November 22, 2026
“Am I a Good Sheep?”
Ezekiel 34:11-19, 20-24

**Intro:**
It is almost like a scene from a Hallmark movie, or a feel-good family TV show… The parents are sitting on the couch, maybe quietly reading a book or having a general conversation, and their little child – maybe 4 or 5 years old - comes into the room, gets up on the couch and snuggles in between Mom and Dad and with all the innocent concern of a young child asks, “Am I a good kid?”

Perhaps you’ve seen the scene before, or experienced it first-hand as either the child or the parent. However you have seen it, we all have a pretty good idea of what the response will be, right?

The Mom and Dad put down their book, maybe give each other a quick and knowing glance, turn their complete attention to that little face that seems on the edge of breaking, and smiling, they reply with, “No dear, in fact you are the worst kid we have ever encountered.”

Did I get it right? You were probably expecting a glowing affirmation of just how good and perfect that little child is. After all, it is that affirmation and approval that the child is seeking in that moment and it is a parent’s job to assure them that they are loved and seen and appreciated.

As we step into the book of Ezekiel for a moment this morning, we get a similar picture forming. Here, the response from God is just as likely to be what I put forward first – his people are not good.

**The Passage:**
This morning I want you to ponder the question, “Am I a Good Sheep?” I know, you are not livestock, but the image of being a sheep, especially in the context of our relationship with God, is common throughout Scripture and helps to frame

how we should see some of that relationship. In light of who God is, and all that goes on in this great world that He has created, we are just like sheep – we are reliant upon Him for our protection and provision. We are mostly helpless in so many ways. We need to be cared for, no matter how strong our urge might be to claim that we don't need any help from anyone – that we can manage just fine on our own.

But we are God's sheep. Are we good sheep?

As we land in Ezekiel 34, the people of Israel have been, or will be in the prophetic future, scattered into exile. "Lost" would be good way to describe them. Lost is sometimes a good way to describe us today. But they, and we, are not lost to God. He is going to undertake the task to bring all the sheep that have been scattered back to Himself. From wherever they are in the world, they will be returned to relationship and the presence of God. All of them.

And this is good news! This is a message of hope. But before anyone can get too comfortable in thinking that Ezekiel, for once, is going to deliver a purely positive message, God throws in the caveat that once all the sheep have returned, they will be judged and separated – sheep from goats – based on whether they have been good. The rubric for this judgement is based on how they have treated their fellow sheep – have they bullied and exploited others in order to advance their own agendas, or have they not succumbed to such selfishness, and in spite of bad treatment, still managed to bring blessing to others.

But they, we, are all sheep and so we need to pause here for a moment and step back to get a little more context.

**Shepherds:**
The beginning of Ezekiel 34, and indeed many places within this book, brings the readers' focus not on the sheep of the land, but on the shepherds. These are the leaders of the people, both religious and political, and in these opening verses, God has nothing good to say to them. He calls them out for having exploited and

grown fat and rich off the people that they were supposed to be representing and looking after. It was their job to make sure that the Israelites were safe and that they lived in accordance with the covenant that God had established with them. But instead, they oppressed them and caused them to walk away from that covenant. The result of that bad leadership was the exile and God absenting Himself from them for a period of time. The shepherds were bad.

Now, leaning into the imagery of sheep, sheep are not the leaders in this flock. They are the followers. They have followed the example set by the shepherds. They are simply behaving in what they have seen modeled. But as the section of Ezekeial 34 that we read earlier points out, being the follower does not excuse their behaviour. The bad sheep will still be separated from the good ones.

We could spend the rest of this message unpacking the social justice and social gospel elements that separating the sheep from the goats presents – and certainly those themes are there. But I want to spend the rest of our time this morning going deeper than that.

Before we can find an answer to whether we are good sheep or not, we need to first ask, who have we been listening to? Whose, or which, voice and example are we drawing permission from on how to behave? I'll spoil the end for you here – if it isn't the voice of Jesus, and only His voice, then it is the wrong voice and there is a very real danger that you will be led astray. Ezekiel confirms that once the sheep have been gathered, God will place one, and only one, shepherd over them all to guard and provide. In John 10, as we read earlier, Jesus confirms that He is that ultimate good shepherd. It is his voice that calls the sheep back to the safety of his sheep-hold. Are you listening to His voice? Jesus says that his sheep will know his voice and will know it to be a place of safety and justice and knowing what is right. Do you know the voice of Jesus?

**Conclusion:**

There are a lot of "shepherds" out there in the church and in Christian circles. A lot of voices that claim to be teaching the truth of what Jesus would teach or say.

But not all of those shepherds are looking out for the sheep. Some of them are looking out for themselves – and the example they set gets picked up and repeated by those sheep who listen to them. Jesus said that to lead is really to serve. That can be lived out in all sorts of ways, but it is never lived out when the self is taking the place of the Good Shepherd.

It is easy to get off on the wrong track, especially with all that is going on in the world today. It seems as though the church, and Christians, are being attacked on all fronts (there certainly are many areas of persecution out there), and it is only natural to gravitate toward those voices that offer a solution that sounds like something God would want, but is really a mask for a less-than-godly agenda. We need to be discerning people when it comes to everything we hear, or think to follow. Is this Jesus' voice that we are hearing? If I follow what is being said, will God see me as being a good sheep?

It all starts with knowing the Good Shepherd's voice, and listening to it. The only way to learn to hear and know that voice is to spend time listening for it. Pray. Sit in the silence of seeking and listening. Read your Bible. Pray some more. Take what you think is direction for what you should do or how you should treat someone else, and test it against what Scripture already tells us.

When you ask Jesus if you are a good sheep, may you hear clearly from Him – "Yes you are, little lamb…you are very good."

Let's pray.