



Sermon on the Mount
Wk. 30 "The Wolves Among Us"
By Pastor Jody May 03/16/2025

[CALL TO HEAR]

Matthew 7:15-20 ESV

True and False Prophets

¹⁵"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Pastor - "People of God, this is the Word of God."

People - "Thanks be to God."

Pray

Illustration

It's funny when Jesus uses analogies like shepherds, wolves, and flocks we all tend to think, "Oh yeah, I know what He's talking about." While most of our knowledge of those things are second hand coming most likely from a movie, a book, or a documentary we have seen. Doesn't mean we are necessarily wrong, but it may mean our picture is not of the clearest quality or may fit the scripture best. Just be aware of that in scripture family, many times the pictures Jesus is painting in the Bible we have taken and Westernized them in our minds which can change the image ever so slightly. In turn we have changed the meaning of the text just a little (eisegeses) not on purpose or with ill intent, but enough to influence the reading.

A wolf to us is a large Canine, females 60-100lbs., with the males ranging from 70-145lbs, standing 26"-32" tall (Great Dane size) that live in the northern territories of North America. They are carnivorous, eating only meat, and they hunt in highly community driven packs with an Alpha Male always taking



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the lead. Their colors are usually White, Black, and Brown mixed, many times giving them a Grey Appearance, hence why the name the 'Grey Wolf'.¹

So, we take this picture and then we over lay it into this metaphor that Jesus is using. When we do that, we probably think to ourselves, while a wolf in sheep's clothing would be a silly thing, maybe a little deceiving, there is no way without a little discernment that you would not be able to tell there is a predator loose among the flock. I think we all would say that we would indeed see a dangerous animal moving among the heard of solid White, slow moving 100lb. (sheared) softly lowing animals. If anything, they would cry out in alarm, especially with a pack of dangerous carnivorous animals, that are working together to cull out the weak.

If it were only that easy.

What Jesus is describing is a different animal altogether. He is describing the Arabian Wolf, a distant cousin of the Grey we have here in the Americas, they are also called the "Desert Wolf". Their coat hairs are thin, short, and wiry, light in color, varying from light brown through to a grayish yellow. They never get taller than 26" and at the heaviest are 45lbs. They live in small groups from 2-4 due to lack of game and usually are solitary hunters. They are opportunistic omnivore scavengers, that will eat almost anything but like hunting at night where they are told to be a nuisance to farmers. To us, these animals look like coyotes but do not follow the general guidelines for wild canine behavior.²

This leaves us with a totally different image now of what the Lord is describing. First, He says, "Beware"³ – Continually be on the watch for this will happen, this visit from this wolf. This wolf will come in and never really standout. They will never appear heavier or bigger than the sheep and will

¹ <https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Mammals/Gray-Wolf>

² https://ukwct.org.uk/files/education/WP_Ed38_Arabian-Wolf.pdf

³ **4668** προσέχω (*prosechō*): vb.; ≡ Str 4337—**1.** LN 27.59 **be alert for**, watch out, be on guard, beware (Mt 6:1); **2.** LN 30.35 **consider carefully**, implying agreement (Ac 8:6); **3.** LN 31.47 **continue to believe**, hold firmly to a belief (1Ti 1:4; 1Ti 6:3 v.r. NA26); **4.** LN 68.19 **continue to give oneself to**, devote, apply oneself (Heb 7:13) James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).



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even eat what they are eating to blend in, they don't mind the 'feed' to fill their bellies temporarily. You will have a hard time noticing them for their appearance is like dirty wool, a greyish yellow coat. They won't travel in packs, and many times will come in by themselves, and will blend in nicely with the herd. Remember though they are opportunistic and at night when you are lulled into a false sense of security is when they strike, killing one of your own, and decimating the peace of the flock. This is what Jesus compares the false prophet to.

Introduction

Today's teaching from the SoM is to the first of three warnings as Jesus wraps up His sermon, three things to be aware of that would lead us away from the narrow way. This first of the three is a warning about those that would use their influence among the Kingdom to sway people away from God, and the results are devastating. We are to be on the constant watch for these type of folks for they do exist everywhere, they are opportunistic, they blend in, and they will turn and feed upon the flock for their own gain.

