



St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church of
Waterbury, WI
Sermon by
Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Christ the King
November 23, 2008 Ezekiel 34:15,16

"I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down declares the Sovereign LORD. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. But the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice!"
This is God's Word!

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

There is something seriously wrong with this world in which we live. It was reported this week that a man was arrested for assault – not with a gun or knife or baseball bat. But assault with a sandwich! This young man and his girl friend were driving down the Interstate – going how fast? I would imagine something like 69 or 72 miles an hour. When this guy lost control – I mean really lost it. He took this sandwich he was eating and smashed it into the arm and then the face of what I think is safe to assume – his ex-girlfriend. He hit her in the face so hard – that he smashed her glasses off. Then this guy ripped off the rearview mirror and used it to shatter the windshield! How dangerous was that? He could have caused a fatal accident – a fatal crash – crashing into another car full of people – causing cars and trucks and semis to crash into all kinds of people. He could have caused a fiery crash killing little children strapped into their car seats. What do you suppose they were fighting over? Something with huge consequences? Or something so incredibly stupid you can't believe it? This kind of thing happens all the time – usually with far worse consequences than this! We live in a world where it only seems to be getting worse and worse. How horrible can it get? It's hard to say. But we have this powerful confidence Christ is King. Jesus is our Savior and Lord! We have this eternal confidence:

The LORD Takes Care of His Sheep!

- 1. He will feed us**
- 2. He will heal us**
- 3. We will thank him!**

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on this morning comes from the scroll of the prophet Ezekiel. God's Word anchors the ministry of Ezekiel like no other. In the scroll of Ezekiel there are some 14 dates that are nailed down – year, month and day! The main date is 597 years before baby Jesus was born – the year of the exile of King Jehoiachin. Do you remember King Jehoiachin? Jehoiachin became King when he was only 18 years old. Can you imagine being King when you were a senior in High School? Jehoiachin's dad – Jehoiakim – became King when he was only 25. Jehoiachin's dad was King for eleven years. **He did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD his God.** And so he was taken by Nebuchadnezzar bound in bronze shackles – to Babylon – along with articles from the Temple of the LORD – to be used in the temple to false gods in Babylon. How horrible was that? What Jehoiachin had done was **detestable** – in the sight of the LORD! Jehoiachin should have learned from the painful mistakes of his father – should have learned but apparently he didn't! And so he was only King for 3 months and 10 days – doing evil in the eyes of the LORD. He and more things of value from the

Temple of the LORD—were hauled off literally a thousand miles to Babylon. That's when our story begins with Ezekiel! Ezekiel was a priest! Ezekiel could trace his family tree back all the way hundreds of years back—to Aaron himself! Ezekiel was supposed to offer sacrifices in the Temple—lambs and sheep and goats and bulls—the finest wine and purest olive oil—the first bundles of grains ripe from the field—the best loaves of bread. Ezekiel was to burn up on the altar in Jerusalem the very best that God's people brought from hearts overflowing with faith! But Ezekiel wasn't in Jerusalem. He was in far off Babylon. So he couldn't do the one thing he was born to do. He couldn't offer the sacrifices of God's people to the Great I AM! God had a different plan for Ezekiel. The LORD wanted Ezekiel to preach God's Word to people very far from home. The LORD afforded Ezekiel a glimpse into heaven—very much like the glimpse God would give to Daniel and to the Apostle John. The LORD called Ezekiel to use graphic visual aids to illustrate to God's people law and gospel—to people not only in physical and political captivity—but far more importantly—people in captivity to sin, guilt and death! Ezekiel preached God's Word to God's people—who were discouraged. He reminded them again and again—the Great I AM is always faithful. God always keeps His promises. They would return to Israel. Baby Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. They would be redeemed. Again they would bring their thank-offerings until the Lamb of God would take away the sins of the world!

The Sovereign LORD—the LORD Himself promised—in the spirit of the 23rd Psalm: I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. Pastor Gartner and I went to meetings in Milwaukee Sunday night and all day Monday. We were invited to meet with pastors from some 30 different congregations in the Wisconsin Synod—30 different congregations that God has blessed in countless ways these past 10 years. Congregations like ours—that have been blessed with an average of more than 10 more people in worship every week—for the last 10 years in a row. That's not lots of people—if you think of this world—in end times—with perhaps very little time left before Judgment Day! One of the pastors there—talked about many of their new sheep—like those on the island of misfit toys. Do you understand what he was saying—the island of misfit toys? Sometimes there can be terrible troubles. We get lost—thinking real and lasting happiness is to be found in getting really good grades—so we get into a really good college—so we can get an advanced degree. Then we will get a really secure job that pays very well. Then we can build a very beautiful home—and have a fairytale wedding—and have 2.8 children and a golden retriever—and a lawn without dandelions and crabgrass. We will have lots of paid vacation to go to those resorts where the people go running out into the water. And then we retire—and go dancing on cruise ships and play lots of golf and go out to eat—and have very good cholesterol and strong bones—and no arthritis—and hair like a shampoo commercial and a very nice car—to skid on a really wet parking lot! Except again and again it doesn't work out that way—because happiness is not to be found in all measures of earthly success. Contentment is to be found—in knowing Jesus forgives all our sins—we will spend forever in heaven!

