
OUR GOOD SHEPHERD GUIDES AND GUARDS US**Sermon for the Fourth Sunday of Easter 2022****John 10:22-30**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel Reading read before, John 10:22-30: **Then the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem came. It was winter.** ²³ **Jesus was walking in the Temple, in Solomon’s Colonnade.** ²⁴ **The Jews gathered around Him and began to ask Him, “How long are You keeping us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly!”**

²⁵ **Jesus answered them, “I have told you, but you do not believe. The works that I am doing in the name of My Father give evidence about Me.** ²⁶ **However, you do not believe, because you do not belong to My sheep.** ²⁷ **My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me,** ²⁸ **and I give them eternal life, and they will certainly not be lost, and no one will snatch them out of My hand.** ²⁹ **My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand.** ³⁰ **I and the Father are one.”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today is “Good Shepherd Sunday.” Every year on this Sunday in the Easter season we focus our attention on Jesus as our Good Shepherd. On this day every year our Introit is Psalm 23, “*The LORD is my shepherd.*” On this day every year the Holy Gospel is a portion of John 10, the chapter in which Jesus says, “*I am the Good Shepherd and I know My own, and My own know Me, as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father and lay down My life for the sheep.*”¹ Every year on this Sunday, our readings and hymns carry this theme of Jesus as our Good Shepherd.

¹ John 10:14-15

As our Good Shepherd, Jesus guides and guards us. He does not lose His sheep. He knows His own, His flock, and He has led us to know Him. He has created a bond between us like that between the Father and Him, and we see this bond all throughout our lives. We see that our Good Shepherd guides and guards us all the way home and for endless ages to come.

Therefore, today, let us dwell further on how our Good Shepherd guides and guards us.

First of all, Jesus *guides* us.

Listen to what He says, “**My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me,**²⁸ **and I give them eternal life, and they will certainly not be lost, and no one will snatch them out of My hand.**”

Dear friends, why are you here today? Because you hear the Shepherd’s voice. He calls us, and we follow Him. We are a chosen race whom Jesus has called “*out of darkness into His marvellous light*” (1 Peter 2:9). Jesus has called us out of the darkness and the depravity and the death of this world. Once we were not part of His flock, but now we are. Jesus has called us from death to life by dying the death that we deserve because of our sins. We were lost, trapped in the thicket of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. But the Shepherd came and rescued us. He pulled us out when we were ensnared in the devil’s clutches. Jesus lifted us out of the mire, put us on His shoulders and carried us, much as He carried that cross and bore our sins when He died in our place, winning our forgiveness.

Thanks be to God! We would have no shepherd at all if not for what Jesus had done for us! We would be lost, cut off from God, vulnerable, and in grave danger if Jesus had not found us and done the only thing that would save us: He laid down His life for the sheep. He laid it down and has taken it up again in His mighty resurrection. And with that, Jesus has called us from death to life. He has called us by name in our baptism. He has put God’s name upon us, the name of the triune God, to mark us as those belonging to God’s flock, God’s sheepfold. He says, “**My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.**”

Today, in this place, here in His church, is where we hear His voice, where His Word is preached and taught and the sacraments administered. Listen to His

voice speaking. We hear it when Christ's undershepherd declares: "*I, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God to all of you, and on behalf of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*" We hear it in the words, "*Take and eat. This is My body given for you. Take and drink, this is My blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.*" Here is where Jesus' voice can be heard. As Peter once said, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life*" (John 6:68). Here is where Jesus' voice is giving guidance for daily life, leading us along the path of righteousness. Here is where Jesus' voice is giving us hope for our future, even in the midst of danger and evil all around. "*Even though I walk through the valley of deep darkness, I shall fear no evil. For You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me*" (Psalm 23:4). We are His, and we have Jesus now as our Good Shepherd. That makes all the difference.

Take notice: Not only does our Good Shepherd guide us, but He also *guards* us.

The rod that the shepherd carries is used to ward off predators who would attack the sheep. He guards and defends the sheep from all the enemies who would harm them. So it is with Jesus and us, His sheep. He protects us from our enemies and the dangers that we face.

