

**John 10:11-18**  
**Fourth Sunday in Easter**  
**Discovering the Hidden Messages of God's Word:**  
**Christ Alone is the Good Shepherd**

**Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church**  
**Winchester, VA**  
**Pastor Paul Krueger**  
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<sup>11</sup> “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. <sup>13</sup> The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

<sup>14</sup> “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—<sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. <sup>17</sup> The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

I am not a leader. This last week I went to San Antonio, Texas and I met with a few dozen pastors who graduated with me in 2015 from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary along with their wives and probably my biggest take away was that one simple fact. I am not a leader. The man leading our class in discussion, a professor of ours from our college days found wisdom in taking the back seat for a while and giving each of my brothers and myself an opportunity to get up and speak about two things. First, “what is the one biggest thing that keeps you up at night,” and second, “what is your one biggest joy?”

Now it isn't that as I sat there and listened to all of these men get up to speak that I realized I am out of their league; that while they are each qualified to lead congregations of Christians, I am not. No, the realization that I came to—or perhaps more aptly, the truth that I was reminded of—was this. None of us deserve to be here. Were it not for God's grace, we would all still be condemned in our sin and none of us would have had the opportunities we've had to share His gospel over these past three years.

That first question, “what is it that keeps you up at night?” was a tough one to answer. As we built our list it was filled with things like missed opportunities and failures, shortcomings and inadequacies, laziness, unfaithfulness—in short, our sins. I don't think it would be hard for you to imagine the kinds of things my friends and I confessed to one another in that room, because given the opportunity I know that you would all have items of your own to add to that list. Just think about it? What *is* the one, biggest thing that keeps you up at night?

I thought I would hear more of them talking about sins that had been committed against them, rough situations they had been placed into, or hard problems which need to be dealt with. I'm sure they all have those as well, but those weren't what dominated our conversation, nor do I imagine would they be the kinds of things that would dominate ours if we went through a similar exercise here this morning. **We all like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way** (Isaiah 53:6a). While some in this world may be content to go their own way, we're different. You and I who have heard God's word, my brothers in the ministry and I who have been tasked with preaching God's Word, all our brothers and sisters in their congregations as

well as all of you here, we are different. We who have looked into the mirror of God's law and have seen the ugliness of our sins cannot simply walk and forget what we have seen. The sins we see in that mirror—sins we have committed—keep us up at night (sometimes literally, sometimes figuratively) as we are reminded of that truth of the law: we don't deserve to be here.

There were two questions, however, that our group leader had asked us to reflect on. Not only "what is the number one biggest thing that keeps you up at night," but then also, "what is your biggest joy?" I can't speak for all my classmates, or even remember what all of them said, but I know a few attacked that second question like I did. I told them after getting here I eventually had a shift in thought when it comes to my personal evangelism tactics. You see, three years ago when I first started serving you all, I had the mindset—whether it was intentional or not—that when I talked to someone the goal was to get them to come be a member here at our church.

Now that led to some problems, because I found that if I tried to get out to do some door-to-door evangelism I might come home that night without having met anyone at all that I thought was going to show up here that Sunday. I might meet a gentleman who was a member at a local Baptist church and the first thought into my mind became, "How can I exit this conversation, so I can move along to somebody who might actually be interested in joining our church?" It was a frustrating and admittedly an improperly motivated way of doing evangelism work. It resulted in leaving me with a sense of whether *I* had been successful, or *I* had failed. My attitude needed to change.

"What if," I thought, "I approached those conversations not with the end goal of getting them to come to Shepherd of the Hills, but simply with the end goal of telling them about Jesus, their Savior from sin?" I tried it, and I started walking away from those encounters with a sense neither of success nor of failure, but rather of thankfulness that, come what may, God had allowed me to be involved in sharing the news of His Son.