We have three things in which to help us be aware this morning. First, we need to **heed the reality of wolves among us**. Jesus didn't say 'if', it is more a matter of 'when', they will be there, we need to accept that reality. Second, we need to **seek to identify the wolves by their fruit**. That is in order to find such a deceitful creature we need to observe their lives and watch and see if what they are preaching is what they are living. Lastly, we need to **flee from the company of wolves avoiding their destruction**. The wolf's subterfuge will never go unpunished, so it is best to give a wide berth to those that disguise themselves as a part of the body. So, we are going to Heed, seek, and flee in Jesus' command to BEWARE. In this way I want us all to hopefully fulfill this main summary of today's passage.

MP:

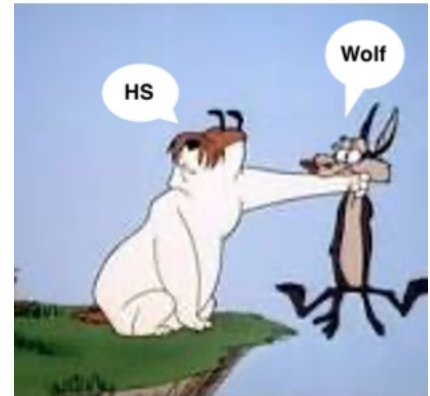
Beware of Wolves by being Diligent Sheep.

You may not like being called sheep but that is exactly what you and I are. Jesus considers us His flock, that means we need His protection and His guidance and intervention when dealing with those that are out to disrupt



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Kingdom living. Men, compose yourself, all are duped by a 'Willy Coyote' (see pic) but thank God we have a guard dog like 'Sam', who is the HS, that will show up when we need Him the most. Best to remember that we need our shepherd.



1. Heed the reality of wolves among us.

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

Here are **THREE REALITIES** that we need see here today, **first is that you have a GOOD shepherd**, He has been given the job of providing your protection and motivation, we best heed His directions.

Ezekiel 34:23 ESV

And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.

A shepherd is one of the **Kingly duties** that Christ performs for His people. Just as David was a shepherd he still wrote about God as the ultimate shepherd (Psalm 23). Jesus feeds the flock and protects the flock.

It was prescribed by God that His people shall need a shepherd because the reality is, well if we are being honest, were just not that sharp to steer clear of trouble. There is this saying that '**sheep are dumb**', but when you look at the facts, they rank up there with other intelligent animals. They adapt to their environment, they remember faces of other sheep and people up to fifty years, they experience animal emotions much like dogs do and even self-medicate by eating certain plants. The problem though is they love following others. A lamb is taught from its' early birth that if its' mother jumps over a log you jump over right after her, without seeing the other side first. In much the same way though, you can lead the whole flock to slaughter because they will blindly follow their leader.



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It is hard-wired into them, to be a follower, but when they have found their shepherd, they are actually in a really 'good way', but if they are following an impostor because of deceit, and God forbid others are following the fake, they will walk to their doom. We need a shepherd, and the image of a Savior that lives and dies for His sheep is the only image strong enough to garner our attention and keep it on Him, and keeps it off of wolves in sheep clothing.

John 10:11 ESV

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Family let me just say you and I are in need of this good shepherd, we are followers, it has been built into our DNA. This man, **instead of the wolves taking you**, He let them take Him. **John 10:18** Jesus says, "*No one takes my life away from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.*" The shepherd is strong enough to defend Himself all day long, but in order to save all the sheep of His flock, He allows the act of His substitutionary slaughter to be so impactful that it can never be forgotten. He became the literal scapegoat if you will for us, to take the violent death, at the hands of the wolves/false prophets. The sheep, the sheep of His pasture, are awakened from their blindness by His violent death and now they see the act of His life for theirs. They follow that path now to Salvation, they have seen His way leads to life, because now they can never unsee it!

John 10:14 ESV

I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me.

I commend to you the one that has shown He is willing to go and rescue you from the jaws of an eternal death even at the expense of His life. We have a GOOD shepherd let us be thankful for Him and **Heed His call for being diligent.**

The **second reality** we need to grasp is that **there are indeed dangers, that are not just outside of the flock, but these dangers are in the body.** These dangers come in the form of the person that Jesus calls a 'False Prophet'. The Greek there is **ψευδοπροφήτης** (*pseudoprophētēs*). n. masc. **false prophet.**



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*Designates a person whose prophetic role is illegitimate or used for deception.*⁴ The term is used to describe not just false teachers, but those who would teach known heresy, and those that work for the spirit of the antichrist throughout the ages. A false prophet is someone who looks like they may belong to the Kingdom of Heaven, that looks like a believer, that even walks in the gate with the flock, but their intentions lead to death and dismemberment. These wretches, the Lord tells us, BEWARE they will come.