I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. People are weak. We make mistakes. We make mistakes all the time. It isn't always because we aren't trying. It isn't always because we aren't paying attention. We make mistakes because we are weak and sinful people. I have noticed again and again—lately—that they have trouble with trying to get it right in sports. There is talk about some kind of computer to call balls and strikes in baseball. But I don't see how that would work. They have this challenge thing in football—if literally 100 yards from the action—some coach thinks the official who was right there is wrong—and a guy watching TV up in a booth hundreds of yard away—thinks the official got it wrong—they throw this little

washcloth out onto the field – and if the next play hasn't started – one guy watches replays from different angles – and then can change the call. But you know what – watching all those videos doesn't guarantee that he will get it right either! And don't even start on guys traveling – taking extra steps in basketball! We are weak – spiritually and morally weak! We try very hard and still we get it wrong. And sometimes we aren't trying. We sin. We fail. We miss the mark. We fall far short! **Jesus binds up the injured and strengthens the weak** – because he loves us so much! Jesus strengthens the weak – through the means of Grace! That means God's Word. When this world tries to scare us – Jesus makes us strong against fear! Oh, look out. There is an e-mail virus that says it's an e-card from a friend. It's one of those cards – where there is music – and beautiful pictures that morph into more and more beautiful pictures! But it's a virus that eats up all your memory! There's another e-mail. It says the UPS guy tried to bring you a package – a present but you weren't home. You try and find out who sent you a present. And again – the virus escapes and it's eating up all your stuff! There are Lean-cuisines – chicken ones – with all kinds of herbs and spices – except there might be little pieces of blue plastic in them. But don't be afraid – they are not from China – where there are all kinds of bad stuff! And the stock market! What's with that? And the whole government is about to be overhauled. What about that? And pirates! Arrrrrh! I haven't worried about pirates since I was little and read Peter Pan! Don't be scared! Whatever might change in this world – our Lord Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever!

I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. The LORD has called us to share the Gospel which alone can bind up the spiritually injured and strengthen the spiritually weak. It was very sad to read they found a grave by the Sea of Galilee – carefully carved oval shaped. Inside was the skeleton of a woman about 45. Her head rested on a tortoise shell – with 50 more tortoise shells around her – a leopard pelvis, a cow tail and part of an eagle wing. This lady was covered by several large stones – which were probably placed there – to keep her spirit in the grave. How sad is that? You can't keep some one's soul by their body by putting stones on their bones. They say this lady was a witch doctor – a shaman – someone who used lies – the tools of the devil – to ensnare immortal souls. How eternally tragic – that this person was a servant of the father of lies – the ruler of the kingdom of the air – instead of serving Christ the King. It's painfully too late – to tell people about Jesus when they have been dead for hundreds of years. Some people are saying this grave is 12,000 years old. That's simply impossible. Adam and Eve aren't 12,000 years old. 2,000 years ago – a baby was born in lowliness and humility – born to die. Born to give up his life – to rescue all people from all their sins. Jesus died for the sins of that shaman – buried with turtle and leopard and cow and eagle parts. Jesus died for you and for me. Jesus died. And we live in a world where there still is hope. There still is time – to tell as many people as possible about Jesus' forgiving love. That's why we have a Synod. That's why we walk together – to do together what would be practically impossible to do alone. We have schools to train up pastors and staff ministers and teachers – to do the work of sharing God's Word in home missions and world missions. We have a Synod – to send workers to Africa. To send civilian chaplains to bring God's Word and Holy Communion to people literally in the fox holes in the rice paddies of Viet Nam – to soldiers in Iraq – the first Gulf War and the war in Iraq now – as well as in Afghanistan. We are the Wisconsin Synod – to share God's Word in these end times – where 8 year olds are taking the life of their earthly father. In a world where Aunts are arrested – accused of literal murder and literal torture of infants and toddlers. Together we preach and teach Christ crucified and risen in a world that is dying without him! It is always and only in light of the Gospel – that we bring thank-offerings to Jesus – to erase our past debts – and to spread the Gospel today and tomorrow!

I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down declares the Sovereign LORD! I read the other day about a little village in central Italy – where before World War II they used to have about 3 million sheep! I can't imagine 3 million sheep! Now they have only about 350,000 sheep. So they have this deal. A Christmas idea for the person who has everything. You can adopt a sheep in Italy! For \$240 you get adoption papers – along with your lamb's childhood photos, a chronicle of shearing, milking, and if they have little lambs – you get pictures of them, too. And that's not all. You also get 4 ½ pounds of pecorino cheese, 4 ½ pounds of juniper smoked ricotta cheese and 2.2 pounds of sheep salami – or if you are a vegetarian – an impossible to pronounce kind of cheese. Plus 5 liters of olive oil and 100% wool hiking socks. How great is that? Less money – and you still get the pictures – but smaller wheels of cheese. For \$101. You get the pictures – one pair of socks – and a voucher for one person to stay for one day – meals included – by your sheep! How wonderful is that? I like that – adopting a sheep. Jesus of course did much *much* more to adopt you and me. Jesus lived a life without any sin. Then he died the most horrible death imaginable – to wash away all our sins. Jesus bled and died to adopt sheep who love to wander. No one ever love his sheep more than Jesus loves you. The LORD – the Great I AM – the Holy One of Israel takes very good care of all his sheep. Jesus is the Good Shepherd and we are his lambs by grace alone. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schalla