



Free Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
in South Africa

Sermon- Sunday Misericordias Domini (Proper 4B) 2018

The Good Shepherd shepherds His sheep!



St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach

• **The Word of God for this Sermon is written in John 10, 11-18:**

- ^{ESV} ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
- ¹² He 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.
- ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.
- ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,
- ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.
- 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.
- ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.
- ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."
- **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and resurrect our minds and our hearts so that we will take comfort in our Good Shepherd! Amen.*

• **Dear beloved of God!**

- If there is one Psalm that is almost universally known, it must be Psalm 23. The Psalm about the Lord is my Shepherd. What a comforting Psalm featuring prominently on funerals and memorial services. Rightly so. Amongst Christians, and quite astonishingly, even amongst those outside the church. In dreadful times, in times of serious distress and afflictions, we all need a Good Shepherd, who will hold and comfort us. And also, quite astonishing, nobody complains being called "sheep". There is a deep truth resonating in this Psalm, in this picture it paints, which, it seems, in times of utter despair, even those who would otherwise claim to be no Christians cannot help to flee to.
- How much more is this not great comfort for us, who confess to be Christians,

for us who are united with the very person who says, I am the Good Shepherd! We believe, teach and confess “The LORD is MY Shepherd”! We may do so, because it is true. Through receiving Baptism and hearing His Word He made us His sheep. We are part of His flock. Psalm 23 canvasses, with Words, our existence in Christ! Words filled with the new meaning of the New Testament, Words filled with the person and sacrifice of Christ Himself. Words authorised, legitimised, by the resurrected living Christ.

• Through Christ Jesus God comes to us! He is not a vague deistic principle, far-off, removed from our suffering and afflictions, nor removed from our sinfulness and trespasses. The LORD is MY Shepherd in a very concrete way. Nobody has seen God the Father, and yet in Jesus we see the Father. In Jesus’ person the good intention towards us sinners and consequent servant-hood of God is revealed. But, not only is this revealed, it is real, it is the most certain reality. Jesus is not only like a good shepherd. He IS the Good Shepherd. Remember, the Word became flesh! Hence, before creation existed Jesus was already the Good Shepherd! So, any good shepherd out there in the field, who cares like Jesus does, for his sheep, points to the prototype the original Good Shepherd, namely Jesus, the Son of God. He was revealed, fully, in His ministry of suffering and dying FOR US!

• Jesus says, a good shepherd does not only stay with his sheep when all is going smooth, when there are no dangers. A good shepherd is revealed as being good when a wolf comes, when danger comes to the sheep. Someone, who is a hired hand, someone to whom the sheep do not belong will flee when the sheep are threatened.

• Jesus has proven Himself to be THE Good Shepherd by laying down His Life for His sheep. He took on satan, sin and death, so that He could gather us into His flock through His voice. And so, we participate in His flock, in His Body through His care. We listen to His voice and so we come to know Him. We come to trust His Word.

• He takes me to the place where lush food is provided, food for my soul. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He calms it down. When we become restless on the inside, when doubts and guilt start to creep on in us, when our minds and hearts become downcast, He comes to our rescue and leads us to the fountain of Grace.

• It is a most unusual place, where He takes, to think of Grace. With our native eyes we only see suffering and death, but at the Cross of Christ, water and blood, divine forgiveness and eternal life were poured out for us. This fountain didn't flow and then dry up, it continues to flow forever. Jesus has risen! In His living Body, whereto the Holy Spirit lead you to, this morning, your soul is touched or reached, via your ears, with the Word of Your Good Shepherd. When your soul is washed with this water it calms down, it recognizes the ONE who really cares.

• And the Good Shepherd removes dirt and heals the wounds of your soul, inflicted by others. Then He leads you in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. He puts you on the path to follow Him, because you carry His name. As you go into the week again, into everyday life, into the world, appropriately referred to as the valley of the shadow of death, you go in there without fear for evil. Because, Jesus assures you, you are not alone. He has risen to be with you. Evil, that is forces trying to remove you from your Shepherd cannot be totally effective as long as your Good Shepherd is with you. The fact that Jesus keeps my old Adam in the grave, under the Law, and hence fends off influences from the devil and guides me with His staff, with His Gospel, is experienced as a whole, as comforting me. My Shepherd cares for me!

• My Good Shepherd prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies. At table He anoints my head with the Holy Spirit of joy. My cup of joy overflows.

• And all of these gifts are certain. Goodness and mercy will pursue me all the days of my life. The Good Shepherd seeks after me with His grace. You can be certain of this, He seeks and saves the lost. What He has created in you, He wants to fulfil! If you run off, He will come after you with His Grace. And therefore my

future is secure, is certain: I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

• If that is the case, then I want to dwell in the house of the Lord, the Body of Christ, now already! Then its only logical to present my members of the body as instruments of God's Grace. I have a new purpose for being alive! There are so many broken people in my world, who don't realise that the Good Shepherd has already done everything for them to become children of God. Let us speak to them and invite them to be instructed and comforted by the basics of Jesus' teaching.

• It is true and certain, "The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want"! May He create and renew this faith in all of us!

• Glory be to the Father, Glory be to the Son and Glory be to the Holy Spirit!
Amen.

• *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Amen. [2 Cor 13, 14].*