

Text: Ezekiel 34:11-16

Theme: I Just Wanna Be a Sheep

November 26, 2017

Maybe you know the song; maybe you don't. It's a fun kid's song, a favorite song at Camp Luther, and a song our Sunday School kids have sung in our worship service. Although it's a kid's song, the title is worth remembering because it's true and because it draws our attention to our text for today. As we focus on the words from Ezekiel, we focus on the title of that familiar kid's song, "I Just Wanna Be a Sheep."

I. Our Good Shepherd wants each one of us to be His sheep. A. But in reality, we were born as goats. 1. We were born as goats because we arrived as enemies of the Good Shepherd. Enemies sounds rather harsh, doesn't it? Maybe we weren't born perfect, but enemies? Some would insist that's surely an overstatement. But as we know from our Catechism instruction, we were born blind, dead, and enemies of God. We don't want it to be true and we surely don't want to admit it, but instead of arriving as His sheep, we arrived as those who turned their back on God, who wanted nothing to do with Him. Harsh as it may appear, it's true. We were goats, not sheep.

2. We were born as goats because we thought we could save ourselves. How many people in Medford think they can save themselves, that their efforts will get them to heaven? Before the Holy Spirit stepped into our lives, we thought the same thing. "I can do it. I don't need God. I don't need anybody but me, myself, and I!" It's sounds crazy, but that's where we were before God arrived on the scene. We weren't merely a bit off course; we were lost. We were on the wrong path and nothing and no one except God could get us off that path. We may not like to think about it, but, according to our Gospel, it's clear that we were once goats, not sheep.

B. Because we now know the Good Shepherd by faith, why do we want to be His sheep? 1. We want to be His sheep because the Shepherd will come looking for us. In the first verse of our text, God says, "I, Myself, will search for My sheep and I will seek them out." Have you ever been lost, not oops I guess I should have turned left back there lost, but lost as lost in the forest where you had no idea which way to go? We want to be His sheep because He provides the comfort that, although we were terribly lost and sometimes still lose our way, He will search for us until He finds us. With billions of people on our planet, the Shepherd found you and continues to find you.

2. We want to be His sheep because He promises to rescue us. Ezekiel writes of God, "I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered." Back in my farming days, we raised cattle, not sheep, but every now and then, one of our cattle would get themselves stuck in one of the ravines. Sometimes, it took us hours to get them out. Spiritually speaking, we find ourselves in ravines far more dangerous and life-threatening. The devil and his cohorts create those ravines to steal God's sheep. Our great news is that the all-powerful Creator has promised to rescue us, to bring us back, to do whatever it takes to save us from destroying ourselves.

3. We want to be His sheep because He promises to satisfy us. "I will feed them with good pastures...they shall lie down in good grazing land." For sheep, that sounds like heaven on earth. An abundance of food and water, the shepherd's protection, peaceful enough to lie down unafraid. But then we look at our lives and

we see disunity, disharmony, ridiculous expectations, no time to rest and recuperate. In the middle of that chaos, our Shepherd says, "I will provide. I will enable you to find peace of mind and show you how to be content in the moment." As we hear those comforting words, we say to ourselves, "How great it is to be one of His sheep."

4. We want to be His sheep because our Shepherd was willing to give His life for us. On the farm, when a cow fell into a ravine, we did what we could to get it out, but, never would we risk our lives for one cow. As His sheep, our Good Shepherd would not leave us in our ravine. Instead, He died in our place so that we could live. If we were to choose different picture language, our Good Shepherd was like the hen who would gather her chicks under her wings and die in the fire so that the chicks could survive. That's what our Good Shepherd did for us. He took the cross, carried all our sins on His shoulders as He said, "I have come to give you the abundant life."

5. We want to be His sheep because He promises to heal. Ezekiel writes, "I will bind up the injured." Imagine for a moment that medical technology didn't exist, that every injury remained with us for life. What would we see when we looked in a mirror? If all our injuries of the past were still with us today, we'd be worse than a sight for sore eyes. We wouldn't even be alive today. Thankfully, our Shepherd promises to heal - physical, emotional, mental, spiritual. Some of that healing has already occurred. Some of it will occur shortly, and the remainder He will heal as we depart for heaven. As sheep, it's great news to know He will heal us.

6. We want to be His sheep because He invites us to our eternal home. We find the words in our Gospel, "The King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father'." Of all the invitations in life, His invitation surpasses them all. Although we are undeserving, unworthy, unqualified, unable to arrive on our own, our Shepherd says, "Come. Come and enjoy the wonders of heaven. Come and lie down in My green pastures. Come and enjoy eternity in a place that is nothing like your world." As we hear that invitation, our hearts say, "Now, Lord, can I go now," as we realize how grand and glorious our first moment in heaven will be.

7. We want to be His sheep because we have been offered an inheritance. What's an inheritance? It's a gift we receive that is undeserved, unearned. Maybe that's not the world's definition, but it's the correct definition. Our Good Shepherd, the one who gave His life for you and for me, the One who has loved us when we didn't love Him, who has rescued us when He should have left us in our ravine, who has forgiven us far more times than we will ever forgive anyone else, that Good Shepherd, through no merit of our own, has offered you and me an eternal inheritance. What an amazing gift He has offered to such undeserving sheep.

8. The next time the world, the devil, or your own mind offers you what appears to be so grand and glorious, be a kid at heart and say with great boldness, "No thanks. I just wanna be a sheep!" Amen.