

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday! It's the day we celebrate and give thanks that Jesus is our Good Shepherd. It's one of my favorite Sundays in the church year. I especially love the beautiful hymns and the comforting Psalm 23 that we spoke together today. Jesus, our Good Shepherd is the spiritual leader that every church, that every Christian, that every person in the world needs.

But if you were listening closely during the Gospel reading this morning then you may have noticed that it doesn't actually say the words "Good Shepherd." That description comes up *later on* in John chapter 10. The word we *do* hear a lot is door. "Door" shows up four times in our text today: Door. Door. Door. Door. So, why don't we call this "Doors Sunday" instead of "Good Shepherd" Sunday? Well, it isn't quite as *catchy*, is it? "Doors Sunday" certainly doesn't evoke the warm, beautiful images in our minds that "Good Shepherd Sunday" does. But, if you just went by what Jesus says in the Gospel today, you might actually think this was "Doors Sunday." Four times in only ten verses, Jesus uses the word "door." The one who *doesn't* use the door and gets into the sheep pen by a different way is a thief or robber. The thief sneaks over or wiggles under the fence. He doesn't use the door. How *could* he use the door? He's not the shepherd. The One who uses the door *is* the Shepherd of the sheep. He loves His sheep and cares for them. He's the one whose driving desire is to protect the sheep. He'll even give up His very life for the sheep. And when the Pharisees didn't get it, when they didn't understand what Jesus was talking about, He doubled down, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep... I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture" (vv 7, 9).

Jesus *is* the Door. Through the door of His holy life and sacrificial death, we have eternal life. Through Christ and Christ alone, we gain access to heaven. He's the door through whom we find good pasture.

Outside of Jesus is the way the thieves and robbers operate. That's how the devil and the other false teachers of this world tempt us to believe that our salvation and life and success are all really based on us picking ourselves up and improving our lives on our own. After all, as the reasoning goes, "God's done His part; now it's up to us to do ours."

If that's true let me ask you this: Do you love Jesus, *enough*? How do you know? Have you made Him the Lord of your life? Really? Have you *fully* committed to Him? Is your life better than it was before? Have you stopped sinning altogether? Do this, do that, change this, change that, pray, work, and maybe God will count you worthy to be saved. And in all this "you doing" stuff,

you make **yourself** out to be the door. You are actually the one who, by what you do and don't do, determines if you are in the sheep pen or not. **You** become the door through which you get into heaven.

It sounds funny when I put it that way, doesn't it? Sounds weird. You'd never believe such false teaching. You wouldn't even listen to it. Because you don't listen to the hireling. You will never follow anyone's voice other than that of your Shepherd.

It's because you (and I) are the sheep. Jesus uses **that** word six times today. Sheep. Sheep. Sheep. Sheep. Sheep. Sheep. Maybe it should be "Sheep Sunday"! That sounds better! Definitely softer, fluffier, and more lovable sounding than "Doors Sunday".

But you aren't just **anyone's** sheep. You are **His** sheep. You've heard **His** voice. Each of us is His sheep. You are each uniquely loved, particularly cared for, and led out to pasture by Him. He called you by name. Shepherds used to do that! They'd name their sheep. Pet names. Special names for each one.

To me, all sheep pretty much look the same. In my mind they're mostly all white(ish), fuzzy, and go "baaaaah." But to the Lord, each one is unique. He gave you your name. He gave me mine. He names His sheep at the baptismal font. In the water and His name, we were tagged as His sheep.

Your Lord Jesus is the Door for the sheep. He's the way into the sheep pen. He's the way out to green pasture. And He's not just **any** door or **anyone's** door. He's **your** Door. He's your way into not just life, but eternal life.

You are the sheep. He is the Good Shepherd. He lays down His life for you. That's the Good News of this day. Jesus says that the hireling shepherds were anything but good or noble. When the wolves or thieves would show up, the shepherds had a choice between their lives and the sheep. "Hmm. Let me see.... Do I want to live and see my family, or do I want to die trying to protect these dumb sheep? I'm gonna go with my family." The hirelings bolted, and the sheep were slaughtered.

For the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. The thief would draw you away. He would try to snatch you. To get you to trust in yourself and what you can do to lock down your green pastures by something that starts and ends with you and your work. But the only thing that you'll find behind **that** door is death.

