



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

May 8, 2022

Pastor Randy Ott

4th Sunday of Easter

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Ezekiel 34:25-31](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 23

Second Lesson: [Revelation 7:9-17](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 10:22-30](#)

Sheep Live Securely When They Live with The Divine Shepherd

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

The good Lord knows the people He made. He knows how often we need help, when we need encouragement, how we need strength, and how we need support. That's part of His plan, especially for families with little ones. Families are there to take care of the little ones that need help and strength and support and encouragement.

When I was young and I got a boobo, I didn't go running to my dad. That wouldn't have gone over well if I told him I had an owie. I went running to mom because mom was going to have compassion and kindness. Dad was going to tell you to rub some dirt on it and get back out there. I said that Thursday night in the sermon and someone came up to me after church and said "Pastor, I can't imagine you with a boobo." Then he said, "I also can't imagine you little."

But God knows this about us when we're no longer little, too, when we are older. We still need strength, encouragement, support and help as we go through life, because life can be so difficult. So He puts His believers together in groups of people where they gather together around Word and Sacrament so they can be strengthened, comforted, encouraged by their shepherds and by their fellow sheep. This is part of God's plan.

Earlier in [Chapter 34](#), the Holy Spirit had Ezekiel write some pretty harsh words to one of the two groups that God had designed to provide comfort, support and encouragement, and it wasn't mothers. It was the shepherds and the sheep. You should go home today and read all of Ezekiel (this chapter that we're looking at today). It's fascinating to read these words when you consider Ezekiel, as a prophet, had to feel

kind of the sting of them because he was one of the shepherds and he kept speaking faithfully but people didn't listen. Ezekiel at this time, they were in exile. He had been warning and warning and warning the people and they didn't repent and turn back to God. The shepherds that were supposed to be overseeing the people and pointing people to God's promises, God says they were taking advantage of the people. It says the bigger sheep in the flock were nudging away the lean sheep so that they could have more for themselves and they weren't worrying about the sheep that had strayed or went away. God has some pretty strong and harsh words and says, "Because you guys have failed so miserably, I am going to come and I, myself, will be the Shepherd of my people. I will do it. I will search out and find them. I will bring them back to the flock. I will watch over them."

Then what I read to you at the end is the picture of the safety that God's people have when they live with their Divine Shepherd. Look at the picture it paints. It is a picture of this confidence that we can have that our God is in control. He talks about ridding the land of savage beasts and all of these things and everything is going to be a blessing. He'll drive away the peoples and all of that. It's there just to say that when you're connected to the Good Shepherd, you have someone bigger and stronger and smarter than you watching over you and with you to help you through all the difficulties. It doesn't mean there is going to be an absence of difficulties. The people he is writing this to were living in exile because they had turned their back on God and now they were enduring hardship. It was a reality.

For us today, there are so many realities of things where we still need strength and encouragement and comfort and support from our God and from our fellow believers because we're living on the wrong side of heaven. We're living in a sinful world and things are hard! God himself told us that it is through much tribulation that we'll go through this life until He brings us to our heavenly home.

Because of what David said to us in [Psalm 23](#), we know we have a prepared heavenly home and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. It's not "I hope I will" or "It sure would be nice to..." It's "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever because of Jesus." This is the confidence that God's sheep have. Jesus came, lived and died in our place. The perfection God demands of us, Jesus provided for us. The punishment that our sins should have had put on our backs, Jesus took it. His resurrection...that's why we keep saying "Christ is risen" because His resurrection assures us it's all done. He won. The victory is won; the Lamb that was slain that is at the center of the throne in heaven won the war. But there are still battles going on and Satan is attacking us. So you and I need that voice of our Good Shepherd. We need that voice of our Good Shepherd, where He says, "My sheep know me and they listen to my voice" because as we go through life, there are a lot of distracting voices that are calling us away from our Good Shepherd, calling us away from this picture of peace that God has for us.

I find it fascinating to talk to some of God's sheep and have them tell me, "This is okay. This isn't wrong," and God has clearly said in His Word that it is sin. So the question you have to ask (that I ask in my heart and that I have to ask them) is, have you listened to the voice of your Good Shepherd? Do you even know what He says or are you just deciding on your own what is right and wrong and you've replaced the Good Shepherd's voice with your own thoughts or the thoughts of the culture around you? I've become more and more convinced, even though the Bible is more and more readily available to us—some of you probably have them on your phone apps and all these things. You can have them read it to you and you can probably find one that will sing it to you, I don't know—we have this plethora of opportunities to know the Word and we know it less and less. We're shaped by other things that want to shepherd us away from our Good Shepherd.

We need to know His voice. If He says something we don't like, then we have to remember we're sinners. We have a sinful nature. I'm not always going to like what a Holy Divine God says because my sinful nature wants something different. But I need to listen to that voice so I stay connected to Him because I want His safety.

I love the picture that is in here. I don't understand it to mean that everything is going to go easy but when things are going hard in my life and when things are going hard in your life, I want you to remember this picture and then remember that the God, who loved you enough to die for you so that this is yours, loves you enough to live with you as you're going through the hard stuff. We do go through hard stuff. Like Jesus said, "Because they hated me, they're going to hate you too."

The Gospel I read to you was pretty clear about Him saying "I am the Messiah. ***I and the Father are one.***" That is Him saying He is God. The people that heard it understood it because they picked up stones to kill Him, to stone Him for the sin of blasphemy. They didn't believe it. They weren't His sheep. They had been led astray by other voices so they wanted nothing to do with Jesus.

As you and I go through life, we need someone to take care of our booboos, take care of all the things that stress us and worry us and concern us. We need someone to reach out to us. We need our fellow sheep and the shepherds we have now to reach out to us when we are straying away to bring us back to this picture of safety because if we aren't connected to Jesus and He comes back or we die, that's it!

What connects us to our Good Shepherd (that gives us this safety) are His Word and His Sacraments. That's why they are so important in the life of a Christian. They are that voice that speaks to us. They make an incredible difference for us.

That was driven home for me this past Thursday and Friday. This past Thursday I was meeting with someone here at church and just before we started meeting, I got a text

message from a friend in Arizona. He married my high school football coach's daughter. My high school football coach is living out there and he is in his 90's now. He has dementia very bad and they knew he was going to die soon, so they contacted me and another guy and asked us if we would be willing to do the funeral because they wanted someone from the coach's team and had worked with coach outside of the team. So we said "Yes." I got this text message right before I started the meeting saying "Coach is going to go to heaven soon."

I had my meeting. I went home. I had lunch. Because I'm old, I sat in a chair and I fell asleep. When I sit in a chair and fall asleep, I wake up and my throat hurts from snoring. As I'm there, I hear my phone beep again and I wake up and I look and find out coach is in heaven. So I write to my friend, "I'm sorry for your loss but I'm really happy for coach." The other guy that is on the chain writes to him also some words of comfort about Jesus. My friend Mark writes back to me that he and his wife are laughing and happy because they know coach is in heaven.

That's the peace we have in knowing that our Good Shepherd IS our Good Shepherd; that He has won the war and the victory is ours. The victory isn't ours just when we go through the valley of the shadow of death. The victory is ours when we're hurting, when we're anxious, when we're worried and when we're scared. The Good Shepherd is still right there at our side. He'll bring us confidence and peace. He won't necessarily take away all the problems we have. But He'll bring us confidence and peace when we listen to His voice. So please, listen to His voice and share His voice with sheep that seem to be straying. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7.\)](#) Amen.