Being that they are prophets it means that they are coming to try and sell you something, they are teachers, whether by trade or just the art of persuasion. They can be pastors in a pulpit, or on-line media personalities with thousands of followers or just 5, or they can be sitting in the seats next to you. Prophets will have to eventually say something to you though, they can't be quiet, they have a need to be heard.

There is **one more thing** I would ask you to **see as a reality of these intruders**, these wolves, and that is Jesus ties the title prophet to them meaning **you can know them by "objectifiable means"**. If someone comes as a prophet, an outspoken teacher in the name of God, it means you will be able to judge them by the truth they proclaim and that is good news for us. The world gets duped all the time because they like 'subjective' truth, meaning if it sounds good to them, they will listen to what they are selling. BUT for the church, our shepherd is the living embodiment of the Word, and we will recognize His words in the mouths of our leaders; His sheep will know His voice.

MP - Family, we the sheep need to be diligent, and we are diligent when we first Heed the Good Word of our Good Shepherd. First, we praise God we have a loving one that has laid down His life for us so we can see who to follow. Secondly, we heed the warning that they will come in amongst us disguised as people that must be heard not just seen. Thirdly, that they can be known to be false for to be a prophet of God, they must be willing to be tried by His Word, and that brings us to our second point.

2. Seek to identify wolves by their fruit.

⁴ Aaron C. Fenlason, "[Prophets.](#)" in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).



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¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.

²⁰Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Alright so wolves will get in, there is no way to wolf proof your herd or pen, they are among us, and they will not quit for they are driven by hunger. Our shepherd now in wanting us to be diligent gives us an action that is very patient in its pursuit, and that is **watching fruit grow**. Has there ever been anything so long suffering and tedious as watching fruit grow?

Every year I wait and wonder if my apple trees will produce something good to eat. I have had such a hard time figuring out the best fertilizer, pesticides that are safe, and pruning that doesn't stunt fruit production and I still don't get it right. Even after a failed season I must wait another year before I can see the fruit of my labor, that is how it is sometimes waiting for the wolf to show themselves. We have to wait for them to begin to produce so we can then judge them rightly.

Jesus is going back and forth from a farmer's perspective to a rancher's perspective, to me that means people in the church are always focused on the **growth of the people** in the pen. Those sheep that are fed by produce, fruit of righteous and holy living, will yield wool, things that can be used for Kingdom expansion, so we are looking for specific things to be grown among the body. There are a couple of places we can go to, to see the type of things that should be produced. The first place is the **Beatitudes Matthew 5:1-11**, those visible fruits in the body producing Kingdom of Heaven-like characteristics?

- **V3. Poor in Spirit:** They are humble people and know they don't know it all and constantly ask for help in understanding God's Word and accountability with their sin.
- **V4. Mourners:** they are frustrated with their depravity, and they continually mourn their sin. They have a low view of will power and a high view of God's intervening love.



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- **V.5 Meek:** The knowledge they do have, the authority they have, they never lord it over others and instead lead by a quiet strength always deferring to others in humble submission; anti-arrogant.
- **V.6 Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness:** They truly desire the old self to die; they want nothing more than for God to change them, and even when it is painful call on God to sanctify them.
- **V.7 Merciful:** they know they were changed and saved only by God's Mercy, since God has withheld judgement, they too are merciful to others.
- **V. 8 Pure in Heart:** they don't fool themselves about motives and intention, they are honest with God about what they desire, and in return they are not quick to trust themselves in tempting situations. They know their boundaries.
- **V.9 Peacemakers:** They don't walk away from conflict they walk into it, knowing unity in the body is better for everyone, and it is better to have momentary conflict in this world rather than a soul lost to Hell.
- **V.10 Persecuted:** they don't look at earthly persecution as something to be scorned, neither do they blame God, but accept tribulation as opportunities to display the Glory of God.

You can also look at: **Galatians 5:22-23 ESV**

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5 and Matthew 5 overlap in many ways and by focusing on those two places we can see the Good fruit produced. The bad tree cannot produce these things but again it takes some time to see these things mature.

Now let's use a BIG example that False Prophets/Wolves like to use and again whether they are pastors, online influencers, or your neighbor in the chair next to you, here is something you would be able to identify.

