

The Third Sunday of Easter – Pr. Faugstad sermon  
St. John 10:11-16: “Jesus Laid Down His Life to Save the Sheep.”  
April 18/19, 2026 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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Lord, my Shepherd, take me to Thee.  
Thou art mine; I was Thine  
Even ere I knew Thee.  
I am Thine, for Thou hast bought me;  
Lost I stood, But Thy blood  
Free salvation brought me. *Amen.* (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary #377, v. 7*)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

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*The sermon text for today is written in the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:*

[Jesus said:] “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.” <sup>(ESV)</sup>

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*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

In Christ Jesus, who came that we “*may have life and have it abundantly*” (Joh. 10:10), dear fellow redeemed:

The most well-known and best-loved Psalm in the Bible is Psalm 23. We love the picture of a shepherd guiding his sheep to green pastures and still waters, leading them safely through the valley of the shadow of death, providing everything they need, and bringing them everlasting peace. This Psalm is comforting because it emphasizes the work of the shepherd, how he cares for the sheep.

If it were a Psalm about what the sheep do, the picture would be much darker. The sheep wander this way and that and become separated from each other. They don't know where to find food and water. They walk through the valley of the shadow of death with no one to defend them. Evil surrounds them, and they are very afraid. Enemies get ready to attack, and the sheep cannot defend themselves. They are helpless; they have no hope.

This is the spiritual reality for us apart from Jesus. We don't know the right way to go. We are constantly exposed to the devil's attacks, and he sends us deeper and deeper into sin and guilt. Death is coming, and there is nothing we can do to avoid it. We are hopelessly lost, and we cannot find our way to safety.

But as helpless and hopeless as we are, the LORD our Shepherd still cares for us. He does not want to leave us to our own sinful devices. He does not want the wolves to slink in and pick us off. He does not want to hand us over to death. We see this in the way He snatched Adam and Eve back from the jaws of the devil and death when they fell into sin. He promised that He would *"put enmity between"* the devil and the woman's offspring, and that He would send One to crush Satan's head (Gen. 3:15).

This One is Jesus, true God and true Man. He is *"the Good Shepherd,"* who *"lays down His life for the sheep."* That sounds like good news for the sheep, except that if their Shepherd lays down His life for them, who will be left to defend them? If the Shepherd dies for His sheep, there is no hired man who will stand with the sheep. He will see the wolf coming and leave the sheep and flee. So what good could the Shepherd's death actually do?

We need to understand that the Shepherd laying down His life for His sheep is not some desperate fight to the end, and that as soon as it's over for the Shepherd, it's over for the sheep. What is taking place by His sacrifice is a great Divine Bargain. The Shepherd agrees to lay down His life on behalf of, or in the place of, His sheep. God the Father sent His Son for this very purpose. The way Satan's head would be crushed, the way his power would be taken away from him, is by the Shepherd offering Himself as the atoning sacrifice for all sin.

Only a perfect sacrifice would do. The Shepherd, who never failed at His duties, who never lost track of the sheep, who never took the wrong path, stepped in to suffer and die for the sins of every person. He suffered as though He had wandered away from God like we have, acted foolishly and selfishly like we do, followed His own sinful desires like we have, and ignored God's law. Whatever you and I have done to break God's Commandments, endanger our faith, and put ourselves in the devil's grip, Jesus took the punishment for it. The prophet Isaiah described it like this: *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all"* (53:6).

Jesus offered His perfect, righteous life in place of ours. He shed His holy blood to wash away every sin. This was the price for our redemption. This was the Divine Bargain: He would suffer and die for our sins, so we would receive His righteousness and eternal life. Jesus did what He told His disciples He came to do: *"I lay down My life for the sheep."* But immediately after that statement, He indicated that He had gracious work to do beyond His sacrifice: *"I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice."*

How this would be possible was made clear in the very next verses after today's reading, where Jesus says, *"I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father"* (Joh. 10:17-18). The Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep fully trusting His Father's plan that He would be raised again. The sheep would not be left to fend for themselves, not the disciples in Jesus' day and not us. Jesus died to redeem us, and He lives to save us.

We mentioned how much people appreciate Psalm 23. What might be lost on them is how well this Psalm connects with the one before it. Psalm 22 starts like this, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?"* Later in

the Psalm we hear, *“They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots”* (vv. 1,16-18, NKJV). Psalm 22 is one of the clearest depictions in the Bible of Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross. But what could this Psalm of agony have to do with the peaceful Psalm that follows it?

Psalm 23 describes the fruit of His victory over death and the ongoing work He continues to do among us. Our risen Lord supplies us with everything we need for our salvation. He leads us to the green pastures and still waters of His Word and Sacraments. That’s where He feeds us, restores our soul, strengthens our faith. He leads us in the paths of righteousness. Those are the paths of God, *His* paths. We walk along them by His grace, *“for His name’s sake,”* because of what He has done for us.

We walk through the valley of the shadow of death in this life; we face temptations, hardships, sorrows, persecution; every day is a day closer to our death. But we fear no evil. Why? Because the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd, our crucified and risen Savior is with us. Because He is with us, we rejoice with Him and feast with Him even in the presence of our enemies. St. Paul writes, *“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”* (Rom. 8:31-32).

On our own, we—the weak and vulnerable sheep—don’t have a chance. But in Him, we have every confidence. If He was willing to die in our place, for our sins, He is not going to abandon us now. If He was willing to seek after us and bring us back when we wandered and became lost in our sin, He will keep watch over us and protect us today. We Gentiles used to be outside the fold. There was a time when our forefathers did not listen to His voice. They followed gods and superstitions of their own making. That would still be true of us today if not for God’s grace toward us.

The fact that the saving faith has come to us is a fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in today’s reading: *“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.”* We are believing Gentiles whom God has called along with believing Jews into the “one holy Christian and Apostolic Church” (Nicene Creed). We are sheep by faith, not by nationality. The members of His holy Church have passed through the same cleansing waters of Baptism. We have received the same body and blood of our Lord. We are gathered into His body with Him as our Head. He nourishes and cherishes us, just as a Shepherd nourishes and cherishes His sheep.

The Shepherd grows His holy Flock of believers in no other way than through His Word. He speaks, and the sheep hear His voice. We cannot see the future. We do not know what the way forward will look like. We don’t know what trials and temptations we will face. Will there be days of gladness or seasons of sadness (ELH #377, v. 3)? How dark will the shadow of death hang over us? Will the days to come be many or few?

We fear no evil because the Shepherd speaks. We know His voice. There is no other voice like His. Other voices make grand promises: “You can have more!” “You can be happier!” “You can leave all your troubles behind!” These voices would pull us in every direction away from Christ. But only He has the words of eternal life (Joh. 6:68). Jesus says, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know*

*them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand” (Joh. 10:27-28).*

The world can make no such promises. The world cannot give you eternal life. Only He who laid down His life and took it up again can do that. He did that for you. You are not “just another sheep” to Him. He knows you, knows everything about you – your sins, your struggles, your weaknesses. He chose to suffer for you, die for you, and rise again for you, so that you would live with Him. *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow [you] All the days of [your] life; And [you] will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever” (Psa. 23:6).*

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

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