

Old Testament Reading:

Ezekiel 34:11–24

¹¹“For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. ¹²As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. ¹⁶I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

¹⁷“As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats. ¹⁸Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet? ¹⁹And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

²⁰“Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, ²²I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. ²³And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.”

Epistle: 1 Timothy 1:12–17

¹²I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Holy Gospel: Luke 15:1–10

¹Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear [Jesus]. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

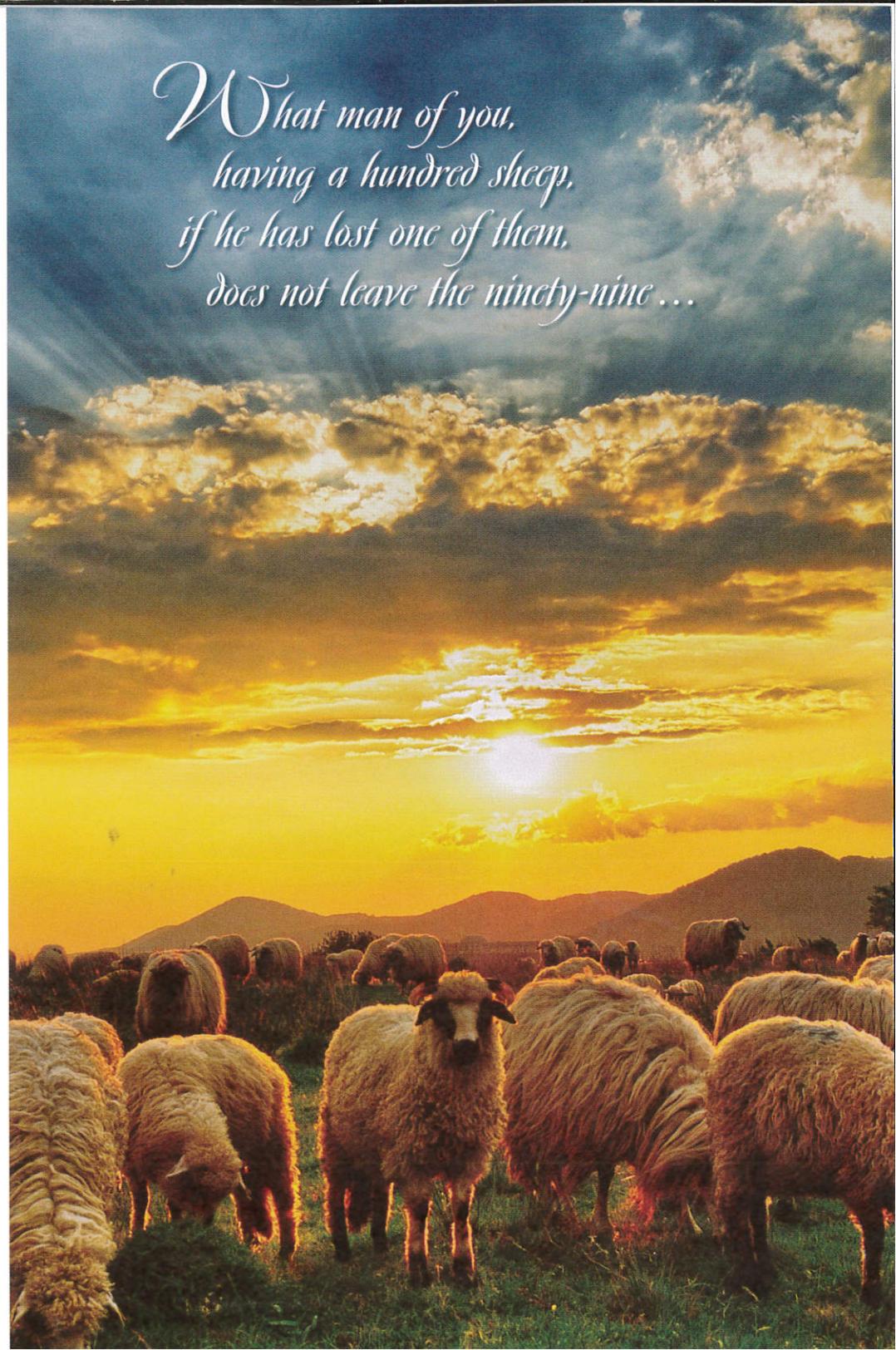
³So he told them this parable: ⁴“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

⁸“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ ¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”



About the Cover: The Lord, our Shepherd, cherishes each and every one of His sheep, so much so that if one goes missing, that one sheep becomes of singular importance. He has come to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Our Shepherd continues to seek out wandering and lost sheep—us and those for whom we pray—in order to bring them into the fold of His merciful forgiveness, won by His cross and eternal protection.

