



Risen Savior Lutheran Church

14700 Leavenworth Rd., Basehor, KS 66007 913-724-2900

No parents wants their daughter to come home and say I met this great guy, he's the one, we're planning our life together. And when you ask what he does for a living, she says, he's a shepherd. And no son of yours would ever say I wish I grow up to be a shepherd. Life in the ancient world.

If you imagine a man, as dingy as a homeless person, unbathed, smelly, unkempt, then you've picture of a shepherd. A shepherd is the last thing you would want to be compared to. In an agricultural home where there is farming and raising of sheep and animals, the duty of the shepherd always given to the youngest. You might remember David, the shepherd boy, writer of Ps 23, the youngest of Jesse's sons. The prophet Samuel sent by God, goes to Bethlehem to anoint a king, Jesse brings out his 7 sons, "no its not one of these" Jesse says oh I have one more, not really that important, the youngest out tending sheep.

What makes our Gospel text today remarkable is Jesus uses one of His **I am** illustrations, **I am**, the name of God, to call Himself a shepherd. Yes, liken to a dingy, unkempt, smelly, unacceptable, lowest member of the family, a shepherd. But you see, that's exactly the picture our Savior wishes to paint for you sheep, you lambs. Jesus did not come to be viewed as the great majestic Lord, the most esteemed, the most beautiful. No, this is the picture of our Lord – **I am the good shepherd**. He comes to live among the sheep, who love to wander, need to be fed, constant care, need to be near still waters because they're incapable of drinking from running water, who to be sheered – yes, their wool needs sheered. Sheep love to lay in their own feces. Need grooming. They can't defend themselves well, really no chance of survival on their own.

You are the sheep of our Savior's pasture. You are the ones he protects and lays down His life for. The one Jesus loves so much that He would stand His ground, take your punishment, not back down when a crown of thorns was placed on His head, whips and chains hitting His back, face and side, and heavy cross placed on His shoulders so He could carry His very own instrument of torture and death.

The Shepherd lays down His life for wandering sheep. Wandering sheep in the flock. I know what you do – I do it too. You rationalize your wandering. “As long as I don't stray too far, come back to the sheep pen on Sunday morning. “I can control my wandering, my wandering isn't so bad.” As if there are “degrees” to wandering away from Jesus. We don't even realize the magnitude of our wandering. How dangerous. How hurtful to ourselves and those we love. Rationalize “innocent” or “controlled” wandering, “no real concern or consequence, it only affects me. I have my wandering under control.” Wandering, too much alcohol, wandering on the internet. “It's under control.” You tell yourself, wandering in laziness, or lying or gossip or temper or selfishness or social media stuff- “under control”. Wandering -too busy, for prayer, study of God's Word –it's okay, I'll get to it. And oh how wandering sheep love to bite and criticize and teardown other sheep. “But it's all under control.” “I can control my behavior. It's not too bad. I've got this.”

He lays down His life, it demands the life of God, for what you think is something little, that you have “under control.”

And you suffer – those around you suffer – and so does your life with the Good Shepherd. Sometimes you didn't even notice it.

“I've got it under control. My family is under control. My life with Jesus is under control.” Not hardly. Not even close. In fact as sheep, you're truly helpless, hopeless, defenseless.

The Good Shepherds says, I got this, I'm really in control. It will be okay. **I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own, my own know me. My own,** You belong to Jesus. He knows – even when He seems so distant – He knows you; knows exactly how to shepherd

His sheep, for your unique good, precisely what you need. A shepherd ever near you, right with you in the stuff you can't control. You are **My own**.

Even in the midst of your wandering, your doubts, your struggles against the fallen flesh, **I give them eternal life, they will never perish, no one will take them out of my hand.** You are in His protection. Standing guard, watch over you and will never, ever perish. Nothing can separate you from the love of God, not even your sins, your failures, your imperfect faith, your broken vows, or your doubts. This is not your promise to keep. It is His. He has placed His promise upon you, baptized you into **I am**. Pronounced His will for you in this flock. Even to serve, tend you with His shepherd here. Declared your future in His resurrection. Death has no claim on you. Hell has no way to hold you.

Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever. You've a Shepherd. Working in the messes with messy sheep. **I know my own.** He's got this; has called you to be: His forgiven, His beloved sheep and lambs.