

**Text:** Ez. 34:12/John 10:27-28   **Title:** **Listen and Remember the Voice of the Shepherd**

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Inside your worship folder you will see a figure with Jesus looking for sheep along with Scriptures: please have that available throughout the message. From Ezekiel 34:12 *“As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered so I will seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered.”* From John 10:27, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”*

As I read through it and studied all those verses from Ez. 34, six words stood out all beginning in the English with the letter “s”. Obviously sheep and shepherd. But along with the sheep came the words scattered and strayed and with the shepherd, seek and search. We’ll start with the sheep – scattered and strayed. Scattered seems like there’s some danger in the midst of the flock and the flock is dispersing - scattering out – running in different directions. Stray seems more like an individual sheep is being attracted to something else – it’s wandering away – its drifting. But then I realized that in either case, whether scattered or straying one thing is happening – the sheep are getting farther and farther away from the voice of the shepherd. It becomes harder to listen - to hear - to pay attention. When the sheep are scattered or straying the voice of the shepherd becomes harder to hear.

So what does that look like for us today? Scattered, strayed. Well, when you listen to the voice of the shepherd, that takes concentration – you need to spend some time - to be mindful - to think - to pay attention to that voice. But today, that paying attention, mindfulness is difficult. Came across this quote – a little phrase - *“we are distracted from distractions by distractions.”* (Repeat) So I’m going to pick on a rather modern device today because I find it very true in my own life - and that’s this little thing called a phone.

Actually anything with a screen, your laptop, your computer, whether you're on social media like Twitter, FB, Instagram whatever it is - we are distracted from our distractions by distractions.

Research has shown that when you do something over and over and over again your brain is rewired to keep doing that and instead of paying attention – thinking deeply – when you're on a screen so much of the time – it rewires your brain to skim and scan and surf and scroll and barely get beneath the surface.

Our brains are not attuned any more to the deep concentration that listens to the voice. But now we're distracted by distractions. Distractions like, well, games, emails, phone calls, text messages – for me I'm a news junkie. I can be in front of that screen for hours and not realize how much time has gone by. How many followers, how many likes – we're distracted by how we're supposed to look or what will make a difference for our life. Or there's the click bait that will take you into some sort of sexuality/sensuality or nudity. Oh, and I've got this phone on right now and I'm going to mention something – my wife and I are going on vacation in a couple of weeks to attend an LFL Conference in Colorado Springs. You know what's been happening - I'm getting advertisements from all the places in Colorado that we should go and see and things that we might want to do while we're there. The targeting of all the advertisements for us to buy and to spend to become a part of a consumer society. All the distractions! We are distracted from distractions by more distractions.

And it becomes more difficult – it becomes harder to pay attention – to think deeply about the voice of the shepherd.

Imagine that in the center of the page is the Good Shepherd with sheep around Him. Then think of the Good Shepherd seeking and searching for lost sheep who are scattering and straying. But the more I thought about it, the Good Shepherd, Jesus knows exactly where we – His sheep - are. He doesn't have to go find us as if it's some sort of game of hide-n-seek. No, what He's doing is He's calling us with His voice – He's seeking us -He's

searching for us with His voice for how far we've wandered away or drifted. He's calling us, He's seeking us, He's searching for us with His voice.

And in John chapter 10, the Good Shepherd passage, Jesus says these words that He has the authority to lay down His life for His sheep – which takes me to the cross on Good Friday. And words from the voice of the shepherd – *“I thirst” “Son behold your mother, mother behold your son.”* He's taking care of His mother appropriately. But He knows our physical needs. He knows our hungers and our thirsts and what we need for our daily bread. *“My God, My God why have you forsaken me?”* and He takes the punishment – all of it – all the way to hell itself - for all the scattered and drifting and wandering and straying and distractions in our lives that keep us from His voice.

*“Father, forgive them, Today you will be with me in Paradise.”* WOW! He forgives and beyond Paradise is a day of resurrection. The Good Shepherd gives eternal life. Amazing gifts of eternal life – from the voice of the Good Shepherd!

*“Father into your hands I commend my spirit.”* And with that Jesus shows us just what we are to do when we listen to His voice - to commend our lives into His care. For good reason we speak the Morning and Evening prayers. *“Into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul and all things.”*

And *“It is finished.”* Everything that needed to be done on that Good Friday was completed. The Good Shepherd had the authority to lay down His life – but not everything was done. If the shepherd's dead, the sheep are going to scatter, the wolves will come in – it's destruction time. So when Jesus in John 10 says I have authority to lay down my life He also says I have authority to take it back up again. And yes, He rises from the dead as the Good Shepherd He lives! He is victorious over anything and everything! At the end of the gospel of Matthew He simply says all authority has been given to me – authority over any distractions – over anything that scatters us - over anything that will cause us to stray. He has authority over it all! And then at the end of that gospel He simply says *“Lo I am with you always.”* He seeks and He searches and He finds and He calls us back to Him.

Read with me please out loud - those two verses with the cross and the resurrection in mind.

So where and when and how do we hear and **remember** the voice of the Good Shepherd? There are a number of Scriptures that exhort us to remember the Lord your God – obey His voice and not forget Him and go after other gods.

Remember, remember! The voice of the Shepherd **remember** in your baptism for you have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You’ve been baptize into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Remember** when you come to the Lord’s Supper – receive His body given for you - His blood shed for you. Do this as often as you eat this... how? **In remembrance of Me**. In the Holy Waters of baptism, in the Lord’s Supper

In the Word, of course and today you have heard me read that to you, you have read and spoken it – and in another way. We speak about the mutual consolation and conversation of the brethren – of fellow believers. And that does happen, surprisingly perhaps even on my phone. Often on FB people post Scripture verses or other inspirational sayings.

Emeritus Pastor Senne regularly posts the best Scripture readings, Luther quotes, wonderful pictures and many solid Lutheran Christian thoughts. And I like it when he puts up Luther’s Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. He may not get many likes but I really like it when he mutually helps me to remember.

Sing LSB # 699 – “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say”

Hearing/Listening to the voice of the shepherd. Remember in your baptism, in the Supper, in the Word, in the conversation. Yes, we may scatter and stray but the Lord always seeks us out as the Good Shepherd. He has laid down His life – He has taken it up again.

**So listen and remember the voice of the Shepherd.**

Amen.