

Introductory

This material is exclusive to John. It has for centuries been read on a Sunday after Easter. TLH appoints it (10:11-16) to be read on Misericordias Domini, the Second Sunday of Easter. LW moves the Good Shepherd material back to the Fourth Sunday of Easter, and it appoints different portions of John 10 to be read in the A, B, and C Series.

LSB does the same; in year A we read 1-10, in B, 11-18, and in C, 22-30. Easter 4 has replaced Easter 2 as Good Shepherd Sunday on the church's calendar, and that works. On this Sunday, we talk mostly about Jesus the Good Shepherd, and not so much about the Under-shepherd, the many faithful Pastors who stand "in the stead" of that One.

We have talked before about both the familiarity of this text to the hearers and the awkwardness that is part and parcel of the pastor talking about pastors to the sheep. Study the text again, and see what God would teach you this time, and then pass what you learn on to your hearers. Pastors complain all the time about being misunderstood.

They complain that people don't really know what Pastors are supposed to be doing. If you don't talk to them about what Pastors do, then don't complain that they don't really know what your job is. I know, you aren't complaining. It's the others. And if you complain that they don't know Lutheran or biblical doctrine – redundant – why not?

In fact, to talk about the pastoral office is not optional for the pastor. It must be done, and you are the one to do it, and if you don't do it, then it probably won't get done – at least until you leave, and the vacancy pastor will talk about it. I have been easing into it for about thirty-six years now, and it's a lot easier now than it was on Easter 4, 1986.

I got a phone call from a relative a couple of weeks ago. He's interested in the religious, but does not himself partake, and he knew a couple who wanted to get married, and they were "Lutheran." Thinking he was doing me a favor, he rang me up, and was surprised that I was completely uninterested in making a few bucks for doing that wedding.

At first, he thought I was kidding, and I had to explain that I do that for those who belong to my flock only, and he thought that was odd. That's what a lot of people think we do all day, sit by the phone, and wait for a wedding or a funeral to come along. Oh, and on Sunday we read a sermon St. Louis sends us, and that doesn't sound like a very hard job.

We don't take a great interest in doing little things on the side for money, and we write our own sermons, and generally the more time spent on it, the better a sermon will be. But more to the point, the Divine Call is just that, a call from God, through the congregation, for this man to shepherd this flock in this time and place, and them only.

About sheep and shepherds; this should be the week for an annual review of sheep and shepherds, a concept so very common in the day of Jesus, but so very foreign in our day. As is usually the case, WIK is a good starting point for exploring sheep and shepherds, but probably not a good ending point. There are more good resources out there than ever.

There are books and magazines that talk about these things, some in the context of Bible Times, some not. Many writers of commentaries seem to have become sheep scholars, and we can learn from them about sheep things. I learned a new thing about goats last Saturday without even trying! One time, in Montana, I talked to an actual shepherd.

To the best of our collective ability, we are participating in the "eat local" movement, (we are "locavores") preferring first to eat stuff that we produce on our land, second stuff produced by our neighbors on their land, and third stuff that you buy at Wal-Mart. The local newspaper had an article about a doings just over the hill that caught our interest.

The doings were being put on by a man and his wife who have fruit trees and grow vegetables and milk goats. So, we were taking the tour of the orchard, and asking questions about the goats and goat milk, and the hobby farmer was telling us about the ten goats he is milking, and that each goat is an individual with its own goat personality.

My wife – who daily used to milk goats – leans over and says, "that's the difference between sheep and goats. Sheep are docile. Goats are...mischievous." She was remembering the Sheep and Goats at judgment day sermon, and how I had said at that time that the only thing notable about the goats in the story is that they aren't sheep.

I think she may be on to something. Back in the day when we had two goats, our goats had kids, and goats are very...mischievous. They have a mind of their own, as much as animals can have a mind. They jump over fences and onto roofs, and they wander off to eat the neighbor's flowers and vegetables and anything else edible – or not!

