

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Midweek Lent 2
February 25, 2026
Sermon by Pastor Nicholas Guillaume
What's he worth to you?

For some people, it's no big deal to spend a couple hundred on a nice meal out. Others would rather take that same amount of money and stock up on PB&J and ramen noodles for half the year. Some folks would gladly pay big money to go an opera, or a Broadway show. Others, would rather watch a movie from home or grab free DVDs from the library.

It comes down to this: what's it worth to you? I think we face that question every day. Even down to the little things in life, like this one: Is it really worth it to pour milk over my cereal right now, or can the milk wait until I get all my groceries in a few more days and in them meantime, I can just make some eggs over easy?

If you really want to know what's worth it to you, take an honest look at where you spend your time. Review how you spend your dollars.

In our text, we will hear Zechariah change the question just a little bit. He doesn't ask: "What's it worth to you?" Rather, he asks, "What's he worth to you?" As we consider our answer, may the Spirit move us to be honest with the Lord (and with ourselves) and hold on more tightly to Jesus.

Our text, from Zechariah chapter 11. ***7 So I shepherded the flock marked for slaughter, particularly the oppressed of the flock. Then I took two staffs and called one Favor and the other Union, and I shepherded the flock. 8 In one month I got rid of the three shepherds. The flock detested me, and I grew weary of them 9 and said, "I will not be your shepherd. Let the dying die, and the perishing perish. Let those who are left eat one another's flesh." 10 Then I took my staff called Favor and broke it, revoking the covenant I had made with all the nations. 11 It was revoked on that day, and so the oppressed of the flock who were watching me knew it was the word of the Lord. 12 I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. 13 And the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the Lord.***

In these words, we have Zechariah describing the work he was doing to care for the people's spiritual needs. He uses the picture of a shepherd with his sheep. Although I do not know any real life shepherds, I think the picture is still one we can readily understand. The Bible describes Jesus as the Good Shepherd who takes care of his sheep. The word pastor means shepherd.

Zechariah is caring for the spiritual needs of the people, as a good shepherd would take care of the sheep of his flock. He was especially concerned for those individuals who had been oppressed. Oppressed by other religious leaders who were exploiting and taking advantage of the flock.

Unlike those corrupt shepherds, Zechariah was dedicated to caring for God's people the right way. He held two staffs—one he called "Favor," and the other he called "Union," which is a very interesting way of saying that Zechariah, as he pastored these people, wanted them to experience God's favor (or grace) and to enjoy union (or unity) with God and each other.

Not only did Zechariah pastor the people correctly, he even removed shepherds who were harming the flock. ***"In one month,"*** the prophet writes, ***"I got rid of the three shepherds."*** These shepherds are not named, but they had to go. Surely the people would be grateful. But...

The flock detested me, and I grew weary of them and said, "I will not be your shepherd. Let the dying die, and the perishing perish. Let those who are left eat one another's flesh." Then I took my staff called Favor and broke it, revoking the covenant I had made with all the nations. It was revoked on that day, and so the oppressed of the flock who were watching me knew it was the word of the LORD. I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver.

Ouch. It may seem harsh, but Zechariah was done. He tried to shepherd God's people the right way, but the people were not interested. So who could really blame Zechariah for quitting? The sheep were determined to die (***let the dying, die***), so he would no longer try to stop them.

In fact, Zechariah was so fed up that he didn't even care if he was compensated for his efforts. He told them, "**If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.**" They decided to give him 30 pieces of silver.

Now some estimates equate 30 pieces of silver with four months' wages. Not a tiny sum, but it was a way to say, "This is what we think you're worth. Now get lost." So...

The LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the LORD.

God told his shepherd to take that sum and throw it to the potter. It was a message to these ungrateful sheep, basically saying, "I don't need you *or* your money."

Now this isn't anything new. Many prophets had been frustrated by stubborn, ungrateful Israel. But Zechariah was actually prophesying about someone else—someone still far off in the distant future.

You know that shepherd—the good one—who cared for his people perfectly, loved them dearly, and had only their best interests at heart. The dual staffs—Favor and Union—symbolized Jesus' desire to feed his flock with God's grace and unite them. Instead, they rejected the Good Shepherd with shouts of "Crucify! Crucify!"

Zechariah's words also find fulfillment in Judas. The Jewish leaders were willing to fork over 30 pieces of silver to be rid of the troublemaker, Jesus, who threatened their lucrative control over the flock. Judas turned Jesus over for that "handsome price."

And after the betrayal, Jesus went humbly to the cross where he would pay an infinitely greater price for sheep who did not consider him worth much, if anything at all.

So what's he worth to *you*, Christian? I know your answer: "I would *never* sell out or give up my Savior for *any* amount of money!" But have you ever traded following Jesus for the acceptance of your peers? Have you held so tightly to your 30 pieces of silver that you wouldn't give him 2? or even 1? Can you always find time for play but rarely find time for prayer? Does "me time" take priority over time spent with Jesus? How do we spend our blessings of time and treasure? Is our focus and attention on those things that have eternal value?

And as that law of God stings, may we be led to simply say, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." Yes, we deserve to hear Jesus say, "**I will not be your shepherd. Let the dying die, and the perishing perish.**"

But our Savior wasn't concerned about the value placed on him by the ungrateful sheep and their unethical shepherds. So the holy Son of God was willing to be sold for 30 pieces of silver, willing to be betrayed with a kiss, willing to be handed over to his enemies, willing to be sentenced to death as a criminal. He bought in to a plan to be sold out by Judas so that he could buy you with his blood.

Now Jesus did not suffer in order to guilt trip you or shame you into shaping up your life. He did it to show you that you are loved no matter what. That you are valued. That you are precious in his sight, and forgiven—fully and freely—through his life, death, and resurrection.

See in Jesus the shepherd who uses the staff of God's favor to lift that weight of guilt, push away the embarrassment and shame, to stamp out the worry of "am I good enough?" Who uses that staff of union to draw you to himself and reassure you that nothing can snatch you out of his hand.

And now the question: "what's he worth to *you*, Christian?" Doesn't the answer flow quite naturally? He's worth my time, he's worth my work, he's worth my worth. He is my precious, priceless, irreplaceable Savior, who faithfully shepherds me each day until I reach the green pastures of glory. Yes, he's worth everything I have and everything I am. Amen.