*What man of you,
having a hundred sheep,
if he has lost one of them,
does not leave the ninety-nine ...*



St. John's Lutheran Church (LCMS)

8948 N 1900 Ave Geneseo, IL 61254

309-949-2516

September 11, 2022 Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Service of Prayer and Preaching (Lutheran Service Book, p. 260)

Hymn of Invocation 814 O Bless the Lord, My Soul

Opening Versicles (Common, p. 260)

Psalm 119:169-176

(in place of Old Testament Canticle)

TAW

¹⁶⁹Let my cry come before you, O Lord;
give me understanding according to your word!

¹⁷⁰**Let my plea come before you;
deliver me according to your word.**

¹⁷¹My lips will pour forth praise,
for you teach me your statutes.

¹⁷²**My tongue will sing of your word,
for all your commandments are right.**

¹⁷³Let your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.

¹⁷⁴**I long for your salvation, O Lord,
and your law is my delight.**

¹⁷⁵Let my soul live and praise you,
and let your just decrees help me.

¹⁷⁶**I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant,
for I do not forget your commandments.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Readings (on back of bulletin)

Responsory (Common, p. 263)

Catechism (p. 264)

Ten Commandments

The Apostles' Creed

Lord's Prayer

Confession

What is Confession?

Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

What sins should we confess?

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer; but before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

Which are these?

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?

Sermon

Office Hymn 609 Jesus Sinners Doth Receive

Presentation of the Offering

Prayer of the Church

After each petition:

P Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

The prayer concludes:

P ... both now and forever.

C Amen.

Collect of the Day (p. 265)

P Lord Jesus, You are the Good Shepherd, without whom nothing is secure. Rescue and preserve us that we may not be lost forever but follow You, rejoicing in the way that leads to eternal life; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Collect for the Word

Morning Prayer (p. 266)

Blessing (p. 267)

Hymn to Depart 718 Jesus, Lead Thou On

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH-LCMS

churchoffice@stjohnsgeneseo.org
Website: www.stjohnsgeneseo.org
https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo

**HEARING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE
HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE**

Rev. Timothy Nerud **Pastor**
309-949-2516 (Office), 612-940-8138 (Cell), 309-949-2517 (Home)

Elder: Aaron Raschke

Organist: Gail Tutt

Greeter: Janet Bertsons

Videographers: Joel Werling, Nicole Nerud, or Heidi Nerud

Today's Readings: Old Testament Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-24
Epistle: 1 Timothy 1:12-17
Holy Gospel: Luke 15:1-10

WE PRAY: Out of Your mercy and grace, O Lord of hosts, You have given mercy and grace even to those who live in ignorance and unbelief, that finding forgiveness in Jesus Christ, they may be examples to the world of Your unbounded love for it; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who with You and the Holy Spirit are one God with dominion over us forever. Amen

WELCOME TO ALL!

We are anxious to share with you the Christ-centered ministry at St. John's. Our Liturgy follows closely the pattern of Word and Lord's Supper handed down from the ancient Church. It is our hope that you will make the Church's life of prayer your own. If you have difficulty following our order of service, please ask someone sitting near you for assistance. We pray that you will receive rich spiritual blessings from your presence here. May the peace and power of our risen Christ be yours always.

IF YOU DESIRE, a visit or call from Pastor Nerud, please contact the church office (309-949-2516).

OFFICE HOURS

Terri's hours (Monday—Friday) 8 am—12 pm
Pastor's hours (Monday, Pastor's day off)
(Tuesday) 9 am—12 pm
(Thursday) 9 am—12 pm & 1 pm—4 pm
(Wednesday & Friday) please call ahead.

STREAM SERVICES <https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo/> and on the website: www.stjohnsgeneseo.org.

Portal of Prayers are available for October—December. Pick one up.

ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY

Sunday school—5 Adult Bible Class—12 Worship—47

OFFERING

Offering last Sunday \$5,222.00
Weekly 2022 Budget income needed \$4,084.71

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES AT ST JOHN'S

Today	8:45 am	SS/Adult & Youth Bible Study
	10:00 am	Divine Worship
	11:30 pm	Catechism class
Tuesday	1:30 pm	LWML
	6:30 pm	Council meeting
Next Sunday	8:45 am	SS/Adult & Youth Bible Study
	10:00 am	Divine Worship/Holy Communion
	11:30 am	Catechism class

I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." Psalms 122:1

LUKE 15:2 – "And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'" Thanks be to God: Jesus receives us sinners! What the Pharisees can't understand, we praise with all our being. We give thanks for the grace of God, and we live by that grace. The more of it we receive, the more we will want to conform ourselves to the image of our generous and gracious Lord. Knowing the Lord and trusting Him come first, and the desire to imitate Him can't help but follow.

ATTENDANCE PADS are at the end of each pew. Each family (members and guests) should sign using only **ONE** box per household, naming all family members present in the one box. **EVERYONE** needs to indicate their intention to receive Holy Communion on a Communion Sunday. Return pad to the right end of your pew. Thanks for your help with this.

LWML Giving Tuesday-Watch for daily posts the first two weeks of September as LWML shares stories of "Treasures of Your Heart." For one day only, on September 13, you are encouraged to share a story about one of the treasures of your heart on Facebook, donate toward the LWML Mission Goal in honor or memory of that special treasure, and pray for the mission grants. Your donations on that day will be matched up to \$10,000. Donate online at lwml.org/giving Tuesday or give your donation to Beverly Peterson.

ALL LADIES ARE INVITED to attend the Rock Island Zone Fall Rally at Faith Lutheran Church, Kewanee, on Tuesday, September 20. The guest speaker is Rev. Rodney G. Blomquist, CID Prison/Jail Coordinator and a member of the CID Human Care Committee. Let Liz Neumann or Bev Peterson know if you would like to attend by September 4.

COLLECTION FOR ABILITIES PLUS, Kewanee. Articles will be gathered at the LWML Zone Rally. If you would like to contribute, deposit them in the box beside the coat room. Articles needed are Large Duplo Lego Blocks, Re-

ceiving Blankets, Soft Baby Books, Adult Coloring Books, Colored Pencils, Art and Craft Supplies, Word Search Books, Paper Plates, Paper Napkins, Adult and Simple Puzzles, Plastic Tablecloths, Small Bingo Prizes, Adult and Children's Board Games. Cash or checks are welcome also. Make checks payable to Abilities Plus. Cash or checks are also being accepted for *Portals of Prayer* subscriptions for the East Moline Correctional Center. Make checks payable to Women of Faith. Cash or checks may be given to Bev Peterson or Liz Neumann. **Bring all donations to the church by Sunday, September 18th.**

SPECIAL OFFERING –Holy Trinity Lutheran church is the only LCMS congregation in Bristol, TN, formed in 2002. These 40 faithful members met in first in a hotel meeting room and presently at St. Columbia Episcopal church. In recent years they purchased a house & remodeled it to serve as a fellowship hall where they have Bible study classes, Sunday school and Sunday Bible class. This building also houses the Pastor's office. This building is paid for. Currently, a modest building is in construction. It includes a 42' x 28' nave & chancel, remodeling an exiting carport to serve as Narthex with restrooms and coffee area. This will connect the house and church together. Funding was secured through the LCEF. However, the city of Bristol and TN Dept of Transportation are requiring a concrete culvert for the drive at an additional cost of \$50,000 unexpectedly putting the congregation over loan and down payment by \$43,000. Your prayers and monetary gifts are greatly needed. An offering plate is on the table under the Office window. Your gifts will be matched up to \$1,000 from Karna Hollatz estate monies given to St. John's.

INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL (ILC) - Pastor and lay leaders are invited to a **Breakfast Presentation** about the (ILC) @ **Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 4107 21st Ave, Moline IL, 8:00-10:00 AM, Thursday September 22, 2022.**

Just returning from the ILC World Conference in Kenya on September 10 (God granting!), I will speak about the nature & work of the ILC in strengthening & encouraging Confessional Lutheran Churches around the globe as well as taking questions from those gathered.

