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| **Cared For By the Good Shepherd***Promise: Jesus promises to lead His own to our heavenly home*Pastor Timothy A. DuesenbergActs 4:1-12; Psalm 23; 1 John 3:16-24; John 10:11-18(Fourth Sunday of Easter), 4/21/24)*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.* – Jn 10:11**Lead In –** If you asked people if they had to be some kind of animal, what do you suppose they would answer? What would you choose? I can imagine someone might choose something majestic like an eagle, or fierce like a tiger, or mighty like a lion, or fast like a cheetah, or perhaps something even playful like a dog. But would anyone choose to identify as a sheep! In spite of cuddly and fluffy childhood pictures, most of us know that sheep are rather pathetic animals. And yet that is what we are consistently compared to in Scripture.1. **The Unflattering Nature of Sheep**
	1. The need for constant care and protection…
	2. Their tendency to wander off and get lost…
	3. As followers their susceptibility to bad influences…
2. **Repeated Bad Leadership Among OT People of God**
	1. Ezekiel 34 especially draws attention to this…
	2. The Shepherd David and what he realizes…
	3. The Lord’s promise in Ezekiel 34:15-16…
3. **Imagine the Reaction to Jesus’ Statements in John 10**
	1. Teachers don’t make such audacious statements…
	2. Talk can be cheap! Greater loves has no man…
	3. “I have the authority to lay my life down, and to…”

**Final Word –** We might ask ourselves the question this morning, why on the 4th Sunday of Easter is our Gospel Reading going back to a time before Jesus’ death and resurrection? At least one reason might be this. What Jesus said about being the Good Shepherd was not cheap talk! Because Jesus died and rose again, indeed He did have the authority to lay down His life and then take it back up again! This means His Word is true and reliable! And that, my friends, means that He came that we might have life and have it abundantly. Claimed in Baptism we are to hear His voice and follow Him. It means He will lead us to good pasture, and that our cup overflows…**Ps 95:7** For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.**Ps 100:3** Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.**Is 53:6** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way**Ez 34:2b-6** Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them. | **John 10:11-18 ESV***I Am the Good Shepherd* 11I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16And 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. 17For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18No 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.”**Psalm 23 ESV***The Lord Is My Shepherd* 1The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**Ez 34:15-16** I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. I 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.**Jn 10:7-10** So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.**Jn 10:11** I am the good shepherd. |