Sheep don't have much of a mind at all, as little as an animal can have. As the sainted sheep maven Norman Grotheer put it, "sheep are dumb. God does us no favors when he calls us sheep." I don't know if it's a good idea for a shepherd to call his sheep dumb, but he can always quote Norman. I didn't say it, the Sheep Maven Norman said it.

Generally a metaphor has only one point of comparison, as does a parable; an extended metaphor. This one about shepherds and sheep and the Good Shepherd has several such points; gate, thief, robber, voice, hireling, wolves, death, and maybe others that I'm not seeing, and each of them is used to make a distinctly different point, several points in all.

What we're actually looking at in this sermon is a series of several metaphors, all of them pertaining to the metaphor of shepherd and sheep, which is very unusual even in the Bible. It's not easy to pull that off well, to articulate a series of metaphors coming like spokes off the hub of the main metaphor, but Jesus does it, and He does it masterfully.

Paul does a similar, but not the same thing in 1 Corinthians 12, using the body metaphor and then talking about the individual body parts in individual metaphors, and it works. We can learn from Jesus and Paul how to do this well, and we can learn from almost everybody else who has ever tried it how to do this poorly. Do it well, not poorly.

You may want to mention, in case they have forgotten, that the word "pastor" means "shepherd," and that we call our clergy by that title because it best describes what our clergy do, or at least what they are supposed to do, and similarly how the congregation is to regard themselves. Conversely, we do not call them "minister" or "priest" or "father."

Jesus could have chosen any metaphor to describe His work, and He chose this one, and in fact the shepherd/sheep metaphor has deep roots in the OT. Explore some of those roots to help the hearer to better understand the metaphor, uncommon to us today – especially city folk, but not many country folk have sheep – common as rain in their day.

Like most things, this thing occurs in a context taken up by most of chapter nine. He heals the man born blind, then that long, drawn out, and often humorous inquiry by the Pharisees of just what happened here. It ended with them casting him out. Jesus has a pointed conversation with them, and a shepherd does not cast out, but draws to himself.

Textual Notes

11. He says of self, "ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός, ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός – I am the Good Shepherd." Those first two words are the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew "Yahweh," the personal name of God. He then puts "The Good Shepherd" in the predicate nominative position, grammatically the closest you can get to identifying one thing with the other.

He goes third person, "τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ τίθησιν ὑπὲρ τῶν προβάτων – He lays down His life for the sheep." The idiom "lay down (one's) life" has come down to us today, although

it is not as commonly used now as it used to be, which is probably a result of less Bible reading and more Bible translations being looked at by Bible readers.

The verb “τίθημι – lays down” is used to refer to something very consciously and very deliberately done. The thing being laid down by Jesus is His “ψυχή – His whole being,” which includes but is not limited to His “βίος – physical life.” He gives it all “ὑπέρ – on behalf of” the sheep. We may refer to this as the Vicarious Atonement, or something.

It’s hard for Americans and other modern man to think of a shepherd actually giving up his life on behalf of sheep. A Google search of “shepherd killed” hits stories of Matthew Shepherd, a video game move, shepherd on shepherd violence, and a shepherd killed by a tiger in India when he went into the jungle looking for a plant used to make moonshine.

In other words, today man is the animal most dangerous to the shepherd, especially if that man is armed with a gun. Having said all of that, it was not uncommon for a shepherd, back in the day, to actually give up his life while defending his sheep. There were many more predators there then than there are now, including bears, big cats, dogs and wolves.

Thomson, in *The Land and the Book*, cites several examples from the turn of the nineteenth century of just that; shepherds who were killed by animals or humans while defending their flock. At the time he was there – mid 19th Century – he speaks of the presence still of wolves, leopards, panthers, and of course the apex predator; the human.

I have listened with intense interest to their graphic descriptions of downright and desperate fights with these savage beasts. A poor faithful fellow last spring, between Tiberias and Tabor, instead of fleeing, actually fought three Bedawin robbers until he was hacked to pieces with their khanjars and died among the sheep he was defending (203).