Many times, for a wolf to gain your trust they will sound "**amoral**"⁵, you will know them more about what they say is ok than by what they say is not ok. Their arguments are more for tolerance than for holiness. It might not be on

⁵ <https://www.vocabulary.com/articles/commonly-confused-words/amoral-immoral/>



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everything, but they will usually have a spot in their lives that they don't have much opinion on, or they are very opinionated on one thing, so as to keep your attention on it and off of other things. They don't like to pass judgment on whether something is right or wrong but would rather argue over semantics.⁶ Some pastors who are this way like to preach a lot of Grace for example but don't like to preach Law, but you must have both messages to have the Gospel.

Tulian Tchividjian was an up-and-coming star (speaker) in the reformed world, the grandson of Billy Graham, and he was known for preaching and explaining the radical grace of God is what changes us. Perhaps so, but he never had much fear of God either and for His Holiness, leading to him divorcing his wife in 2015, after two different affairs, marrying his mistress in 2016, all because to him, *Grace was enough*.⁷ That is someone not mortified by sin, he does not take seriously the warnings of false teachers in the scriptures and their accountability, and does not thirst for righteousness. This is a wolf brothers and sisters.

But see that example is the same for a lot of people in the church. There are many that want no one looking at them and the fruit they produce, so they live without any reference to scripture that calls them to repentance. They like to accuse people of not being good Christians when they even mention things like, "**well the Bible says so**". That thought process leads to the ancient heresy of **Antinomianism**, the belief that *we are no longer held to any moral obligations of the law*.⁸ Paul did preach a lot about Grace yes, he did, but he also battled those that wanted to throw the law out (see Romans 6). Family, you **need BOTH to have the Gospel**. You need law for guidance and conviction of sin, and you need Grace to remove guilt and condemnation, but Grace with no conviction leads to abhorrent living, that's all.

False prophets when you bring up things to them, will always try to turn the table on you. They will point out your faults instead of listening to your questions. They will accuse you of not loving them when you approached them with the desire for unity and peace. False prophets, wolves, to sum up family

⁶ <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/semantics>

⁷ <https://churchleaders.com/news/357546-tullian-tchividjian-starts-new-church-after-affairs.html>

⁸ <https://www.gotquestions.org/antinomianism.html>



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never are truly repentant, they don't want to change, they don't think they need to. The other thing I noticed when their ways start to get them noticed they can't handle the heat they will leave and look for greener pastures or easier prey.

John Stott mentioned to me this past week three different tests you can use to see if the fruit is ripe.⁹ Hopefully it is better than the test I use for watermelons, I can never do that right! 😊

- **Character vs. Conduct** – do they conduct themselves with the character the claim to have (Mat 5 Beatitudes; Gal 5:22-23 Fruits of the Spirit)
- **Actual Apostolic Doctrine** – do they adhere to Confessionalism; the Creeds or do they have their own views of scripture and how it should be deciphered.¹⁰
- **Effect on Others** – by what they teach does it lead others to righteousness, holiness, and godliness? Do they harden hearts to truth, do they harden wills towards confession, do they open wide the gates of acceptance for unrepentant people?

Family let us all seek to be a little bit more diligent, not like the KGB keeping secret tabs on each other and turning us over for questioning. But let us be loving, peacemakers, and be concerned when others are under the influence of false doctrine, ask questions, and call people to repentance when needed.

3. Flee from the company of wolves avoiding destruction.

¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

⁹ John R. Stott, [*The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*](#)/Revised Edition (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2020), 172-174.

¹⁰ Four formal creeds have become known as the ecumenical creeds of Christendom. These creeds, which were formulated at various points in church history, include the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the Creed of Chalcedon. Identifies the unique roles of the Persons of the Trinity in redemption, concentrating in particular on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

<https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/ancientcreeds.html#:~:text=Four%20formal%20creeds%20have%20become,and%20the%20Creed%20of%20Chalcedon.>



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In closing what is the destiny of those that do not repent, of those that seek to plague the church? According to Christ, it is destruction. The tree that is not producing "Good Fruit" is the tree that is cut down.

Again, when I lived in Florida, I never had a problem with a fruit tree, you just plant a fruit tree in Florida, and it grows, and it produces. It was the combination of sun, temperature, fertile soil, and constant pollination for S. Fl. is constantly flowering, therefore things always produced fruit. Here I had peach tree once, produced one year and then not, always back and forth. Then it got a disease, and it became good smelling firewood in my house, that was all it was good for. You can't give fruit trees free reign in your yard for they will cause disease in all the other trees, they will suck life out of your soil, they will invite harmful insects, and you will never get out of them the hours and labor back you spent on them in the first place.