But your Shepherd—He gave up His life for you. He took upon Himself all the times that you live for yourself and not others. He died for all the times you try to make yourself the door. He rose again on the third day. You have life in

His name, in His Baptism. Life that goes on and on and on as long as He goes on and on and on.

You are His own sheep. He goes before you, protects, guides you. He meets your enemies head-on, sin, death, and the devil, and defeats them for you. You follow Him because you know His voice.

Don't listen to other voices that would tell you that you can make things better with God by doing, saying, and feeling the right things; that there is any other way into the sheep pen than through Jesus and Jesus alone.

You are His sheep. He isn't just a shepherd. He's ***your Good*** Shepherd who lays down His life for you on the cross. The righteous sacrifice that makes you acceptable to God.

Doors Sunday? Sheep Sunday? No, better than either of those, is Good Shepherd Sunday. The Sunday when we celebrate that Jesus is our Shepherd, the Door through Whom we have life and have it abundantly. Amen.

Sam, Nolan, Connor, Oscar, Claire, Ruby, Cambel, Blake, Harper, Ayla, Macie, Bennet, Caylee, Clara, Priya, and Mitchell, you've made it! **Just about** made it, that is. In a few moments you all will be coming forward to make your promises to remain faithful to your God and Savior for the rest of your life and by the power of the Holy Spirit working through His Word the Lord promises to bless you.

On the day you were baptized, your parents and sponsors came forward and said, "Yes" to all the many blessings that God poured out on you that day- including the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Today, each of you will be coming forward for yourself to say, "Yes!" to the promises of God's love for you in Christ, for yourself. It's a proud moment for your parents, a proud moment for your baptismal sponsors, a proud moment for your family, and yes, a proud moment for me and the other instructors you've had here at First Lutheran. You all have done well, believe it or not, I actually looked forward to every Wednesday afternoon class that we had together this year and I will miss that time. I was pleased with how well everyone got along with each other in class and how respectful you were toward each other as well as to me. What's more, each one of you has many God-given gifts and talents which have I've enjoyed seeing in our year of Catechism classes together and I look forward to seeing those gifts blossom within you in the years to come as you fulfill your promises to remain faithful to the Lord.

And parents! You've done a great job making sure that these youth came to the classes over the past several years. Thank you, but... your job's not done yet! **Please** make sure they keep coming here to worship, that they're in God's Word at home, and please encourage them to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities for all the youth here at First Lutheran including through the leadership of our Director of Christian Education, Deaconess Polzin, and our Christian Education Board and other hardworking volunteers. On behalf of all of them, I can tell you that we care about these confirmands, and we want to do what we can to help keep them strong in the faith of the Lord Jesus that they are confirming today. But we need your ongoing help in the future in getting them out the door and into these doors!

With that being said, let's focus on today. And today is certainly an amazing day, an exciting day. It's Confirmation Sunday! And it's also another one of my favorite Sundays of the year: Good Shepherd Sunday. It's the day we celebrate and give thanks that Jesus is our Good Shepherd. It's one of my favorite Sundays in the church year. I especially love the beautiful hymns and the

comforting Psalm 23 that we spoke together today. Jesus, our Good Shepherd is the spiritual leader that every church, that every Christian, that every person in the world needs.

But if you were listening closely during the Gospel reading this morning then you may have noticed that it doesn't actually say the words "Good Shepherd." That description comes up *later on* in John chapter 10. The word we *do* hear a lot is door. "Door" shows up four times in our text today: Door. Door. Door. Door. So, why don't we call this "Doors Sunday" instead of "Good Shepherd" Sunday? Well, it isn't quite as *catchy*, is it? "Doors Sunday" certainly doesn't evoke the warm, beautiful images in our minds that "Good Shepherd Sunday" does. But, if you just went by what Jesus says in the Gospel today, you might actually think this was "Doors Sunday." Four times in only ten verses, Jesus uses the word "door." The one who *doesn't* use the door and gets into the sheep pen by a different way is a thief or robber. The thief sneaks over or wiggles under the fence. He doesn't use the door. How could he use the door? He's not the shepherd. The One who uses the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. He loves and cares about the sheep. He's the one whose driving desire is to protect the sheep. He'll even give up His very life for the sheep. And when the Pharisees didn't get it, when they didn't understand what Jesus was talking about, He doubled down, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep... I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture" (vv 7, 9).