12. The shepherd owns the sheep. They are his personal property, and human nature dictates that if something belongs to you, if you own it, you are going to take better care of that thing. One time I lent my tertiary car to one of my Kansas sheep, and when I got the car back from them the clutch was going and a couple of days later the engine blew.

He is not called “δοῦλος,” a servant or slave working on salary, who had a relationship with his employer or master. The “μισθωτός – the hired one” is working for a wage. He does not own the sheep, and at the end of the day will not care as much about the sheep as the shepherd who owns the sheep, exactly the point that Jesus makes in verse thirteen.

To emphasize the point of ownership or not, having called him “the hired one” He then adds the redundant, “who does not own the sheep.” He then describes the very real scenario of what the hireling will do at the approach of the wolf pack. When the “fight or flight” choice presents itself, the man really has no dog in this fight, so he flees.

The text talks about the singular “wolf,” and that’s likely the figure of speech known as synecdoche, substitution of a part for the whole, because we all know that wolves travel and hunt in packs. When the pack attacks, and the hireling flees, then “καὶ ὁ λύκος ἀρπάζει αὐτὰ καὶ σκορπίζει – then the wolf snatches them and scatters (them).”

If you look at the fourteen NT occurrences of that verb “ἀρπάζει – snatch,” you will note that the word is often used to denote a violent, sudden taking, and what could be more violent and sudden than a wolf attack on a defenseless flock of sheep. Some of the sheep will be killed and consumed by the wolves, and the others will in their terror be scattered.

13. He responds with flight “ὅτι μισθωτός ἐστίν καὶ οὐ μέλει αὐτῷ περὶ τῶν προβάτων – because he is a hireling and not himself does not care about the sheep.” Back in the day, the worst thing an LCMS Pastor could be called was “hireling.” The second worst thing he could be called was “sheep stealer,” and it depends on from where they were pilfered.

Trolling the Internet for a brief time, you know that a lot of churches hire and fire pastors fairly often. It also appears that a lot of churches don’t pay their pastors very well. The big money in modern shepherding is in TV. Microsoft and others will gleefully tell you who are the fifteen or twenty wealthiest preachers, and I’m not poor, but I’m not close.

14. Jesus does not often repeat Himself, but here, for the second time in a few verses, He repeats, “ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός – I am the Good Shepherd.” He goes on to elaborate on that point, explaining the well-known, “καὶ γινώσκω τὰ ἐμὰ καὶ γινώσκουσίν με τὰ ἐμὰ – and I know mine, and mine know me,” part and parcel for any shepherd and any sheep.

The verb “to know” is “γινώσκω,” indicating not only factual knowledge, but also a certain degree of understanding or even intimacy. KJV and others make the second occurrence of the verb to be in the passive voice, “I am known by them,” but both occurrences of the verb are in fact in the present tense and the active, not passive voice.

In a rare occurrence, in this case the newer translations are more accurate than the KJV. The critical apparatus in NA shows that the KJV translators were looking at a text that does have that verb in the passive voice. A quicker look at the Textus Receptus at www.biblehub.com shows that the second verb is also found in the passive voice there.

Textus Receptus, Latin for “received text,” the first complete Greek NT compilation, was put together by Desiderius Erasmus in 1516, and it was the basis for Luther’s German Bible as well as the KJV and other earlier translations. It was the standard NT Greek text through the end of the nineteenth century, when there was a flurry of new ancient texts.

In the nineteenth century, the Europeans began to go to the Middle East and dig around, and in the course of that digging they often found NT Greek manuscripts that had been lost,

or at least to the Europeans, for many years. They are housed in a number of settings, including places like Berlin, London, Ann Arbor, Uppsala, and Dublin.

For many years, an American named Chester Beatty actually sort of set up shop in various Middle Eastern locations, and he would move from place-to-place offering to purchase ancient manuscripts from the locals. His collection is held at the library that bears his name, located right behind Dublin Castle. Why there? “Politics,” the man said.

