

Sermon 4-22-18

What My Shepherd Does for Me John 10:11-18

Dear Ones who have a Good Shepherd:

When I was a pastor in Florida some 20 years ago, one of my faithful members was an elderly lady who had been a Lutheran her whole life. She had been baptized, confirmed and married within the context of the Lutheran church. She knew her Savior. She was a regular in worship. She was a regular in Bible study. She lived her faith.

However, one day I was talking with her about the Bible and things related to the faith and she said a few things that caught me off guard. She made a few statements about the Bible and the Christian faith that were simply not true. In our discussion I led her to see what the Bible really said about the issues that came up in our conversation.

Later I thought to myself, how could this woman of such a faith be led astray into these false teachings? Later I found out that she had been listening to some of her friends about spiritual things that weren't exactly in line with Biblical truth. These false statements had led her astray from the truth of God's Word.

At the time I thought it might be a good exercise for all of the members of the church down in Florida to review some basic teachings of the Bible. I came up with the following statements and asked people to either answer True or False as a way to begin our discussion. Some of these statements were for example....

True or False?

- By nature everyone is born as an enemy of God
- All people will be saved
- Good works can help save us

- We can become “little christs”
- Heaven and hell are not real physical places
- Reincarnation is possible
- Every word of the Bible is true and without error
- Christianity is the only true religion
- Only through faith in Jesus’ death on the cross is eternal life received
- There is nothing we can do to add to our salvation that Jesus has won for us
- God created the world in six literal 24 hour days
- All false religions teach a salvation by good works

Each one of these statements is either true or false. There is no gray area in answering these statements. Yet, there are people who would not answer these statements correctly because they have been led astray by false teachers or shepherds.

In our Gospel lesson for today, Jesus reminds us that only he is the true Shepherd who will lead his sheep. He reminds us of all the false shepherds in the world that have led people to spiritual doom over the history of the world.

The prophets of the Old Testament warned the Israelites of the danger of the false shepherds and of the coming Messiah who would be the true Shepherd sent from God the Father.

- Jeremiah 50:6; 23:1-2 “My people have been lost sheep...”
- Ezekiel 34:1-10 “You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured...”

There would be a day coming when the Good Shepherd would set things straight. That day came with the arrival of Jesus as True God and True Man who entered our world. Mark 6:34 says “When Jesus landed and saw

a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a Shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.”

In Jesus’ day the Jewish religious leaders were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were the lay leaders of the Jewish faith and were more conservative in their beliefs than the Sadducees. The Sadducees were the professional clergy. But both groups were leading the Jewish people astray. Both groups had become false shepherds in leading the people. Both groups began focusing on the teachings and traditions of men rather than of God.

Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees taught the Jewish people that Jesus was the false shepherd. They proclaimed Jesus as the false Messiah. Both groups worked overtime to lead people away from Jesus.

Jesus countered what the Pharisees and Sadducees were teaching. Jesus comes before the people and says: “ I am the true and only Shepherd for your spiritual welfare.” Jesus showed that he was the true Shepherd because....

He had come into their lives the way God had foretold in the Old Testament. The Old Testament revealed...

- a. where the Messiah would be born Micah 5:2
- b. when the Messiah would be born Daniel 9:24-27
- c. under what circumstances the Messiah would be born Isaiah 7:14
- d. what type of ministry the Messiah would perform Isaiah 61:1-2
- e. what type of miracles he would perform Isaiah 35:5-6
- f. the way in which the Messiah would be presented Malachi 3:1

Jesus is saying: Look, there is a great deal of objective evidence which can be used to test whether I am the true Shepherd or not. Consider the

evidence, Jesus says. The Old Testament prophets spoke of my coming and John the Baptist has recognized me as the Messiah. Isaiah 40:3-4

As the true Shepherd, Christ had come to God's flock and those who are his sheep will recognize his voice. Jesus had come to draw a line between him and the false religious leaders of the Jews. Jesus would show the true way, the true life. Jesus showed that he was the true and only shepherd.

What is the role of a Shepherd? According to Psalm 23 a shepherd will...

- make the sheep lie down in green pastures - food
- lead them beside quiet waters - water
- restore their souls - protection
- guide them in the paths of righteousness - security

Those who followed Jesus as the shepherd found peace, freedom and food for their soul as opposed to those who followed the Pharisees and Sadducees. The false shepherds of Judaism did not bring peace and security to the Jewish soul.

The Pharisees offered life through obedience to their traditions. The Sadducees offered a hope of life through oft-repeated rituals and sacrifices.

Only Christ offered himself as the sacrifice that would bring the sinner peace, security and satisfaction. Jesus offered himself and the one and only Shepherd. 10:12 ie Bahai's

The religious leaders of Jesus day are likened to hired hands who took over the flock because they only cared for themselves. Like hired hands they worked for the paycheck or for the promotion. They only saw their position as a means for personal gain.

I read a story some years ago about a pastor who became an atheist. He remained as pastor of his church even though he lost his faith because he

liked the job of being a pastor. Someone asked why he would remain as a pastor if he did not believe anymore. He said that he still liked doing the duties of a pastor and that he could still serve the people who had faith even though he himself did not believe. He became a hired hand. He remained a shepherd for personal gain.

Jesus knew the sheep. He was devoted to their care. They were the object of his love and concern. He came to protect and preserve them. He was the only one willing to die for them. The false shepherds would not be willing to die for the people.

Jesus showed himself to be the obedient shepherd called by God the Father. vv17-18 He became the Good Shepherd by the Father's command. He was faithful and obedient to the Father. His life and death was submission to the Father. He came to redeem the flock for his Father.

The people of Israel were confused as to who Jesus was even after he presented himself as the True Shepherd, the Good Shepherd and the Only and Obedient Shepherd. Jesus called the Pharisees and the Sadducees false prophets and spoke against them. This infuriated the Pharisees and Sadducees. They dismissed Jesus as a demon-possessed maniac.

We know otherwise. Jesus is our Good Shepherd.

A traveler on a long and tiresome journey welcomes the sight of a motel along the road. The motel can offer the traveler rest and refreshment. It is an especially welcome sight when a storm begins to rage to find safe haven in a motel.

For our journey in this life, our Good Shepherd has provided for us a safe place to rest and be refreshed. This is no earthly shelter, no flimsy or perishable abode. This place of refuge and rest is himself, his love, his mercy, his protection.

This divine shelter gives us great relief and security when...

- the winds of adversity began to beat upon us
- the gray clouds of worry and grief lower overhead
- when there appear to be danger on the road ahead of us

We are reminded in Psalm 27:5 **“For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling;** he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock.”

This place of safety is the glow of God’s love. Sometimes when traveling and we are caught up in a storm we may say, “Any motel, any town, any port will do” to ride out a storm. But when it comes to spiritual matters and we are caught in the storm of life we know there is only one port, one place of safety for us.

“The secret of blessed communion with God is the sole possession, the unique heritage of those who have traveled the way of the cross. We have a Good Shepherd who has set us up upon a rock. This is the rock of his forgiving and sustaining love. This rock shall never be moved. There God has pitched a safe place for us. Here in his arms we find rest on our journey in life. A rest that will lead us to heaven for we know the voice of the Good Shepherd.”