

Jesus Lives!

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter

April 26, 2009

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Hecla

Zion Lutheran Church, Ipswich

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Bowdle

Text: John 10:11-18 ***“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But he who is a hireling and not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.***

***“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”***

Theme: ***“I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH”***

- One Flock and One Shepherd

Dear fellow sheep of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, fellow redeemed,

Every Sunday when we gather in the Lord’s House we make a public confession to one another and for all present to hear what we believe. We openly confess for all to hear our faith in the Triune God. On most Sundays we use the Apostles’ Creed and typically on communion Sundays we use the Nicene Creed. A creed is simply a statement of what one believes. Part of our statement of what we believe deals with “the Holy Christian Church” - “I believe in the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints.” We are so very familiar with these words. Even our Sunday School children know these words. But what do we mean when we say, “I believe in the Holy Christian Church?” What does it mean to be a member of the Holy Christian Church? And how does it affect our relationship with our fellow members of the Holy Christian Church?

Over the next couple of weeks as we transition from the Easter season to Pentecost, we plan to take a look at different aspects of the Holy Christian Church which we say we believe in. We want to consider what it means to be a member of the Holy Christian Church individually and how being a member of the Holy Christian Church affects our relationships with our fellow believers. Today as we consider the Good Shepherd section of John 10, our attention is drawn to the words of Jesus at the end of verse 16 - ***“There will be one flock and one shepherd.”*** So let us consider how we believe that the Holy Christian Church is one flock with one shepherd. May God the Holy Spirit increase our faith through His holy Word that we might gladly hear it and apply it to our lives.

Throughout Scripture we have various terms that are used to help us better understand the believer’s relationship with God. Scripture refers to Christian believers as children and God as their Father. Scripture speaks of the believers as being a wife or bride to Jesus who is the

Husband or Groom. We also find portions of Scripture describing the Christian believers as being one body with Jesus Christ as the head of that body.

Another comparison that is frequently used is the relationship between shepherd and sheep. We used it earlier in that familiar and beloved Psalm 23. In our Old Testament lesson from Ezekiel 34 we heard God promise to supply His own shepherd. The relationship between shepherd and sheep is quite fitting to describe our relationship with God. Sheep are not the most intelligent of the domestic animals. If left alone they have a tendency to wander into danger without knowing it. Some sheep are very stubborn and need constant correction and supervision. Some sheep are always looking for a way to escape from the sheep pen. They need someone to lead them to green pastures to feed in and still waters that are safe to drink from.

How many times have we, like sheep, strayed into danger without realizing it until it was too late? How many times have we, like sheep, tested the boundaries of God's Word, trying to sneak off and get away with more and more? We can be stubborn and set in our ways. We can be foolish and naive. Though we have all we need to nourish our souls with the Gospel, how many times haven't we strayed from God's Word thinking there has to be better pastures out there? Though we've been brought to still waters from which we may drink safely, how many times haven't we tested the waters of this world in an attempt to quench our spiritual thirst?

There are many voices in the world calling us to shepherd us. The voices of wealth and power wish to shepherd our souls, telling us that the riches of this world will give us what we want out of life. The voices of pleasure and sex call out from our television sets and the internet to us to follow them, telling us that those are the pastures we should feed in. The voices of alcohol call to us telling us that it is the only thing that will truly quench the thirst of our soul. There are many out there that want to shepherd us telling us that they have the best water to drink from and the best pastures for us to graze in. Yet their water is poisoned and their pasture is barren.

There is only one Shepherd that is truly Good. ***"I am the Good Shepherd,"*** Jesus says. The Greek is very emphatic here - "I Myself am the Shepherd, the Good one." Jesus distinguishes Himself from all other shepherds. He alone is the good one. He proves Himself to be the good one in what He does for His sheep. Unlike the hired-hand that runs away from the dangerous wolf, Jesus the Good Shepherd protects the flock. Jesus knew that just as a wolf would devour and scatter sheep, so the devil would devour some souls and destroy others. ***"The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."*** Rather than running away, He confronted the wolf Himself to save the flock. The Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep ***that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.*** (Heb 2:14) This is the Good Shepherd who gives everything He has - even His own life - for the sheep.