Please contact me at the email below before Wednesday, September 14 with the names and number of people attending so that our hosts can be adequately prepared.

Feel free to contact me with any questions about the ILC, understanding that I expect to be in Africa September 9-19. You can also learn about the ILC at www.ILCouncil.org.

In Christ's service, Rev. Roger B. James
Assistant to The General Secretary, ILC
Roger.James@ILCouncil.org, 260-413-7613

ALTAR FLOWERS—The **2022 Flower Chart** is now on the bulletin board next to the restrooms. Cost for weekly flowers are \$30 for two arrangements. We greatly appreciate those who help with providing flowers for Sunday worship services. **Please sign up for a Sunday.**

PRAYER MINISTRY

Rejoice in God's goodness in Christ as you pray:

MISSION—*Thank God for family.* Pray that God would guide all families to love each other with the love of God in Christ Jesus.

ST JOHN'S—Mr. & Mrs. William Lage—We offer before You our common request for the well-being of Your church throughout the world that it may be so guided and governed by Your good Spirit that all who profess themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth and hold the faith in unity of spirit in the bond of peace, and the righteousness of life. Specifically, we pray for William and Julie and ask Your blessings upon them.

ST. JOHN'S FAMILY—O Lord, You are the great Physician of soul and body. We pray that You would show mercy to Your servants:

Elizabeth Bjork	Betty Firch	Carolyn Werner
Paula Chapa	Arlyn Helke	Carolyn Wildermuth
Jim Dahl	Lynne Johnson	Marilyn Woods
Lois Esterlein	Drew Schillinger	

Don Eggers (son of friend of Marilyn Woods)

Jodi Martins (daughter of Gary & Darla Johns)

Jon/Anita Clausing (missionaries in Kenya)

Marilyn Potts (wife of Cal Potts, former St. John Laborer for Christ)

Virginia Miller (mother of Jamie Werling)

Rev. Justin Kane (son of Sandra Kane)

MILITARY—We pray for those serving in our military and their families:

Mandy/Richard Davila (daughter/son-in-law of Linda Aper)

Luke/Nicole Thompson (son/daughter-in-law of John/Kindra Thompson)

Ken Willeford (husband of Alicia Willeford)

Karl Flynn (son of Mr/Mrs Paul Flynn)

Zachary/Tiffany Gardner (nephew/wife of Lois Esterlein)

Casey Powers Jr. (step son of Lisa Powers)

Brittany Loenser (daughter of Gabe Loenser)

LUTHERANS FOR LIFE

“A Christian funeral isn't the end. Yes, we don't deny death. That would be foolish and insensitive. But in Christ, we defy death. That's Christian. Because the dead don't stay down when Jesus is involved. They are saints triumphant! Encourage one another with these words.” *Rev. Peter Sulzle, St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Redwood Falls, Minnesota Illinois – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

THE G.R.I.T. RUN is back on October 1 at Camp CILCA. Run trails, cross creeks, see great sights, and earn your place with the brave souls who meet this challenge each year. Cost is \$30 for adults and \$10 for children 17 and under. Register at www.cilca.org/grit-run.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 11, 2022

Text: Luke 15:1-10 (Gospel)

Other texts: Ezekiel 34:11-24 (Old Testament Reading); 1 Timothy 1:5-17 (Epistle)

“Lost Sheep, Straying Sheep, Found Sheep”

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In today’s Gospel we heard two parables and this morning our focus will be on the first one, that of “The Lost Sheep.” Why did Jesus speak this parable (as well as the other)? It was in response to what was occurring. As the tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to Jesus in order to hear Him, the scribes and Pharisees grumbled, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”¹ Far from speaking grace and good news to sinners, some Pharisees even taught that “there is joy before God when those who provoke him perish from the world.”² While true that those who provoke God will perish eternally, truly Jesus shows how wrong such a teaching is when He says, “there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”³ How different Jesus’ message was from theirs!

The parable is very simple, yet powerful. A shepherd, recognizing that one of his flock is missing, leaves the ninety-nine others in the open pasture to go and seek the lost one. The point is not that somehow the shepherd willingly endangers the rest of the flock while seeking the lost sheep, but simply impresses upon us how this Shepherd was unwilling to lose *even one* of them. The extra effort over this one lost sheep emphasizes that every one of His sheep is precious to God who sends the Good Shepherd to find them and bring them safely home.

