

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran  
Church  
Sermon by Pastor Anthony  
E. Schultz  
November 20, 2016  
Last Sunday of the Church Year  
Ezekiel 34:11-16, 23, 24**



<sup>11</sup> “For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. <sup>12</sup> As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. <sup>13</sup> I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. <sup>14</sup> I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. <sup>15</sup> I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. <sup>16</sup> 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...<sup>23</sup> I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup> I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.

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

When I was little – when there were only four TV networks – ABC, CBS and NBC and PBS – before they invented *Sesame Street* – we used to watch a program on Sundays called simply *The FBI*. Week after week this guy named Ephraim Zimbalist Jr. would go after terrible criminals – often bank robbers – or people that crossed state lines – committing crimes. It always seemed to end the same. The bad guys would empty their guns shooting at Ephraim Zimbalist Jr. Then they would throw their empty pistol at the FBI Special Agent. Then with one shot the FBI Special Agent would wing the suspect. Next – a mug shot followed by how long the bad guy was going to spend behind bars. Apparently a guy named Tommy Ray didn't watch *The FBI*. Tommy Ray was arrested the first time when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Tommy Ray was arrested 5 times for robbing banks! Most recently for robbing a bank in Reno, NV armed with a large steak knife. Tommy Ray made off with a paper bag filled with less than 3 week's pay – including 4 marked bills and an electronic tracker. Tommy Ray is 76 years old – my Dad would say, "Old enough to know better!" Aren't we all? How little are you – when someone tells you, "No!" or "Hot!" or "Don't touch!" and we do it anyway and get burned! We sin again and again-doing what we know is wrong – and failing to do what needs to be done! We sin and the wages of sin is death! It is only because of Jesus' unconditional forgiveness that we come to God's House again and again – because:

**The LORD Is My Shepherd!**

- I. He searches for His strays
- II. He feeds His sheep
- III. Jesus is My Good Shepherd!

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on today is from the scroll of the prophet *Ezekiel*. If one of the first people you bumped into in Heaven was Ezekiel – yes, *thee* Ezekiel what would you say? The Lutheran Study Bible – the English Standard Bible – introduces the book of Ezekiel with the picture of a mason with a trowel slathering mortar across a mud brick – building a wall – brick by brick. When the mason stops for a drink of cool water – he looks west and things about the walls that were his home back by Jerusalem. The walls – thick massive walls of Jerusalem are smashed down. The Temple – made with stones so enormous even architects today cannot explain how such massive stones would be set so precisely one upon another. And the people of the LORD could not understand – they never dreamed that the day would come – when the Temple itself would be smashed down and God's people marched off into captivity some thousand miles away in Babylon. And for how long? For some 70 years! That's a captivity from the day I was born – all my life – plus another 6 years! God's people are in Babylon – and Ezekiel – a priest – cannot function as a Priest – offering guilt offerings and sin offerings – whole burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Ezekiel can't do wave offerings. He can't heave a whole slab of beef onto the altar – and watch it burn to ashes. Ezekiel can't do the precise rituals that taught the people in the most graphic way – the wages of sin is death and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness! What to do...what to do?

The LORD – the Great I AM – the Holy One of Israel is the God of free and faithful grace. He is the God who promised to send His one and only Son to save us! In a most amazing way – that almost has to remind you of some of the wondrous things that the Apostle John saw in Revelation. God's Word describes Ezekiel's first vision: **<sup>4</sup>I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming**

out of the north – an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, <sup>5</sup> and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was human, <sup>6</sup> but each of them had four faces and four wings. <sup>7</sup> Their legs were straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. <sup>8</sup> Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. All four of them had faces and wings, <sup>9</sup> and the wings of one touched the wings of another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved. <sup>10</sup> Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a human being, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. <sup>11</sup> Such were their faces. They each had two wings spreading out upward, each wing touching that of the creature on either side; and each had two other wings covering its body. <sup>12</sup> Each one went straight ahead. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, without turning as they went. <sup>13</sup> The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. Fire moved back and forth among the creatures; it was bright, and lightning flashed out of it. <sup>14</sup> The creatures sped back and forth like flashes of lightning. <sup>15</sup> As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces. <sup>16</sup> This was the appearance and structure of the wheels: They sparkled like topaz, and all four looked alike. Each appeared to be made like a wheel intersecting a wheel. <sup>17</sup> As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the creatures faced; the wheels did not change direction as the creatures went. <sup>18</sup> Their rims were high and awesome, and all four rims were full of eyes all around.

