

## Fourth Sunday of Easter - Good Shepherd Sunday

### *Sermon Road Map*

April 21, 2024

Acts 20:28-32

Peace Ev. Lutheran Church - King of Prussia, PA      Rev. Roger W Huffman, Vacancy Pastor

### **Listen and learn how the Good Shepherd shepherds his flock.**

When you hear, *The Good Shepherd*, what comes to mind?

What do you think others expect of Jesus as *The Good Shepherd*? A Super hero for emergencies? A silent companion until consulted? A leading companion through life?

It's easy to see how Jesus was the Good Shepherd to the people who walked, talked, and ate with him. But how does he shepherd us now, when we can't meet face to face?

Paul answers this question as he speaks to the Elders of Ephesus. He teaches us how our Risen and Ascended Lord shepherds his people. In fact this brief reading is the key source of many Christian teachings and practices. It's a gold mine. We are in for a real treat.

### **Listen and learn how the Good Shepherd shepherds his flock.**

Speaking to these Elders, the leader/teachers of the churches in Ephesus, Paul charges them, <sup>28</sup> *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*

- Their God-given roles: *overseers, keep watch, be shepherds of God's church/flock*
  - ♦ Shepherds don't sit there, eyes glued on their cell phones, ignoring the sheep!
  - ♦ A shepherd stands where he can look over the whole flock. He's an *overseer*.
  - ♦ *Be shepherds* is a verb. *Pastor*: from the Latin verb *pascere*: *lead to pasture, feed*
  - ♦ Value of their charge: *the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*
  - ♦ *Wow*, they're precious! That's sobering. What a trust! What a privilege!
  - ♦ Comfort: not self-appointed! A servant ...*the Holy Spirit has made you overseers*
- Divinely appointed with divine authority - shepherding under the Good Shepherd.
  - ♦ This is how the Risen and Ascended Good Shepherd shepherds his flock.
  - ♦ Each faithful pastor knows he's called to shepherd as Jesus would, on his behalf.
    - Feed, guide, and care for his sheep applying Jesus' word and sacraments.
    - Shepherding with Jesus' heart, with Jesus' wisdom and mercy, modeling Christ.
- This requires knowing Jesus, his purpose and goal for his flock and its sheep/followers
  - ♦ Paul later spells this out to them and all the church in Ephesus in Ephesians 4:
    - *Christ... himself gave the apostles, ... as well as the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the purpose of training the saints for the work of serving, in order to build up the body of Christ. <sup>13</sup> This is to continue until we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, resulting in a mature man with a stature reaching to the measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> The goal is that we would no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, when people use tricks and invent clever ways to lead us astray. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we would in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head.*
    - Paul spoke of his own pastoral work among them: <sup>26</sup> *Therefore I solemnly declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, <sup>27</sup> for I did not hesitate to proclaim to you the whole counsel of God.* <sup>EHV</sup> *All of it? Yes, all of it!*
    - <sup>19</sup> *Therefore go and gather disciples... <sup>20</sup> ...teaching them to keep all the instructions I have given you. And surely I am with you always until the end of the age."*

- ◆ Do you recognized the Good Shepherd at work in his pastors?
  - They are to do what he did: *gather, baptize, teach everything!*
  - Why not just enough to *“be saved”*?
    - Is Jesus content to just saving us from **some** of Satan’s lies?
    - It’s not safe to be tossed about by liars, easily led astray from Jesus.
  - <sup>32</sup> *“Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can **build you up** and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”*
- The Good Shepherd calls his under-shepherds by the Holy Spirit
  - ◆ *...the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers*
  - ◆ This is the chief passage revealing the teaching of the **Divine Call**.
  - ◆ Jesus’ pastors are **not** self-appointed or called by a feeling or hired by a church.
  - ◆ Men willing to serve Jesus, found mature in faith, and equipped are candidates.
  - ◆ Asking the Spirit guidance, the calling body deliberates - a call is extended.
  - ◆ It’s from God, but not an order. Asking the Spirit to direct deliberation...
  - ◆ Based on this and other passages, we trust the Good Shepherd is shepherding us.
- There are implications for all who follow the Good Shepherds, their Lord and Savior.
  - ◆ The **character** of Jesus’ followers - **they flock** - gather around Jesus and follow.
  - ◆ Sheep that don’t gather and follow are Lost Sheep, rebel sheep. Scattered by Satan.
  - ◆ Jesus provides you, his people, with a pastor to serve you on Jesus’ behalf.
  - ◆ Refusal to gather, be fed & trained, mature, equipped for service is **hostile to Jesus**.
  - ◆ Sending the 72: *“Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.”* Luke 10:16
  - ◆ *Listen* as in *keep on listening to, taking to heart, to shape thinking and living*.
  - ◆ Meet where your flock gathers, to be led in worship by your pastor.
    - Not a passive classroom being served. Serve, actively encourage one another.
  - ◆ Pursue Jesus’ goal for you to mature by gather around those called to teach.
  - ◆ Know your pastor is there to offer Jesus’ insights, counsel, personal instruction.
  - ◆ Don’t hide your struggles & wounds from your pastor. Let him bring Jesus’ healing.
  - ◆ Don’t avoid your pastor, hiding your sin, so you can *“follow Jesus your way.”*
    - You are not served by hiding your symptoms from your doctor.
  - ◆ Treat your pastor as Jesus’ personal shepherd that he assigned for you.
  - ◆ Respect your pastor for what Jesus has made him - your personal shepherd.
- Respect for your pastor comes from his divine call and his faithfulness to the Word.
  - ◆ A pastor who doesn’t hold to God’s Word, does not represent Jesus.
  - ◆ Check with other faithful disciples to confirm if he is wrong or you are.
  - ◆ Follow Matthew 18 to call an errant pastor back to the Word.
  - ◆ If the flock fails to stand with Jesus, it’s time to find a new faithful flock.
- The Good Shepherd shepherded us through our pastoral vacancy.
  - ◆ Jesus ascended to rule over his flock, sending the Spirit to work in and through it.
  - ◆ He used the 12 calls we extended to train us, to grow in trust, and do his work.
  - ◆ He has provided the right pastor at the right time to shepherd us.
    - All of us, including me, will be blessed as we actively seek his shepherding.
  - ◆ We are precious to Jesus. He personally shed his blood to claim and gather us.
  - ◆ He is our loving Good Shepherd who cares for us by sending us a shepherd to shepherd us in his name, as he would shepherd us in person.

**That’s how the Good Shepherd shepherds his flock.**