He did not explain himself further, except that we found the Irish to be very easy to get along with, and there is a wall around the castle. Kurt Aland and Eberhard Nestle put these and other manuscripts into book form, and the Nestle-Aland Greek NT is now in its twenty-seventh edition, and NA is standard issue for first-year LCMS seminary students. -----

15. The verb “γινώσκω – to know,” which we just looked at, occurs two more times in this verse. It has just been used to express the bond between Jesus and His sheep, which was tight, and now between Himself and His Father, which was also tight. Jesus is the perfect and complete intermediary between man and God, of whom His is fully both.

He has talked about the Good Shepherd, and has said that He is that Good Shepherd, and that the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. For Him to here say that “καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν μου τίθην ὑπὲρ τῶν προβάτων – I lay down my life for the sheep,” is not redundant but is instead a simple connecting of the dots, spoken for emphasis and clarity.

16. He says that He has other sheep that are not of this “αὐλῆς – fold.” What does that mean? The word “αὐλῆς” is better translated as “pens” for people like us Americans who have little familiarity with shepherding, but who do know about pens. Those who own livestock keep them in pens, and pet owners keep their dogs and cats in them as well.

The average American enjoys extrapolating from that saying that Jesus is describing viral American denominationalism, and in a positive way. He is not. Jesus is no more a fan of false doctrine than I am, and probably even less. He is speaking to a people who very much think of themselves in exclusive terms, and He’s telling them that they aren’t so special.

The other folds are the Gentiles, like us. During His Ministry, and especially in the writings of those who came after Him, Gentiles coming into the kingdom is a strong and common thread. The Christian religion is for all people of all times and places, not just for these few Hebrew people gathered around Jesus in first century Palestine.

You can’t talk about this text without talking about Pastors. There is only one Jesus, and He is the Good Shepherd, and the sheep belong to Him. There have been, and there are many pastors, and the sheep recognize in the voice of their individual pastor the voice of Jesus speaking through the man, and they therefore follow that voice, the voice of Jesus.

We sometimes refer to these men as “under-shepherd.” and they are to fight to defend the flock entrusted to them against the wolves and thieves, and they are not to flee when the fight becomes difficult, because they are not hirelings, and we do have a dog in this fight. That’s us in LCMS. Other churches and other shepherds – well, they’re not shepherds.

17. For a third time Jesus talks about how He will lay down His life for the sheep. “διὰ τοῦτό με ὁ Πατήρ ἀγαπᾷ ὅτι ἐγὼ τίθημι τὴν ψυχὴν μου – because of this my father loves me, because I lay down my life for the sheep.” He begins with the preposition “διὰ,” followed by a “τούτο - this” in the accusative case, denoting the reason for something.

He then goes on to explain and make clear what “this” is; that The Father loves the Son “ἵνα πάλιν λάβω αὐτήν – because He lays down His life for the sheep.” Far from being a reckless or wasted act, the voluntary laying down of His life is a gallant and meaningful act, one that brings about the rescue of the sheep, and for that the Father loves the Son.

Oh, wait. There’s more! He lays down His life “ἵνα πάλιν λάβω αὐτήν – in order that again I might take it,” and He does. This is a different way of saying that it is necessary for the Son of Man to go to Jerusalem to be killed, and then to be raised up on the third day. Suffering before glory, Crucifixion before Resurrection, Good Friday, and then Easter.

18. Unlike as is often the case – that a person takes another person’s life – nobody takes the life of Jesus from Him, “οὐδεὶς ἤρεν αὐτήν ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ - nobody takes it from me,” but He willingly lays it down of His own accord. Using the emphatic “but,” contrasting with the previous statement, “ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ τίθημι αὐτήν ἀπ’ ἐμαυτοῦ - but I lay it down of myself.”