But Jesus did not simply give His life for the sheep, as the Good Shepherd He also took up His life again. As the Son of God, sent by God's command, Jesus laid down His life of His own will and power, and took it up again by rising from the dead on the third day. Unlike any other shepherd that might have died to protect his sheep, the Good Shepherd rose from the dead so that He would continue to protect His flock. This is the comfort and reassurance of Easter. Good Friday wasn't the end of our Good Shepherd. Our Good Shepherd lives to lead us beside still waters.

A shepherd also needs to know the sheep he is watching over. He needs to know which of his sheep has a tendency to wander away and which is constantly causing problems. Which of his sheep is sick. Which of his sheep is slow. The only way to take care of the whole flock is to

know the individual personalities of each one of his sheep.

Jesus shows Himself to be the shepherd, the good one, because He knows His sheep. To help us grasp just how well Jesus knows us, He compares it to the relationship of God the Father and God the Son. ***“As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father.”*** How well would you say God the Father and God the Son know each other? They know each other perfectly! They know their very thoughts, will, and desires! That then is how well the Good Shepherd knows us! ***“I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep, and am known by My own.”*** Jesus knows us better than our parent know us, better than our spouse knows us, and better than our own pastor knows us. He knows exactly what you are going through right now even if no one else does. He knows the challenges you face. He knows how much you can handle. He knows which of you needs more time and which of you needs some discipline to get you moving. He knows each one of your strengths and each one of your weaknesses. He knows you perfectly just as the Father and Son know each other perfectly.

The Good Shepherd also gathers all His sheep together. This is where the discussion of the Holy Christian Church comes in. In verse 16 Jesus says, ***“Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.”*** Jesus came to be the Savior of all people - not just the Jews. He came to be a light unto the Gentiles also. Those are the other sheep to which Jesus is referring.

Whether a believer is Jew or Gentile, black or white, male or female, they all have this in common - Jesus is their Shepherd. This one flock that Jesus speaks of, is the Holy Christian Church. It is made up of all who believe in Jesus as their only Savior from sin. Jesus says of this one flock, ***“They know Me...and they will hear My voice.”*** Those who are members of the Holy Christian Church know Jesus personally as their Savior from sin, just as Jesus knows them personally as His sheep. The members of this one flock all listen to the voice of Jesus, their good shepherd, and follow Him. That is why for the believer the Bible is so very important. The Bible is the voice of our Good Shepherd. In it our Good Shepherd speaks to us and leads us through the valley of the shadow of death. By the Scriptures our Good Shepherd leads us from one green pasture to another. Speaking to us through His Word He leads us beside the still waters of His Gospel.

Earlier in Psalm 23 we said of the LORD as our Shepherd that His ***“rod and staff comfort us.”*** Sometimes our Good Shepherd uses His word as a rod and sometimes as a staff. The shepherd’s rod was for poking sheep to get them moving. That is what Jesus does with the Law. He pokes us and reminds us of our sin - how we like sheep have gone astray and wandered from the truth. But with the gentle staff of the Gospel, the Good Shepherd pulls us back in. Both the rod and the staff of the Good Shepherd comfort us.

What does it mean to you to hear that there is one flock and one shepherd? The flock is made up of all believers in Jesus Christ. The only shepherd that the Holy Christian Church has is Jesus - the flock knows no other shepherd, but Jesus. The flock listens only to the voice of Jesus. And the Good Shepherd leads His flock to the eternally green pastures of heaven and the still and pure water of life flowing in heaven. As a believer in Jesus Christ you are part of this flock. Jesus has sought you out and gathered you, personally, into His flock and made you a member of the Holy Christian Church.

What the Good Shepherd did for you, He has done the exact same thing for your fellow

believers! They are members of this same blessed flock! Are there different sheep with different temperaments? You bet! But the same Good Shepherd leads them. Are there different individual sheep with different individual needs and issues? You bet there is! But there is only one flock and one shepherd. None of the sheep are better and none are worse. To rescue each one of you from the wolf, the Good Shepherd gave His life for each one of you. The Good Shepherd took up His life again that He might continue to watch over and protect you. The Good Shepherd was delivered up because of your offenses and for the offenses of your fellow sheep. The Good Shepherd was raised again because of your justification and for the justification of your fellow sheep.

This is the Holy Christian Church that we believe in. We who are many are one in Christ. One flock. One shepherd. *Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb 13:20-21)*