

Misericordias Domini Sunday  
St. John 10:11-16  
April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Augusta, GA  
Pastor Jerald P. Dulas

## I Lay Down My Life

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

### **Sermon Text:**

“I AM the Good Shepherd; and I know Mine own, and Mine own know Me, even as the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”

### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O God, Who didst will Thine Only-begotten Son to learn obedience by the things which He suffered, that, being thus made perfect, He might become the Author of eternal salvation unto all that obey Him: work in us, we beseech Thee, such inward conformity with His holy patience as may cause us to have part also in His glorious power, that so, walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, we may be able to serve Thee all our days in newness of mind and life; through + Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear friends, a Good Shepherd cares deeply for His sheep. He will do anything for the sheep that will benefit them. He feeds them with good pasture. He leads them beside still waters so that they can drink. He provides for their wants of body and soul. But a Good Shepherd does even more than provide sustenance for the sheep. He also defends the sheep against harm and danger. He puts His own life on the line in order that the sheep may not be harmed. The Good Shepherd is willing to lay down His life for the sheep. Our Lord + Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He lays down His life for the sheep. More than that, our Lord + Jesus became a sheep like us in order to save us. He is both Shepherd and sheep. He took upon Himself our flesh, so that in our flesh He might rescue us from the wolf; that devil of old.

St. Peter in his First Epistle from our Epistle for the day tells us that our Lord + Jesus “bare our sins in His Body upon the tree.” That means that as a sheep—in our flesh—our Lord + Jesus placed Himself in the jaws of the wolf, so that we might not be devoured. He allows Himself to be devoured by the wolf on the tree of the holy cross, so that, as St. Peter put it “we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness.” This is what a Good Shepherd does. And by “Good” is meant “better than the rest.” He is the best of all Shepherds. There is no other shepherd as “good” as the True Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

For other shepherds have tendency to flee from the wolf. Indeed, the bad shepherds leave the sheep to be devoured by the wolf. They allow false doctrine and licentiousness to reign free among the sheep. The sheep may get pleasure from this, but they are unaware that they are slowly being eaten

alive by the wolf to their eternal ruin.

But our Good Shepherd knows His sheep. They also know the Good Shepherd. They hear His voice. They heed His warnings of the Law to stay away from false doctrine and immoral living. They do not do it reluctantly. For just as the Good Shepherd cares deeply for the sheep. On account of that deep care, they in turn also care deeply for the Good Shepherd. They hear His voice and listen to His voice because they love the Good Shepherd. They love the Good Shepherd because He loves them. This is why this Sunday is called "*Misericordias Domini*." This title means "tender mercies." It describes the deep care that the Good Shepherd has for us. This deep care is expressed in His mercy for the sheep. Mercy means to not treat someone the way that they deserve to be treated.

Our Lord does not just withhold the punishment that we deserve, however. His mercy is even deeper than we would have mercy. If we have mercy on someone who deserves punishment, it will simply mean that we did not give him over to that punishment. But our Lord + Jesus, the Good Shepherd, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, goes even further. For He does not just withhold the punishment that we deserve on account of our manifold sins and trespasses, but He takes those sins into His own Body upon the tree of the holy cross. He undergoes the punishment that we deserve. This is the depth of our Lord's mercy. He does not just withhold punishment, but endures our punishment Himself.

How many of us can truly say that about ourselves? If we consider ourselves merciful, would we face the death sentence that somebody else earned by their crimes? Would we bear someone else's sins by undergoing their punishment? No, we would not! Even if we desired to, we could not, because we have our own sins for which we have earned the Lord God's eternal wrath and displeasure. We ourselves have been given a death sentence that we must pay. But we no longer have to pay that punishment, we no longer have to face the executioner, for our Lord + Jesus, our Good Shepherd, laid down His life for us sheep.

He who knew no sin, became sin for us, so that He might die for us, and we might go free. This is the "*Misericordias*" of the Lord; this is the tender mercy—literally, the merciful heart—of our dear Lord + Jesus, our Good Shepherd. He not only feeds and nourishes us, but guards and protects us. He does this by becoming a sheep like us, so that the wolf attacks Him instead of us. He places Himself in the jaws of the wolf, so that we may flee to safe and green pasture. He dies so that we might live. He lays down His life, so that our lives may be spared. That is what it means to be merciful; what it means to not treat someone in the way they deserve to be treated. It means laying down our life in the place of someone who does not deserve to have someone lay down their life for them.

This is what it means when we say that our Lord + Jesus is the Good Shepherd; that He lays down His life for the sheep. The imagery associated with this day often depicts our Lord + Jesus holding a lamb, or surrounded by sheep, in a lovely pasture. Indeed, the cover of today's bulletin depicts such a scene. But this imagery does not go far enough in depicting our Lord's role as Good Shepherd. The image should really be one of our Lord + Jesus in the jaws of the wolf as the sheep go free, as we go free. And even though the wolf devours the sheep of our Lord on the tree of the cross. It only leads to the devil's demise. For by His death, He destroys both death and the devil. Our Lord + Jesus, our Good Shepherd is now the Lord over death and life.

He grants us life, and not death, because we are His sheep through faith in Him. He is our Good Shepherd, because we hear His voice, and in faith, follow after Him. And following after Him does not simply mean walking behind Him. It means having Him as our only Lord and Savior. It means not leading an immoral life. It means avoiding false doctrine, that is, the lies and traps of the devil, the wolf. Both false doctrine and licentiousness go hand in hand. Wherever false doctrine exists, immoral behavior is sure to follow. This is because these things are the tools of the wolf, of the devil. The bad

shepherds lead the sheep away from green pastures and still waters, right into the maw of the wolf. The bad shepherds allow this to happen, because the sheep do not like to hear the Law of the Lord God. Nobody likes being called a sinner, except those who humbly confess their sins. The repentant person has no problem being called a sinner, because he knows it to be true.

But the bad shepherds, the hirelings, care not for the sheep, even though such urgings to live as one wants to live without fear of punishment is often dressed up as being “loving.” An immoral life is dressed up in the code phrase “love is love.” As if leaving someone to rot in eternal damnation and hell is somehow loving. This is how one sees that the bad shepherds have no real care for the sheep, because it is harder to preach against such things than it is to condone it. To preach against it leads to hatred of the shepherd. And while it is true that our Lord + Jesus offered up His life as a ransom for the sins of the whole world, and that through Him we have forgiveness of our sins, such forgiveness cannot be offered if we do not hear the voice of our Good Shepherd.

Our Good Shepherd calls us into repentance. He calls us to turn away from our sinful lives, and live lives worthy of repentance. Humility and repentance are never found in arrogance. Contrition is never found in delighting in our sinful behavior. The truth of the Word of the Lord is never found in lies and deception which ignore the Law and lead the poor sheep into their eternal ruin by false doctrine and willful sinning.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us carefully avoid all false doctrine and immoral living, and let us rather turn in contrition and faith to our Lord + Jesus. For He lays down His life for us poor, miserable sinners, so that we might have the forgiveness of our sins in Him. In Him we have been shown His great care and mercy for us. He bears our sins in His own flesh, our flesh which He took upon Himself at His Incarnation. He dies, so that we may go free. He dies, so that we may live, and live with Him forever and ever. He saves us from the jaws of the devil, the wolf, so that we may have eternal joy with our Good Shepherd forever in heaven. May this be granted unto us all! In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord + Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same + Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ + Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*