When Jesus says of His life that, “ἐξουσίαν ἔχω θεῖναι αὐτήν, καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἔχω πάλιν λαβεῖν αὐτήν – I have power to lay it down and power to again take it up,” He is descriptively stating a fact of nature unique to humans. Animals don’t commit, or even contemplate, suicide. Is it problematic if we say that Jesus was tempted to commit suicide?

The noun “ἐξουσία” is often correctly translated “authority,” but here the primary meaning of “power” is correct. The KJV and descendants have it right, but the rest don’t. Of course Jesus had the power to take His own life, and by tempting Him to leap from that tall building Satan was doing just that. We all have power to do that, but none have authority.

God gave life, and only God has authority to take life, and God decides when you will die, and “ταύτην τὴν ἐντολὴν ἔλαβον παρὰ τοῦ Πατρός μου – this command (law) I received from My Father.” It would be wrong for The Son to have decided to kill Himself. It is only appropriate that the Father would decide the time and manner of the death of The Son.

Ellicott says of the conclusion of this sermon,

He has asserted in fullest terms the entirely voluntary nature of His one sacrifice. He repeats in fullest terms the voluntary subordination of Son to Father, which is based upon equality of nature.

Indeed, on the battlefield men will voluntarily fall on the grenade for their buddies, and there is a plethora of anecdotes that have things like that happening. In marriage a man is supposed to be willing to die for his wife, but other than that, it doesn't happen much. Then there's Jesus of Nazareth, who willingly and voluntarily went where the road took Him.

Law/Gospel

Death/Life – This is the emphasis during the entire Easter Season.

No Shepherd/Good Shepherd – Pity the poor souls who know nothing of Jesus the Good Shepherd, and who turn to false gods. Pity the poor souls who tramp over to church on Sunday morning, waiting to hear a Word from God and hear something else. Blessed are those who have been chosen and given faith to see Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Blessed are those to whom God has given a faithful shepherd, one through whom He speaks His pure and nourishing Word. I once heard an LCMS person use the term “The Gift of Pastor.”

Not Known/Known – God knows everything and everybody, but not all people are known by God. We are known by God, who chose us, who saved us, who sends angels to watch over the youngsters, and maybe the elderly, and who even numbers the hairs on our heads. He knows us well.

Known/Known – God know all about our sin, and yet He still loves us and shepherds us.

Sermon Titles

About Sheep

About Sheep and Shepherds

What Do Shepherds Do All Day?

Hymns

They sure have gutted the Ministry/Ordination/Installation section of the hymnal and have jettisoned some really good stuff; from twelve hymns in TLH to six in LW to two in LSB.

One is hard-pressed to find hymns to sing at Ordination or Installation. I'm not a copyright attorney, but I think that the copyright for TLH expired in 2016...just saying...

Shepherd of Tender Youth – LSB 864

The King of Love My Shepherd Is – LSB 709

The Lord's My Shepherd – LSB 710

Rev. Steven L. Anderson
Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church
Grand Mound, Iowa

Resources

ACC – Manlio Simonetti, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Mark).
Intervarsity Press, 2002

BAG – Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. Translated by
William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, University of Chicago Press, 1979

BCLY – William Barclay, The Gospel of Mark.. The Westminster Press, 1975

FGG – James W. Voelz, Fundamental Greek Grammar. Concordia Publishing House, 1993

MGM – W.F. Moulton, A.S. Geden, H.K. Moulton, A Concordance to the Greek Testament.
T & T Clark LTD., 1978

MM – James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament.
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982

ODCC – F.L. Cross, Editor, Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. Oxford University
Press, 1978

RNK – Fritz Rienecker, A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament, Zondervan, 1976

RSV – Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Zondervan Publishing House, 1965

UBD – Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, 1977.

WP – A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, Baker, 1930

VINE – W.E.Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984

WIK – www.wikipedia.com

BIB – www.biblos.com

GBO – www.greekbible.com

Digital Classics Library - www.perseus.tufts.edu

Internet Classics Library – www.classics.mit.edu

Christian Classics Ethereal Library - www.ccel.org

Project Wittenberg - www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html