Jesus *is* the Door. Through the door of His holy life and sacrificial death, we have eternal life. Through Him and Him alone, we gain access to heaven. He's the door through whom we find good pasture.

Outside of Him is the way the thieves and robbers operate. That's how the devil and the other false teachers of this world tempt us to believe that our salvation and life and success are all really based on us picking ourselves up and improving our lives on our own. After all, as the reasoning goes, "God's done His part; now it's up to us to do ours."

If that's true let me ask you this: Do you love Jesus, *enough*? How do you know? Have you made Him the Lord of your life? Really? Have you *fully* committed to Him? Is your life better than it was before? Have you stopped sinning altogether? Do this, do that, change this, change that, pray, work, and maybe God will count you worthy to be saved. And in all this "you doing" stuff, you make *yourself* out to be the door. You are actually the one who, by what

you do and don't do, determines if you are in the sheep pen or not. You become the door through which you get into heaven.

It sounds funny when I put it that way, doesn't it? Sounds weird. You'd never believe such false teaching. You wouldn't even listen to it. Because you don't listen to the hireling. You will never follow anyone's voice other than that of your Shepherd.

It's because you (and I) are the sheep. Jesus uses **that** word six times today. Sheep. Sheep. Sheep. Sheep. Sheep. Sheep. Maybe it should be "Sheep Sunday"! That sounds better! Definitely softer, fluffier, and more lovable sounding than "Doors Sunday".

But you aren't just anyone's sheep. You are **His** sheep. You've heard **His** voice. Each of us is His sheep. You are each uniquely loved, particularly cared for, and led out to pasture by Him. He called you by name. Shepherds used to do that! They'd name their sheep. Pet names. Special names for each one.

To me, all sheep pretty much look the same. In my mind they're mostly all white(ish), fuzzy, and go "baaaaah." But to the Lord, each one is unique. He gave you your name. He gave me mine. He names His sheep at the baptismal font. In the water and His name, we were tagged as His sheep.

Your Lord Jesus is the Door for the sheep. He's the way into the sheep pen. He's the way out to green pasture. And He's not just **any** door or **anyone's** door. He's **your** Door. He's your way into not just life, but eternal life.

You are the sheep. He is the Good Shepherd. He lays down His life for you. That's the Good News of this day. Jesus says that the hireling shepherds were anything but good or noble. When the wolves or thieves would show up, the shepherds had a choice between their lives and the sheep. "Hmm. Let me see.... Do I want to live and see my family, or do I want to die trying to protect these dumb sheep? I'm gonna go with my family." The hirelings bolted, and the sheep were slaughtered.

For the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. The thief would draw you away. He would try to snatch you. To get you to trust in yourself and what you can do to lock down your green pastures by something that starts and ends with you and your work. But the only thing that you'll find behind **that** door is death.

But your Shepherd—He gave up His life for you. He took upon Himself all the times that you live for yourself and not others. He died for all the times you try to make yourself the door. He rose again on the third day. You have life in

His name, in His Baptism. Life that goes on and on and on as long as He goes on and on and on.

You are His own sheep. He goes before you, protects, guides you. He meets your enemies head-on, sin, death, and the devil, and defeats them for you. You follow Him because you know His voice.

Don't listen to other voices that would tell you that you can make things better with God by doing, saying, and feeling the right things; that there is any other way into the sheep pen than through Jesus and Jesus alone.

Sam, Nolan, Connor, Oscar, Claire, Ruby, Cambel, Blake, Harper, Ayla, Macie, Bennet, Caylee, Clara, Priya, and Mitchell, always remember that Jesus is your Good Shepherd, You are His sheep. He isn't just *a* shepherd. He's ***your Good*** Shepherd who lays down His life for you on the cross. The righteous sacrifice that makes you acceptable to God.

It's Confirmation Sunday, no doubt about it! But is it also Doors Sunday? Sheep Sunday? No, better than those two options: It's Good Shepherd Sunday. The Sunday when we celebrate that Jesus is our Shepherd, the Door through Whom we have life and have it abundantly. Amen.