And so each and every one of us, truly all people, are so dearly precious to our Good Shepherd. For which one of us was not in need of our Savior’s seeking us out? “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way.”⁴ We were created by Him, but being conceived and born in sin in the image of our fallen father Adam, so we were by nature a lost sheep. And how this reality is made ever more obvious to us by our daily experience as we are constantly tempted by Satan, the ravenous wolf, to stray from our Good Shepherd that he might destroy us. Temptations that the old man, our sinful nature find all too appealing.

Certainly we wish this text didn’t refer to that reality, but only to our first conversion. For then we would feel safe in our certainty that our Shepherd has found us, that we have been brought back, heaven rejoiced over us, and there’s nothing more to be said. But there *is* more to be said. For it is true that our Savior has found us in Holy Baptism, has brought us to the fold of His Church with heaven rejoicing; but comfort must not be replaced by complacency.

For when complacency rises up, then that good news that we once rejoiced so much to hear starts to become just a past tense “history” lesson, and perhaps a bit repetitive and boring at that. And when that occurs, instead of staying with the Good Shepherd, that is, continuing to come to Jesus to hear Him as the tax collectors and sinners did, we begin wandering away.

Like a sheep that sees some tasty grass or clover and goes to get it because it desires it so much, we too can be tempted by that which our sinful flesh desires. The devil works overtime to trap us in his lie, that what is good is evil and what is evil is good.⁵ So as the prince of darkness disguises himself as an angel of light,⁶ so also the murderous act of abortion is called “women’s healthcare,” various depraved deviancies are called “freedom to love whom you want,” living together without marriage is called “a committed relationship,” and those who suffer severe gender dysphoria are told to defy reality, are encouraged to poison and mutilate their bodies, and then are called “brave” when they embrace the delusion and their body’s destruction.

Yes, the devil would have us cheer when such wickedness is done upon those who are far too young to understand the topic, much less the future consequences, many of which cannot be undone this side of the resurrection. Oh how Satan’s lie has taken root in people’s minds and souls when even those who claim to be the Shepherd’s sheep follow the lie instead, when the lie is proclaimed from their pulpits, and when they then condemn as “hateful” and some sort of “phobic” those sheep and undershepherds who faithfully follow the Good Shepherd.

But it need not be so obvious. Sheep are curious animals. So like a sheep that gets curious about its surroundings, we too can develop a curiosity concerning the world’s ways and ideas and, though unintentionally, wander in the opposite direction of our Savior. For consider man’s false philosophies (behind which is Satan’s lie). There is Evolution which limits and, ultimately denies the Creator and makes life and everything a mere “accident.” There is Marxism which in both its traditional form as well as in its new mutations like Critical Race Theory that sets people against one another as oppressed and oppressor and so leads to further separation and violence.

There is Postmodernism which denies that there is any absolute truth, thus rejecting any claims to such (except its own!), such as found in the Bible. There is Pragmatism which rejects the idea that there is any universal ethical principle, denies that anything has intrinsic value, and so only evaluates in terms of usefulness, finding worth only in what one can accomplish. Consequently, those who cannot contribute enough are considered a “drain,” which include such as the unborn, the disabled, the elderly, permitting, even encouraging that they be “removed,” or that they would choose to remove themselves for the betterment of the rest.

This is the thinking of the sin-darkened world, and it is easy to see how all of these come forth from Satan’s lie. It is easy to see how open wickedness comes forth from such thinking like worms from rotting wood, for there is no God, no Word, no truth, and so no right or wrong, but only like or dislike, only what makes me happy, only what I can force on others. Thus while it may be necessary to learn such rubbish, and to interact with those who profess such, it is then *all the more necessary* to be in the Word of God and to seek Christian answers to these challenges so that you might recognize the lie for what it is. Yet, the curious sheep might forget to be curious about *that*, and so end up far from their Shepherd. It is as one Christian professor at a secular university stated:

I will never forget a young woman who told me during office hours that she felt she was losing her faith. Her radical feminist teachers could see nothing in Christianity but “patriarchy”, and she couldn’t find Christian replies. It didn’t take long to discover why she couldn’t find them. She wasn’t looking...She pictured

herself as struggling to hold on to her faith despite superior arguments against it. The truth was that she was looking for an excuse to lose her faith, exposing herself to the most anti-Christian influences she could find.⁷

This is why St. John the apostle warns, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.”⁸ And St. James is even stronger, “You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”⁹ The world of unbelievers and sin is our spiritual enemy!

