

Theme: **God is with us as our Shepherd**

Text: Isaiah 40:1-11; John 10: 11- 18

Occasion: 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday Advent Service

Date: December 5, 2018

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, Co

*Grace and peace to you as you let the Good Shepherd be your guide in life, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen*

(Show picture of Shepherd at the manger. #1) Many of us when we think about Shepherds during the Advent and Christmas season often think about the Shepherds who came to see the promised Messiah birth, the Christ Child, as the angels proclaimed to them. So who is the Good Shepherd in this picture?

(Show picture of the Baby in a manger. #2) Do you really think of the Good Shepherd as being the newborn child wrapped in swaddling clothes? Who are you looking for when God through Isaiah tells us, **“Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and His arm rules for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him. He will tend His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in His arms; He will carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.”** (Is. 40:10-11) Do we think of our Good Shepherd as being a tiny baby or just a grown up man?

(Show picture of children looking and the manger. #3) As you come to these Advents services, who are you looking for? Who are you expecting to come into your life and be your Good Shepherd? Jesus says to us, **“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.”** (Jn. 10:14 – 15) Do you know your Good Shepherd? Do you listen for His voice and follow Him all the time? How well does your Good Shepherd know you?

(Show picture of the manger seen. #4) Jesus came into this world to be our Good Shepherd, not a hired hand and He accomplish that by being born just like each of us. Dealing with all the problems that each of us have to deal with, only withOUT a single sin. Why would Jesus want to do this for us? God’s Love for us was shown to us by sending His Only Son to be our Good Shepherd and to do what He had to do to get to know why each of us act like sheep so often instead of God’s Children.

(Show picture of the Good Shepherd. #5) Out of love for each of us Jesus came to be just like each of us, to live in this world just like each of us, only without any sin so that He could lay

down His life to save us from sin, death and the power of the devil. To be able to save us from our sins Jesus had to face all the sins we will ever face and not commit a single sin. Jesus had to do that for us so that He could give us His righteousness and take all our sins upon Himself. Jesus had to pay for all our sins by dying for them so that He could give us eternal life by conquer death for us. To make us children of God again He had to conquer the devil and guide us away from Him. He accomplishes all this for us by His life, beginning with His birth in a stable because there was no room for Him in the world filled with sin, death and the power of the devil.

(Show the picture of Jesus on the cross. #6) Is this what you expect of your Good Shepherd? We might not think of Jesus Crucifixion when we think about Him as our Good Shepherd but He says to us, **“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. For this reason the Father loves me, because 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.”** (Jn. 10:14-18)

Jesus came into our world out of love for us so that we can live in His love for all eternity. To enable us to live with Him forever He had to conquer all our sin so that He could give us His righteousness in exchange for our sins. Then He had to go the Cross of Calvary to suffer our punishment and give us back the life we had lost because of our sins. With Jesus’ resurrection we are given what God is talking about with Isaiah, **‘Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.’** (Is. 40:1-2) The comfort we can share with others is the knowledge of what our Good Shepherd has done for us. He came into our world to conquer sin, death and the power of the Devil so that we do not have to fear them but come to Him willingly.

(Show the picture of Good Shepherd feeding a lamb, #7.) Do you come to the Good Shepherd to be feed from His hand? You can if you have learned to trust in God’s love instead

of your own desires. A sheep wouldn't come to someone and eat out of their hand unless they have come to know that they will be given what they need. Our Good Shepherd want to get to know us personally so that He can guide us along the path of righteousness that lead to our heavenly home with Him. Do you listen for your Good Shepherds voice and eagerly come following Him? I hope that you will as you get to know the comfort that He can provide for you as you put your trust in Him alone.

(Show picture of Jesus with Lamb on shoulders, #8) Have you ever tried to pick up a lamb or any animal that you just came upon and carry it on your shoulders? They will kick and bite you to get away. So how do you think that this Lamb is allowing his Good Shepherd to carry him upon His shoulders? Because he knows Him and knows that He is only going to help him and not harm him. Our Good Shepherd wants to lead us back to the path of righteousness when we have gone astray and to care for us when we get hurt, but we have to put our life in His hands knowing and trusting that He will get us back to where we will be safe again.

(Show picture of Jesus at the still waters, #9) Will you let your Good Shepherd guide you to the still waters of His love for you or will you stray away so that He will have to go looking for you again? Our Good Shepherd knows where the still waters and green pastures are so that we can grow in His love and become the Child of God that God made us to be forever. What do we have to say to Good Shepherd when we think of His love and care for us? Certainly, we want to thank Him and praise Him for His love and protection but how do we do that.

The Bad News is that the Shepherd is watching over us; the Good News is that the Shepherd is watching over us. Our Good Shepherd knows why we want to wander after the succulent greens just over the next hill, why we often walk to the place we think is better for us, while ignoring His call and head off instead in the direction of the next beckoning light of our own imagination.

Oh, we will be wandering sheep, until we fall. That is until we wander into a box canyon and fall into an unmarked pits. That is until we find the limits of our abilities, the consequences of our own choices; the painful dead-ends of our self-serving decisions. Oh, how good it is to know that we are under the gaze of our Good Shepherd who never sleeps, who never turns

away, who never gives up on us, who never leaves us alone, who never abandons us to the paths we have chosen, who never stops watching and waiting and calling for us.

When we call Jesus our Good Shepherd, we are naming Him to be the one we know, the one we listen to, the one we follow, the one we trust, the one who will bring us safety to the love, peace and joy of life we need. We have no other who can accomplish all this for us.

(Show the picture of the children around the manger, #10) Sometimes Advent and Christmas can be a time of hollow joy—a fleeting joy based only on momentary fun or a good feeling. The coming of the Christ Child offers us a chance to again find the real joy of knowing that we have been found and cared for as God’s children – by our Good Shepherd and have heard the announcement of the Good News of great joy to all people. God is with us again, the Child of Bethlehem—the Child who will become, by His life, death and resurrection, our loving Good Shepherd, He is keep us as His own so we can have eternal life in Him. Now that you have come to know the love of your Good Shepherd are you going to proclaim the Good News to others, like the shepherds did who came to see the Christ Child at His birth? That’s what our Good Shepherd wants us to do as He guides in this life to the next. Amen.