

# Christ Lutheran Church

## *“God with Us”*

### Advent Worship Series

December 9, 2018: Our Shepherd

Preacher: Pastor David Goehmann

As we come into Advent we are asking God to come. Jesus specifically is coming to us as he returns at the end of the world. And God has come to us in the person of Jesus. But who is are God? What is he like? What does he want from us?

God’s character as we reflect on him in our series is never a stand alone description. We don’t call him mountain. We don’t call him Island. We don’t call him something that doesn’t involve another thing. For this series we are reflecting on the character of God in relation to people. You can’t have a potter without a pot. You can’t have a shepherd without sheep.

That is our focus for today. On God as our shepherd. We are probably familiar with the good shepherd Jesus. We likely would be familiar with Psalm 23 that says the Lord is my shepherd.

Traditional pictures of Jesus show a shepherd that gently cares for the sheep. He has a lamb over his back as he nurtures and cares for each sheep and knows them intimately by name.

That is true, but it is not how I would like to talk about him today. Shepherds are often depicted as scrawny, weak little boys. Or in the manger scene shepherds might look like a graceful character who glides through the mountains leading his sheep to green pastures.

Nothing could be further than the truth.

The truth is shepherds were often skilled defenders of the sheep. They may not have been strong, but they were skilled warriors. Unless of course you were a lousy shepherd who really didn't care about the sheep. Then, when there was any sign of danger, you would simply run like a coward, and then the sheep would be devoured.

A good shepherd would be one who could risk his life. One of the best shepherd's in Bible was David. Most of us know the famous story of David and? That's right, Goliath. David was so brave he was willing to go up against Israel's most fierce enemy. The man Goliath who stood 9ft tall. That's taller than most of our Christmas trees. How could he have so much courage?

My favorite part of the story is 1 Samuel 17:33-37 <sup>33</sup> Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth."

<sup>34</sup> But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, <sup>35</sup> I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. <sup>36</sup> Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. <sup>37</sup> The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine."

Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you."

This is the kind of Shepherd Jesus is. Although you may not notice at first, Jesus laid down his life for the sheep. He died for you and me. He protects us first and foremost from the prowling Lion that is Satan. O come, O come Immanuel the hymn even has a verse that talks about

how Jesus defends us against Satan and hell. Jesus isn't joking around, and God is certainly not a big teddy bear in the sky.

Besides Satan, we are our own worst enemy because of our sin. Our sin of fear. Our sin of worry. Our sin of feeling insecure in our world. Believe me, a God who protects us from Satan will certainly protect us from whatever is in this world. Nothing, absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Not even demons.

Christmas just got hardcore as Jesus comes into this world. We know he came to give up his life on the cross so that we would have forgiveness from our deadly sin, and salvation that leads to life. He will come again with power descending in the clouds, the judge of the living and the dead.

Jesus is our fierce bold shepherd who will do anything to save us. That is the kind of God we have. We have a God who would place his life before his.

When I was out in Grizzly country a couple weeks ago all I had to protect myself was some aerosol can called bear spray. By the time you see a grizzly charging you, it is often times too late. Even my friend who had a pistol, told me that he wondered if he would have the steadiness and time to draw pull the trigger. Grizzly are fast and you could certainly never out run them. Being torn apart by a grizzly seems like one of the worst ways to die.

Just recently, one of the members of my friends church saved the life of his guide on a hunting trip. He by chance had his gun on him even though they had just wandered away from the camp. In a split second, he shot not once, but twice to save the other man. Just ten yards away the bear fell dead. Jesus did one step better.

No one could beat the slow torturous death of Jesus on the cross. His body was torn apart by the nails in his hands and his feet. He literally stepped in front of our enemy that is death. Yet Jesus triumphantly rose from the dead. Because of his death and resurrection

we are free from death.

He defends us against the prowling lion, against the wolves in sheep's clothing. He is always watching out for us so that we will have the victory over death.

As Christians, we are called to protect each other. We are to gather together and look to our shepherd to protect us. That is one of the main reasons we come together as a church, so that we may join together and remind each other of the shepherds protection against evil.

We await him in advent. He is our fierce and bold shepherd, who will stop at nothing to protect us from spiritual danger till the very end of the age. Amen