When Ezekiel saw all of this – it was overwhelming! He fell on his face! Then the LORD said to him, “Stand on your feet and

**I will speak to you!"** And as the LORD said this to Ezekiel – **the Holy Spirit entered Ezekiel and lifted him up!** How amazing is that?! The LORD called on Ezekiel to do something – and at the same time – equipped and enabled him to do it! The LORD called Ezekiel **"son of man"**! The LORD never calls Ezekiel~Ezekiel! 93 times the LORD calls him **"son of man"**! This is a humble and lowly name – born of flesh – Ezekiel is a son of man. How great is Jesus' lowliness and humility that Jesus called Himself the **Son of man?**

One more thing to always remember Ezekiel was moved by the Holy Spirit to do like children's devotions – object lessons. For example the LORD said to Ezekiel: **Go, shut yourself inside your house. And you, son of man, they will tie with ropes; you will be bound so that you cannot go out among the people. I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be silent and unable to rebuke them, though they are a rebellious house!"** And then at just the right time – according to the LORD's plan – the LORD would speak to the son of man – would open his mouth and he shall say to them: **This is what the Sovereign LORD says...some will listen – some won't!** Or again – **"Now, son of man, take a clay tablet, put it in front of you and draw the city of Jerusalem on it. Then lay siege to it; Erect siege works against it, build a ramp up to it, set up camps against it and put battering rams around it. Then take an iron pan, place it as an iron wall between you and the city and turn your face toward it. Did the people see the danger? Did they appreciate the LORD's essential protection? Did they understand the spiritual implications? Would they repent? *Not so much!***

<sup>11</sup> **"For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. <sup>12</sup> As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look**

**after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.** Sheep are scattered on a days of clouds and darkness. What is that? Clouds and darkness-- *“our own personal sinfulness bring us such a feeling. The evils of society, the uncertainty of the future, hardships of all kinds, loss of loved ones, personal tragedies, overwhelming challenges, a really grievous sin committed – all fill the days with clouds, darkness and misery.”*

**<sup>13</sup> I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. <sup>14</sup> I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.**

When Ezekiel wrote down these words he was in Babylon. For some 70 years God’s people would be in exile. And then when they were released it would be a near 1,000 mile walk back to Israel – no small task! Why go all the way back to the creamy stones of that small country rippled with ridges and mountains and lots of wilderness? Why go back when for decades they had dug in and made a life for themselves in Babylon? Why go back to a land so many had never even seen? The Gospel promises of God – that’s why. Back in Jerusalem – a horrible pile of rubble – the Temple – the House of the LORD! Imagine if we were gone from Watertown for 70 years – Jesus’ Father’s House of Prayer – completely neglected for 70 years? What would be left? The shingles would be gone! Break *one* stained glass window – and the birds – the squirrels – the ducks and geese and sand hill cranes and much more would move in! And what was truly critical? It would be back in Bethlehem that the Messiah – the

Christ—the Redeemer of God’s people would be born in poverty and humility to save God’s people from all their sins! They had to go back! They had to go back or die trying! They had to! The LORD would bring them back. After all He promised!

**<sup>15</sup> I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. <sup>16</sup> 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...** Search for the lost and bring back the strays! This is just part of the work the LORD will do. By the grace of God—Jesus can use us to be a part of that! If we have family members who have strayed—we can find them and encourage them! When we go to Uncle Marty and Auntie Kathleen’s house for Thanksgiving feasting—there are people everywhere! We can encourage them by telling them how much Jesus is blessing us! Tell them—we have the hymn verses up on the wall. When you go back to your pew after coming to Lord’s Supper—you don’t have to guess which hymn and which verse—it’s right up there. You can go back to your pew—kneel—literally on your knees in thankfulness *if you wish*—it’s just between you and Jesus. And then you look up and you can sing. If you have little people—you can hold them with both arms—and look up and follow along the Scriptures and sing the Psalm and say the creed! It’s wonderful! Invite your family and friends and relatives to the Live Nativity. Invite them to sit on the bales of hay and see Mary and Joseph come to the stable—baby Jesus—resting in the manger. See the angels sing—the shepherds bow down and worship. See the coming of the Wise Men with the real live camel. Sing literally “Joy to the World!” Come inside and have hot cocoa and homemade cookies and rejoice that Christ the Savior is born! Then think about the coming Spring—Lent—Ash Wednesday—Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday—Good Friday—Easter morning! Read your Bible! Read the Scriptures! Give Bibles for Christmas presents. The more you read God’s Word—the more Jesus’

love will overflow your ♥ and color every aspect of your life. God bless all Jesus' lambs and sheep. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

