

Easter II

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Date: 23 April 2023

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[0 : 00] Images of a shepherd conjure up thoughts of leading, watching, guarding, protecting.

But shepherds are usually a hired hand, and they're hired for a task. They are hired to watch over sheep.

And if the sheep wanders off and then becomes prey, say for a wolf, the shepherd then would replace that sheep with another one.

But that is not the image we are given here in our gospel text. Here in John chapter 10, we are told that sheep belong to the shepherd.

And that our shepherd will not lose one. As a matter of fact, we heard our Lord say here in John chapter 10, verses 11 through 14, he said, I am the good shepherd.

[1 : 04] The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. But 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. The hireling flees because he's a hireling, and he does not care about the sheep.

Our Lord goes on to say, I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep and am known by my own. To really understand these words from our Lord, we need to know the background of this sheep shepherd metaphor.

And this means we need to be familiar with Ezekiel chapter 34. That is the background here to John chapter 10. The prophet Ezekiel pronounced judgment upon Israel because her shepherds, her prophets, her leaders were corrupt.

The people were led by self-serving leaders who acted as hirelings, not as true shepherds. These so-called shepherds were allowing people to go astray.

[2 : 28] Or even worse, they were the ones leading them astray. They were profiting. Profiting from the wealthy.

Not speaking up to the wealthy. And allowing the poor to be taken advantage of. In other words, they didn't care about people.

They only cared for themselves. In Ezekiel chapter 34, verse 2, we read, Woe to the shepherds of Israel.

And we go on to here in Ezekiel chapter 34, verses 8 through 10. As I live, says the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd.

Nor did my shepherds search for my flock. But the shepherds fed themselves, and they did not feed my flock. Therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord.

[3 : 35] Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand. I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more.

For I will deliver my flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them. There we have it.

The so-called shepherds were self-serving wolves. These lazy and uncaring shepherds were driven only by their self-interest.

And they had caused the sheep to become prey and to scatter. And these are the hirelings that are mentioned by our Lord here in John chapter 10.

They are not true shepherds who care for the sheep, or who would risk their own lives for the good of others. They desire comfort, and to bask in their complacency.

[4 : 46] They are apathetic people who are driven by their own lusts. Lusts for power, money, to be liked, to be accepted.

But the promise given through the prophet Ezekiel to the people of Israel is stated here in Ezekiel chapter 34, verse 11. For thus says the Lord God, indeed, I, I myself, will search for my sheep and seek them out.

That's the promise. And that is what Jesus came to do. He came to seek and to save the lost. He came to bring the sheep into one fold.

He came not only for the Israelites, he came for the Gentiles, calling people far and wide to come home, to come home, to enter into the kingdom of God.

And our Lord showed his commitment and his dedication to the sheep by paying the ultimate price, by laying down his own life, motivated by love in order to sacrifice for the good of the sheep.

[6 : 11] But the shepherd not only sacrifices his own life for the sheep, he raises his life up again from death.

He conquers the grave. We read in John chapter 10, verses 17 and 18. Therefore, my father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it again.

And verse 18, no one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. And I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again.

Jesus is the long-awaited shepherd who offered his own life as the sinless, as the spotless lamb of God. But he not only sacrificed his own life upon the cross, he conquered death.

He conquered the grave by rising from the dead. And now he leads his sheep. He leads you to that final promised land where the demonic wolves and the devil shall never threaten you again.

[7 : 31] So what is to be our response to such selfless love and such wonderful sacrifice?

Well, we are called to live in the joy and in the hope of Christ Jesus and what he has done, knowing that even on our bad days, even on our worst days, the shepherd does not abandon you.

Let me say that again. Beloved, you are called to live in the joy and in the hope of Christ, knowing that even on your worst day, the shepherd has not and he will not abandon you.

And we are to invite others to come home, to come into the fold of the church, to find their security and their strength in the arms of the good shepherd and to join us in singing that hymn.

The king of love, my shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never. I nothing lack if I am his and he is mine forever. and so through all the length of days, thy goodness faileth never.

[9 : 01] Good shepherd, may I sing thy praise within thy house forever. Amen. Christ is risen.

He is risen to thee. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.