What I shared with those good friends of mine and their wives on Thursday morning I'd like to share with you this morning too. What is one of my biggest joys? I get to tell people about Jesus. I get to tell them Jesus laid down His life to rescue them from their own death by taking away their sins. I get to tell them that, and so do you. What an amazing opportunity! In verse 16 of our text this morning we heard Jesus say, **I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to My voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.**

Sheep here equals sinner. Jesus refers to the sinners of this world as His sheep. The Church, the universal body of all those who believe that in Jesus alone they have salvation from their sins is the sheep pen. There are sheep, or sinners, that Jesus must still bring into the safety of the Church, by bringing them to faith in Him as their Redeemer.

What does He use to bring those other sheep into His flock? Who does He use to carry His voice to those other lost sinners, that they can listen to His voice and come to know Him and come to follow Him? When I was about six-years-old, a movie came out called *Babe* about a pig who grew up with sheep dogs and learned how to herd sheep. The whole premise of the movie was that this pig was challenging the established hierarchy of the farm, pigs didn't herd sheep, dogs did! Our circumstance is even more absurd. In the picture of Christ and the flock that He shepherds it isn't dogs or pigs that He calls on to lead more sheep into His pen, it's the sheep that

are already there!

So you are a leader, and I am a leader, and every one of the men that I met with in that room in San Antonio is a leader, because each of us has been called—whether publicly as His under-shepherds or individually as members of Christ’s flock—to lead others to Jesus and that is one of our greatest joys.

I can’t speak for all my classmates, or even remember what all of them said, but I know a few attacked that second question like I did. They pointed to that joy we have as pastors—the same joy you have as members of Christ’s Church—to share the love of Jesus. The problem is, that’s not enough. The joy that I have or that you have in doing the work that Jesus Christ has called us to do, cannot be the biggest joy we have. I sensed some frustration still in the room that morning as pastor after pastor laid out the struggle against their own sinful nature and then turned to the joy of their calling. Perhaps because the joys we were citing, awesome as they may be, aren’t the joy that answers problems we were citing.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the joy we have in being able to share with others what Jesus has done for them is incredible. The opportunity is astounding, absurd even that we who were once lost sheep should be invited to bring the voice of the Good Shepherd to other straying sheep. And yet, neither my faithfulness to my calling as pastor and the joy that comes through that work, nor your faithfulness to your individual callings as Christians and the joy that comes through your work, can quiet the voice of our sins that keep us up at night.

After hearing what nearly all of us had had to say a classmate of mine got up to speak. “Brothers,” he said, “I see myself in you, and in the cares and joys you’ve shared here today. Honestly, at the end of the day, it all boils down to this: ‘What keeps me up at night, or has the power to do so?’ It’s me. My failures. My shortcomings. My anger. My unfaithfulness. My lies. My shame. My sins. ‘But what is my greatest joy?’ It’s Jesus. Jesus, my Savior, the one and only one, who has the power to take all of that away and who did that by giving up His life for me on the cross.”

I am not a leader. I am a sheep who needs His Shepherd. Who, like you needs to know that Jesus laid down his life for me. And yet, I am a leader, in that I have been called by *the Leader* to point other sheep to Him. Allow me to do that for you this morning. Take those sins that plague your conscience, that literally or figuratively keep you up at night, and leave them here at the altar of the cross of Jesus Christ. Hear the words of God, **We all like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all** (Isaiah 53:6). I’ll join with you at the altar, a fellow sheep laying my sins before God, as we receive together the body and blood of our Savior Jesus which He gave up for us in death on the cross to wash away the guilt of our sins and which He took up again in victory on Easter Sunday morning so that He could proclaim to you, “Peace be with you. Your sins are forgiven. Rejoice today. Sleep well.”

I’ll join you again as we leave this house of worship this morning with joy in our hearts confessing, **The Lord is my Shepherd, here is nothing that I lack. Surely Your goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever** (Psalm 23:1,6).

May Jesus our Savior and our Good Shepherd be and continue to be your greatest joy.  
Amen.