MP - Family to be diligent is not to neglect the conditions of your church.

God calls the local church to be pruners, and if you don't do it, then Christ will. Go read the first 3 chapters of Revelation and take in what is the warning for the churches that will not repent? It is the removal of their candlestick, the light they give, the presence of the Spirit in that church. False prophets are to be taken very seriously for whether they know it or not they are sent by an enemy and God will not stand for it.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 ESV

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

Family, it is unloving not just to those who cause a problem not to confront them about their beliefs, but it is unloving to everyone else if we don't do it. Our Shepherd is constantly being diligent in the care of His flock, so let us remember to flee from those that have chosen to be destructive or to go another way, for we cannot hold onto disease and not be affected by it.

[CALL TO OBEY]



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Family in closing today what are some things that we can walk away with to help us live with this reality that there will be wolves among us?

1 John 4:1 ESV

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Test a person according to their love.

In context there in 1 John that is all about how to love, he says if they do not claim Jesus as the Son of God, which would mean they do not practice love as He did, then you are not to associate with them. If someone is unloving in the church when they should be, call them out on it. To be like Christ we cannot hold grudges, to be like Christ we **must** offer forgiveness to one another, and to be like Christ we cannot abide to remain silent over a wayward covenant member, you are called to be a tester.

Ephesians 5:11 ESV

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

Expose malicious behavior and confront it.

When others talk about people in this church, whether it is leadership or not, then do the first thing **offer to go with them on that complaint to that brother/sister**. If they do not want to go to seek a reconciliation, then expose the lie for it is a fruit of darkness. Our world operates out of slander, gas lighting, and deceit but that's not the way of Christ's church. There is no such thing as secretive '*whistle blowing*' in the church, BUT there is gentle open confrontation though for the sake of reconciliation. If that is not desired and you know about it then after your admonishment to them if they do not turn, then you go get someone and go to that person.

2 Timothy 4:3 ESV



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For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,

Learn from those that teach a Full Gospel.

You will find a lot of people and churches now-a-days that preach not the full Gospel. Perhaps you are friends with those that are stuck in churches that are still talking about racial issues instead of Gospel issues, that are in places that promote alternate lifestyles instead of repentant ones. Then either you need to confront in love or at least do not entertain their chatter, for their speech Paul **says suits their passions not God's**. Remember sheep like to follow and if you find yourself being swayed by an antinominalist then run like there is no tomorrow for their destruction lies ahead.

Family, we may not be able to keep all the wolves out, but Jesus has definitely given us ways to protect ourselves and those we love. And who knows, if perhaps we learn how to confront in love some of those who are on the fence of pursuing self-gain or God's glory, can be called to repentance because you loved them enough to say something.

MP:

Beware of Wolves by being Diligent Sheep.

Let us be diligent family, by heeding the voice of our shepherd, seeking to study the fruit of the false prophet, and flee from those that are unwilling to change. I know the Good Shepherd will lead us well in this, let us follow as our DNA prescribes, for His sheep know His voice.

Prayer

Communion

Matthew 26:26-29 ESV

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."²⁷ And he



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took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Today when you eat of the bread remember the life of Jesus. Our Good Shepherd never abandoned His post, He watched over His flock at all times and protected His sheep from the wolves. In return the Wolves of his day tormented Him unceasingly, but He never tired in His duties, and persevered and has not nor will He ever lose even 1 of His flock. Praise be to Him for His perfect care!

Today when you drink the juice remember the cost of our sin displayed by His blood. We all were like sheep that had gone astray. We all were lost without a home, left alone to be devoured by the wolves we chose to follow. But Jesus being rich in Truth and Grace, came and gave His life for us, so we would forever know now the voice of our Good Shepherd. Praise be to Him for His wonderful Love!

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand

Elder – "Christians, what do we believe?"
Congregation - recites

The Lord Is My Shepherd

A Psalm of David.

23 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

³ He restores my soul.



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He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

[OFFERING+LAST SONG]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, who calls us out in love those sheep who are His, forever protecting them from wolves.

Go in the name of the Son, the Good Shepherd, forever diligent, who offers His life for His flock so we may always know we are His.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that makes us aware of wolves, and who emboldens us to love others led astray, now go and tell the world of the Green Pastures you have found.



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