

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin R. Eden

The Fourth Sunday of Easter  
Saturday, May 14, 2011 at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, May 15, 2011 at 8:30 a.m. & 10:15 a.m.

## “We Listen for the Voice of the Good Shepherd”

John 10:1-10

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

Christ often refers to Himself as a shepherd or “the Good Shepherd.” Jesus Christ is the shepherd of this flock we call the Church. God has called pastors to be shepherds of individual congregations and to stand in the stead and speak by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. As an under-shepherd, as pastors are often called, I must speak with the same voice as that of the Good Shepherd – Jesus Christ.

If I would only speak similar to the words of Jesus, or if I would leave out something that He says, or if I would add to what He says, the sheep of this flock would not, or should not listen to me. But rather, you should run away from a strange voice. There are a lot of strange voices in the religious world today.

How do you know what the voice of the Good Shepherd sounds like? How do you know that my words and the message that I preach are identical to the words and message of Christ the Good Shepherd?

You would never know, if you do not hear the Good Shepherd’s voice outside of this one hour on Sunday morning. If you never open up your Bible, or if you never engage in any sort of devotion or Bible study, at the most, you will be hearing the Good Shepherd’s voice once

a week read from the lectern.

If I was a deceiver or a hypocrite who twisted the words of Christ heard on Sunday morning, you would never know how beautiful and wonderful the Good Shepherd's voice sounds.

If you are not involved in any of our Bible studies here at church where you can ask questions and take an in-depth look at God's Word; or, if you are not having devotions with your spouse or children; or, if you are not reading the Bible on your own; you are, first of all, entrusting your faith and spiritual life solely to the words someone else is saying. That can be dangerous. I would like to think that you have confidence that what I am saying is the truth, but don't use that as an excuse to be lazy in your spiritual life.

The tendency in our society is to be lazy in our spiritual life, and this is the reason that people are so easily led astray by Jehovah Witnesses, or the Mormons or other charlatans who sound like they are talking about God, but are changing, or adding to, or taking away from, the Good News of the forgiveness of sins found only in the blood of Jesus Christ.

The other reason that being involved in Bible study, and personal or family devotion, or daily Bible reading is so important is that seven days is a long time to go without food. Even people who are regular church attenders can be spiritually malnourished and even starving. Imagine the strength you would have if Sunday morning was the only time you ate physical food? You would grow weak and die.

What about our need for spiritual nourishment? Over the past 16 years, as a pastor, every time I think that I have heard every excuse in

the book to avoid coming to church, someone comes up with a new one. My all-time favorite, and this is something someone actually said to me, was “Pastor, Sunday morning is our family time.” The irony of that statement was simply overwhelming.

In so many cases, the sheep wander off never hearing the Good Shepherd's voice. And most of them would not recognize it if they heard it anyway. Our world is filled with more Bibles now than at any point in time, but knowledge of Scripture seems to be near an all-time low. There is just so much noise drowning out the voice of the Good Shepherd.

We need to be like the people in the town of Berea to whom Paul and Silas preached. In Acts chapter 17 we read, “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

The people of Berea listened to Paul preach, and then searched through the Old Testament to make sure that what he said agreed with God's Word. They wanted to make sure that this undershepherd was speaking with the same voice as the Good Shepherd. If you ever hear me say anything that you think is contrary to the Word of God, search the Scriptures; ask for clarification; I may be wrong. It wouldn't be the first time.

Berea is a much less famous city than other places where Paul preached, such as Corinth, Ephesus, and Thessalonica. That is because Paul never had to write a letter to the Bereans admonishing them for following other teachings, or adding to, or taking away from the

Good News of Jesus Christ that Paul had preached to them.

Having St. Paul preach to them is not what made Berea a strong church. If St. Paul preached here at Our Redeemer, that is not what would make this a strong congregation. Paul preached in the churches of Corinth, Ephesus, and Thessalonica for a longer time than he preached in Berea. The Bereans searched the Scriptures and made God's Word a daily part of their lives, and that is what made them a strong church. The Holy Spirit works through Word and Sacrament.

We are called to follow their example and become familiar with the voice of the Good Shepherd. Search the Scriptures so that God and His Word are an active part of our lives.

Did you hear in our first reading what life was like for the early Christians? They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers . . . And day by day, attending the temple [they gathered] together" – broke bread in their homes.

The sheep look for and listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd every day. A few weeks ago on a Wednesday morning, someone asked me why I attend chapel at St. James every week. I answered, "The Word of God is being proclaimed. Where else would I rather be?"

Christ is our Good Shepherd. We listen to His voice. He calls His own sheep by name, and when we hear that voice, we joyfully follow knowing that we are safe, and when we hear that voice, we know we are exactly where we are supposed to be. Amen.