This includes the spiritual danger of false teachers and their false teaching. And again, Jesus will do this through His undershepherds. Notice how Paul brings that out in his address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, "*Therefore, I testify to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all people,*²⁷ *because I have not shrunk from proclaiming to you the whole plan of God.*²⁸ *Keep watch over yourselves and the whole flock among whom the Holy Spirit has made you bishops! You are to shepherd the church of God, which He has purchased for Himself with His own blood!*²⁹ *I know that, after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.*³⁰ *Even from among yourselves men will stand up and say perverse things, to draw the disciples away after themselves.*³¹ *Therefore, stay awake! Remember that for three years I did not cease day and night to warn every single one with tears!*³² *Now I entrust you to*

God and to the Word of His grace, which can build you up and give you the inheritance among all those who have been made holy” (Acts 20:26-32).

A faithful shepherd - and the word “pastor” means “shepherd” - a faithful shepherd is sent by Christ to do this for you: to lead you into the green pastures of God’s Word so that you may safely graze there and be fed and nourished. The pastor does this by declaring to you *the whole counsel of God* so that you are firmly grounded in the Scriptures, growing in your knowledge of the truth, and mature in the faith.

And then the flip side of this is to guard you against error. There are always false teachers and false teachings floating around, which could draw you away from the truth. The shepherd needs to stand guard and warn you against following after such seductive teaching, for that is what it often is: seductive. The false teachers can sound so appealing, so nice to listen to; they tell us what we want to hear. They often take a little grain of truth and bake a tasty cake of error around that little grain of truth. They take passages of the Bible out of context and patch them together to come up with their appealing errors. They leave out the passages that don’t fit their system. So in this way, the sheep could be lured away and led astray. But Christ the Good Shepherd has given you a pastor to guard you against that. Take advantage of that. Jesus, your Good Shepherd, is guarding you in this way.

Jesus is our guarding and guiding Good Shepherd. He is committed to getting us safely home, and this is what that will look like. See what John sees in our reading from Revelation today: *“These are the people who have come out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore, they are before the throne of God and keep serving Him day and night in His Temple, and He who is sitting on the throne will shelter them with His tent. ¹⁶ They will not be hungry any longer or thirsty any longer. The sun will certainly not beat on them or any scorching heat, ¹⁷ because the Lamb, who is in the middle of the throne, will be their Shepherd and lead them to springs of the water of life. God will wipe every tear from their eyes” (7:14-17).*

The guarding time will be over. We shall have come out of the great tribulation, away from all the trouble we face in this fallen and often hostile

world. There will be no more enemies to oppress us and attack us. At last, we shall finally be home, gathered in the presence of God, and Jesus will still be our Shepherd, still leading us and guiding us. Notice, *the Lamb* will be our shepherd. Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world - Christ, the Lamb who was slain, now seated on His throne - will shepherd and guide us to those springs of the water of life. There will be no more thirst, no more hunger, no more danger, and no more tears. All that will be put behind us, as we see only life and joy ahead of us.

Jesus, our guiding and guarding Good Shepherd, is leading us there even now. Do you hear your Shepherd's voice? **“My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, ²⁸ and I give them eternal life, and they will certainly not be lost, and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”**

May it be so. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Lord our God, we praise You for Your great goodness; and for the good things that You have prepared for those who love You! Grant that we may obtain those glories, which no human being has ever seen or heard or ever thought could happen, through Jesus Christ, Your holy Servant.

We thank You for sending Christ, the Good Shepherd, into our world, to lay down His life for the sheep, to pay the price of His blood to free us from the power of Satan, from the deserved results of our sins, and from the lifelong fear of death. We praise You also for His triumphant resurrection, and for the glorious promise that all who listen to His voice and follow Him will receive eternal life.

We thank You for His pity and love for us, who were straying and helpless like sheep without a shepherd, but who are now through Your great mercy brought back to fellowship with the true Shepherd and Keeper of our souls. We thank You For Your gracious forgiveness for all our sins, for Your promise of peace, for Your assurance of salvation, for Your presence and power in our lives, and for every gift in Christ Jesus.