Or perhaps, like a sheep just focusing on nibbling grass, we too can drift aimlessly away from our Good Shepherd, being caught up in “nibbling” the things of this life. Whether work or recreation, whether duties or hobbies, whether academics or extra-curricular activities, whether family obligations or volunteering in the community, any of these can become our focus. Truly the excessiveness of entertainment that fills our screens and our lives, most of which promotes the world’s values (and so Satan’s lie), can seem tasty and we can waste far too much time in them instead of God’s Word and serving others. When these become our focus we increasingly lose sight of our Savior, for we are losing focusing on His Word where He is revealed to us.

Dear Christians, sheep follow blindly. If one goes others usually follow, even if it’s to slaughter. How easy it is to follow other lost sheep towards the final slaughter. And so we too must cry out with the psalmist, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.”¹⁰ That is, “I confess dear Lord that even as a sincere Christian who diligently tries to keep Your Word and obey Your will I have fallen far short. I too in my daily struggles against the devil, the world, and my own sinful nature have wandered away from You. I need You every day, my Good Shepherd, and so I sincerely pray that through Your Word You would keep seeking me out and carry me once more on Your mighty shoulders.” And when that is our sincere prayer, He finds us again. And again. For finding the lost one is His great joy!

The Son of God didn’t just leave the open pasture, but heaven’s glories so that He might become incarnate as the Good Shepherd. He came to seek the lost sheep, to save them by the shedding of His divine blood. For note how the sheep was found by the Shepherd, not the other way around. Note how the sheep didn’t walk behind its guiding Shepherd, but the Shepherd laid it across His shoulders to carry it home to safety. What a beautiful picture of how our dear Lord finds and carries us, doing such by carrying the burden of our sin upon His shoulders, even as He carried the cross and was finally nailed to it, paying for our sins of straying.

Dear Christians, note a few things about this parable. The sheep was not beaten for its straying, but is received with compassion and joy. But also consider that when the shepherd came to it, the sheep did not run away from him, but was instead relieved to be found. This pictures *repentance*. The person that is found by Christ does not avoid Him and those who speak His Word, does not want to remain lost by continuing in sin, but is sorry, desiring forgiveness, just as the tax collectors and sinners came to Jesus to hear His Word.

That's why there was no need for the sheep to be punished. The "beating" already took place in the sinner's life, perhaps in external ways, such as sin's consequences, but certainly in their conscience which (rightly) condemns them for their sins, for their straying. So the Church, both the congregation as a whole and her individual members, need only welcome the lost sheep back to the fold, sharing in God's joy over their return. For they have suffered already, and may well deal with further consequences. It is therefore our joyous duty to assure the repentant sinner of their forgiveness which their Savior won for them! The very forgiveness that is ours again as well, each time we repent of our straying and are returned to the Lord's flock to heaven's glad shouts.

The Lord keep us from straying, seek us through the call to repentance when we do, and so also use us to seek others, speaking His Word of repentance, forgiveness, and restoration to God's flock, and rejoicing with Him over every single sinner who repents. Amen!

¹ Luke 15:1. All quotes are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

² *Sermon Studies on the Gospels Series C*; E. H. Wendland, Ed.; Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI, 1982; quoting Alfred Edersheim in *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*.

³ Luke 15:7.

⁴ Isaiah 53:6a.

⁵ Isaiah 5:20.

⁶ 2 Corinthians 11:14.

⁷ Dr J. Budziszewski, professor of Government and Philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin and author of *How to Stay Christian in College*. This quote was found at <https://creation.com/conversion-apostasy-cmis-approach-gods-meaning>.

⁸ 1 John 2:15-16;

⁹ James 4:4.

¹⁰ Psalm 119:176. Psalm 119:169-176 (TAW) is the appointed Psalm for this Sunday and was spoken previously in the service.