil one still at work. And I would like to step out of this picture for a moment and remind the Christian church of this fact, because it seems to have forgotten. The world has convinced us that there is no such thing as evil intent. Therefore we must assume everyone means well if only they say they do. If someone says they believe in Jesus, but deny his teachings and act contrary to him, we are obliged by Political Correctness to let the person call themselves a Christian, and yet willingly and openly contradict God’s Word.

But there is a wolf about, and he is a deceitful hunter who wishes to catch you with your guard down, unawares. Satan does that by deceiving people, especially members of the holy christian church, to speak falsely about God. This is why in the bible, the apostles, especially St. Paul, are so earnest in making sure that sound doctrine is taught and false doctrine rebuked. Because a little leaven leavens the whole loaf. A little crack spreads across the entire windshield. A little poision contaminates the well. And while leaving your door open a crack might seem okay, it’s enough to let a thief in if he’s in the neighborhood. Satan is in the neighborhood, And we are warned in Ephesians 4:27, “**do not give the devil a foothold**” “Do not give Satan an oppourtunity”…he will seize it.

The devil is a wolf, a predator, and he disguises himself as a sheep, an angel of light even because he wants to destroy you. That is why God gives Pastors to his church. Pastor is the latin word for shepherd, and the shepherd is supposed to speak the voice of Christ so that the sheep can recognize it, and also recognize

The confessional documents of our Church say this, [14] It is not only necessary that the pure, wholesome doctrine be rightly presented for the preservation of pure doctrine and for thorough, permanent, godly unity in the Church, but it is also necessary that the opponents who teach otherwise be reproved (1 Timothy 3; [2 Timothy 3:16;] Titus 1:9). **Faithful shepherds, as Luther says, should do both things: (a) feed or nourish the lambs and (b) resist the wolves.** Then the sheep may flee from strange voices (John 10:5–12) and may separate the precious from the worthless (Jeremiah 15:19). (*Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, "Antithesis or False Doctrine in the Disputed Articles, paragraph 14*).

The sheep are weak and easy prey. Their only is if they know the voice of their shepherd. A dog recognizes his owner’s voice and relaxes, but when he hears a stranger’s voice, he barks. Sheep are the same way, only they don’t have a bark. Their only hope against the dangers of the wild is that there is a protector for them, a shepherd that owns them and protects them. But they must recognize his voice so they know where he is, and can stay within his vicinity. Knowing the shepherds voice, that is the “faith” of the sheep.

So too Jesus says, “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.” Friends, that is the holy Christian church on earth, those who know the voice, the words, of Jesus and gather around them for safety and protection from the wolf. **For Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd who, when the wolf came to kill us, stood in our place and was killed so that we might escape the enemy.** When the devil came to claim us, Jesus diverted his attention to himself. So we are the sheep, and we are not to fight the wolf! We are to hide behind the Shepherd. Satan is smarter and stronger than us, and he's been around a lot longer than we have, and the battle moves in ways that are beyond our comprehension. Do not, on your own strength, on your own words, by the power of your own heart of faith fight Satan. You need to remain within earshot of the voice of the shepherd, or else you are a sitting duck for the devil.

Jesus says there is one flock, one shepherd, one Pastor. And so, beloved children, I am not your Good Pastor…Jesus is. I do not own you, Jesus does. The father did not give me authority to die for you; he gave that to Jesus, because you belong to him. I do not know you like Jesus knows you, and I can’t for you are not mine. As your pastor here, I cannot remember all your birthdays, all your siblings, know all your struggles, empathize with each and every one of your very personal and very real hurts and needs. **I more like the hired hand, and so is every other honest pastor because you are not our property, and we do not own you. I know you…but not like Jesus does. I love you…but not like Jesus does. I would die for you, but my death is worth nothing to you, for I have not been given the authority to be your substitute, your priest.** Neither has any pastor that came before me, nor any pastor that will come after, for Jesus says, “I have authority to lay down my life; authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my father. There is one shepherd, Jesus Christ, and one flock…those from one side of the globe to another that hear his voice and congregate to it.

As your church pastor, I am not here to replace Jesus. I am simply to speak Jesus voice, his words to you, and that draws sheep not to me, but to him. **My voice is nothing; but Jesus voice is heard in all faithful pastors who speak Jesus words to his people.**  They will come in and go out and find pasture. And though the devil prowls around you like a predatory wolf, seeking an opportunity to pounce in the darkness of the world…O little Flock, Fear not the Foe, for the Good Shepherd fights for you. You hear his voice, therefore you know he’s near to you.

*O little flock, fear not the foe*

*Who madly seeks your overthrow;*

*Dread not his rage and pow'r.*

*And though your courage sometimes faints,*

*His seeming triumph o'er God's saints*

*Lasts but a little hour.*

*- ("O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe", LSB* Hymn 666 v.1)

Fear not, for the Good Shepherd protects his sheep.