

Sermon for April 23, 2023 Ezekiel 34:11-16 and John 10:11-16

The wolf is the devil - who devours sheep.

The hireling is the false teacher - who abandons the sheep so that the devil can mislead them and devour them.

The Good Shepherd is the Lord Jesus who saves His sheep from the false teacher **and** the devil.

From the 33rd chapter of Ezekiel – the chapter **before** the chapter that contains our Old Testament text this morning, Ezekiel is Israel's watchman. Beginning at verse 7: *“So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, O Wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.”*

When a man stands between God and God's people, it is a very serious thing. The pastor is charged with telling the people what God says. If he is faithful to tell what God says, then he will not be charged with their blood if they do not listen to him. But if he does not tell them what God says – if he tells them nothing – or if he tells them false words and teachings, then he – the false teacher – will be charged with their blood. He will be guilty of their destruction.

It seems that God is tired of false teachers. And to our gospel text today: God says **He** would search for His sheep. God would seek out **HIS** scattered sheep. **God** would bring out His people from all countries into His promised land. God would feed His people **in Israel** with good things – in good pasture on the mountain pastures of Israel. God declares that **He** will be their shepherd. God will seek the lost and bring back those who strayed. God would strengthen the weak. He would destroy the fat and strong in His justice.

So, dear ones, the story about the wolf, the hireling, and the Good Shepherd is not a fantasy or a myth or a nursery rhyme compared to Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf. No, the Good Shepherd is a Man and the story about Him is true and serious. The news about the coming of the I AM - the Good Shepherd - is for real – it is not fiction. The Great I AM has come **for** His People **to** His People. He has come in the flesh as Jesus of Nazareth.

Listen again: *I AM the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 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. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. 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. John 10:11-16

Jesus has bought us with His suffering and bleeding and death. He is our Good Shepherd who has laid his life down for us. He is not a hired hand who has fled when the devil appeared. He looked the devil in the eye and resisted his temptations for forty days in the desert. Our Good Shepherd Jesus Christ knows those who belong to Him because He has bought them and put His Name and seal on them in Holy Baptism. They belong to Him – He knows them - and they know Him. They know Him as their Good Shepherd. In a similar manner God the Son knows His Father as His Father. And God the Father knows Jesus the Son as His Son.

For love - Jesus lay his life down in obedience to His Father because He knows Him so well and loves Him. He also lay down his life for his sheep in Israel – for those who follow Him. He has other sheep – other than the Jews. These other sheep are known as Gentiles. He would bring them into His fold also. They, too, know the voice of the Good Shepherd. They recognize His Word in Holy Scripture. They listen to His voice.

All who listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd and follow Him, will be united in one flock. We know this flock as the *Una Sancta* – the One Holy – the One Holy Christian and Apostolic Church. This is an invisible, worldwide church of all those who truly believe in the Good Shepherd and follow Him and His Word.

So, this parable about the wolf, the hireling, and the Good Shepherd is real. The devil is at work in the world, trying to mislead God's people. He misleads not only God's people but he misleads those who profess to teach and preach God's word but do not. Beware of the many false teachers in this world. There are so many false teachers these days that it is hard to find a teacher/preacher who does not twist God's Word or who does not believe the Word as it has been given to the world by God. Always look to the teachings of the Good Shepherd, Jesus the Christ. Only the Good Shepherd is your Shepherd. Listen to Him. Know His Voice and teachings. Follow Him. Follow Him only. He is the Good Shepherd. Your Good Shepherd. AMEN.

Ezekiel 34:11-16

God, the True Shepherd

11 'For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. **12** As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. **13** And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, [a]in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. **14** I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. **15** I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord GOD. **16** "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment."

1 Peter 2:21-25

21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for [a]us, leaving [b]us an example, that you should follow His steps:

22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";

23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; **24** who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose [c]stripes you were healed. **25** For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and [d]Overseer of your souls.

John 10:11-16

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. **12** But a [a]hireling, *he who is* 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. **13** The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. **14** I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. **15** As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. **16** And 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.