Enable us, by Your grace, to follow the example of Jesus, our Saviour and Head, by seeking the lost, lifting up the fallen, strengthening the weary, rescuing the straying, feeding the poor, helping the suffering, sheltering the homeless, and being sensitive to each other's needs. May we thereby proclaim Your praises for calling us out of darkness into Your marvellous light.

Give us the voice and leadership of Jesus the Good Shepherd in all parliaments and councils of the nations, in commerce and industry, in all civic and social life.

Direct our way through the sin, strife, and uncertainty of this age, O Lord. Give us true faith and godly hearts. Strengthen the sick, cheer the depressed, and supply the needy, showing that You are always ready to help in every trouble. Because our eyes have seen Your salvation, when our last hour comes, release Your servants in peace, and receive us into everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ Your Son, our risen Lord and Saviour. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 20:17-35

¹⁷ From Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus and asked the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ When they came to him, he said to them: "You know how I lived with you all the time, from the first day when I came into the province of Asia, ¹⁹ how I have served the Lord with all humility, with tears and in the trials that I endured because the Jews plotted against me, ²⁰ how I have kept back nothing that was helpful but have proclaimed it to you and have taught you publicly and in your homes. ²¹ You know how I have earnestly warned both

Jews and Greeks to turn to God in repentance and to believe in our Lord Jesus. ²² So now, you see, the Spirit has constrained me to go to Jerusalem. I do not know what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit keeps testifying in every city, telling me that chains and troubles are waiting for me. ²⁴ However, I do not account my life as worth anything to me. I want only to finish running my race and to finish the ministry that I have received from the Lord Jesus, testifying to the Good News of the grace of God.

²⁵ "Now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about

preaching the kingdom, will see my face any longer. ²⁶ Therefore, I testify to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all people, ²⁷ because I have not shrunk from proclaiming to you the whole plan of God. ²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and the whole flock among whom the Holy Spirit has made you bishops! You are to shepherd the church of God, which He has purchased for Himself with His own blood! ²⁹ I know that, after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from among yourselves men will stand up and say perverse things, to draw the disciples away after themselves. ³¹ Therefore, stay awake! Remember that for three years I did not cease day and night to warn every single one with tears! ³² Now I entrust you to God and to the Word of His grace, which can build you up and give you the inheritance among all those who have been made holy. ³³ I have not coveted anyone's silver, gold or clothes. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands have worked for my own needs and for those who were with me. ³⁵ In every way I have shown you that, by this kind of

hard work, we must help the weak and that we should remember the Words that the Lord Jesus Himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Revelation 7:9-17

⁹ After this, I looked and saw a large crowd that no one could count, from every nation and all tribes, peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and carrying palm-branches in their hands. ¹⁰ They called out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!"

¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne, around the elders and around the four living creatures. They fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, ¹² saying: "Amen! Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power and strength be to our God for ever and ever! Amen."

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me: "Who are these people who have been clothed in the white robes and where have they come from?"

¹⁴ I replied to him, "My master, you know."

He told me: “These are the people who have come out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore, they are before the throne of God and keep serving Him day and night in His Temple, and He who is sitting on the throne will shelter them with His tent. ¹⁶ They will not be hungry any longer or thirsty any longer. The sun will certainly not beat on them or any scorching heat, ¹⁷ because the Lamb, who is in the middle of the throne, will be their Shepherd and lead them to springs of the water of life. God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

John 10:22-30

²² Then the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem came. It was

winter. ²³ Jesus was walking in the Temple, in Solomon’s Colonnade. ²⁴ The Jews gathered around Him and began to ask Him, “How long are You keeping us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly!” ²⁵ Jesus answered them, “I have told you, but you do not believe. The works that I am doing in the name of My Father give evidence about Me. ²⁶ However, you do not believe, because you do not belong to My sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, ²⁸ and I give them eternal life, and they will certainly not be lost, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”