

Ezekiel 34:11-16 (NIV)

11 "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. 12 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. 13 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. 14 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. 15 I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. 16 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.

This portion of God's Word from Ezekiel continues this week's emphasis on the Good Shepherd. John 10 pictured the Good Shepherd as one who protected the sheep by laying down his life. Ezekiel offers a slightly different picture, but with the same main theme.

Ezekiel pictures the Good Shepherd as one who gathers in the sheep that have been scattered. From the four corners of the earth, the Good Shepherd seeks out the lost sheep and gathers them into his flock. He brings them to the mountain of Israel. He pastures them in good grazing land full of rich resources. He doesn't rely on the hired hands to tend his sheep. The Good Shepherd will personally tend them; he will strengthen them and provide for them.

We need look no farther than our own lives and the lives of our fellow believers to see the Good Shepherd, Jesus, at work. The very fact that we have faith in Jesus as our Savior shows that he has gathered us in. By nature we are all lost sheep. We have no sense of direction. We have no way to live. We were surrounded by clouds and darkness. But we have seen the Light, our Good Shepherd. He has led us to the mountain of Israel, to Zion, the Holy Christian Church. He has fed us and nourished us with the rich pastures of his Word and Sacraments. He has seen to it himself that we are safe by securing our salvation by his death and resurrection.

What a marvelous picture of God's love for us! What a marvelous ray of hope to share with those who are lost! May God grant us the wisdom and the courage to point all people to their Good Shepherd.