
I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. [12] He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. [13] He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. [14] I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, [15] just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. [16] And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. [17] For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. [18] No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father." ESV

Jesus Is The Good Shepherd

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus who is the Christ. Amen

A certain butcher had sold all his poultry except one hen.

A woman then came in and asked for a hen. The butcher weighed his one chicken and said it would be \$1.85 "Do you have a larger one?" asked the lady. The butcher thought fast. He returned the chicken to the ice barrel, stirred it for a bit, and came up again with the same hen. Weighing it, he said it would be \$1.95.

" I'll take both of them!" said the woman.

Our lesson this morning from John's gospel concerns this idea of integrity. The butcher in our story probably turned many

different shades of red when the lady asked him for both of the chickens since he had only one. He wasn't being too honest with her, he wasn't being too nice, and now he was caught in his lack of honesty. Jesus is not talking about butchers this morning, but He is telling the people a parable about a *Good Shepherd*, a Shepherd who was honest, caring, compassionate, and willing to die to take care of His sheep. Jesus is telling us something about Himself, as He is the *Good Shepherd* for our lives.

Jesus uses this parable about shepherds because the people in His day knew the kind of life that a shepherd lived; it was a difficult life, a hard life. A shepherd felt he had a calling from a young age to tend sheep, so he spent his whole young life learning how to care for the sheep, then the rest of his adult life tending the sheep, fighting off the animals who would eat the sheep, and sometimes fighting off robbers who would steal the sheep.

It was a lonely life, a difficult life, but if a shepherd did his job well everyone would know that he was a good shepherd. Jesus uses what the people would understand, a parable about shepherds to tell us something about Himself, that He is the *Good Shepherd* of our lives.

But before we see what is good about the Good Shepherd, we need to look at this word "good" in the Greek language, which is the language the New Testament was written in.

There are two words that can be translated into our English word "good." The first, AGATHOSE, implies a moral and efficient quality about a person. A person is good because they can perform their assigned task well.

But there is another word that also means "good" and it is KALOS. It not only means what the other did, but it adds the quality of loveliness, or attractiveness to it. It is the kind of goodness that makes us feel wanted and secure.

Jesus as the Good Shepherd, or as one translation puts it, the Model Shepherd, brings to the job the strength and courage of an earthly shepherd, but also the qualities of beauty and kindness which helps us to call Him Friend.

Now that we have laid the foundation for Jesus being the Good Shepherd of our lives, the Model Shepherd, we can see what is so good about Him, why He is the "Model Shepherd".

First, Jesus says, the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. A shepherd in Jesus day, if he truly did his job with all of his being, and not just for the money, would be willing and able to lay down His life for the sheep He was protecting.

Jesus is telling us, He is willing to lay down His life for us His sheep. He wasn't in it for the money or the glory. Jesus would not flee when trouble came, He was willing to lay down His life, to sacrifice His life for us so that we might gain favor with the Father in heaven.

There was a pastor who once visited a sheep ranch and saw a very strange lamb. It looked as though it had two heads and eight feet. He asked the rancher about it. The rancher explained that one of their sheep had a baby but the mother died. They tried to give the orphan sheep to another mother-sheep but when she smelled it, she rejected it. This mother-sheep had also had a lamb which had died. The rancher took this lamb, skinned it and put the wool of the dead lamb on the live lamb. Now the mother-sheep accepted the lamb as her own and cared for it.

In a like manner, Jesus as the Good Shepherd died for us as the Lamb of God, and God accepts us because we are clothed with the Lamb's robe of righteousness. Jesus was willing to lay down his life for us, so that we might have life, life with the Father and life for eternity. The Good Shepherd, Jesus, is willing to die for the sheep, so that the sheep can live. Jesus died for us freely so that we might live.

Notice Jesus says that He laid down His life freely, no one takes His life, but He was willing to give His life for us. Jesus loves us enough, cares about us enough to die for us. He chose to struggle, to die, so that we might live. This is a powerful statement of the love, the mercy, the compassion, and the caring that Jesus our Savior has for each of us. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

Second, Jesus says that the Good Shepherd knows His sheep. He knows His sheep by name.

A young lady came to her pastor's office troubled about this statement: "How does Jesus know and is interested, in her personally." She asked, "How can I believe that God is interested in what happens to me?"

The pastor replied, "Look at your fingers. There are billions of finger tips in the world, but no others are like yours. Even your finger tips have had special attention from God."

We are special; God does care for each of us. This morning when you come to the table to eat and to drink, you are receiving a special invitation from God to partake in this meal, in a personal and individual way we come in physical contact with Jesus through His body and blood.

God knows that we need this special time, this physical relationship with Him to reassure us, to convince us, that He does love us, that He does care for us, that He is interested in us as individual people.

We are collectively God's children, we collectively are the sheep of Jesus' fold, but individually we are also God's children, and individually the sheep of Jesus' fold. And as individuals, He is concerned about us, He cares about us, He reaches His hand of grace individually into each of our lives.

Each of us are unique people, who are special to God. We are special not because we are good, or righteous, or have somehow pleased God, but because God loves us as we are or, in some ways, in spite of what we are, God still loves us. He showed us that by the sacrifice He had His Son make on the cross for us. God is concerned about us from the hairs on our heads to the blisters on our toes. God through his Good Shepherd Jesus Christ, loves us, cares about us, and wants His gracious will of love to be done in each of our lives. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep by name.

Third, as the Good Shepherd, Jesus tells us He gathers together His sheep into a fold. Jesus is telling us that through His Spirit He gathers us who belong to Him. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to gather us together as the members of the body of

Christ. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, to gather the body once a week to worship and praise God.

Jesus knows this time we spend together once a week is important for our spiritual lives. It is during this time that we hear again the promises that God has made for us, it is here that we relive the life that Jesus lived on this earth. It is here that we encounter again and again the great love that God has for us. It is important that we come here often to be refreshed, to be renewed, to hear again about our God and the great love He has for us.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus says that it is important for Him to gather the sheep together into a fold, but notice He doesn't stop with just the sheep that are immediately at hand, no He says that other sheep must be brought into this fold. The fold of sheep, the church, is always changing, growing, adding and losing members. The fold is not a constant place, but it is an alive place, a place where things happen, where changes are made, where people grow in faith, where people meet new people of faith, who help us to understand God's love.

The fold, or the church, is an ever changing, alive, growing place. It is the place where Jesus, through His Spirit is alive. It is the place where we can encounter God through His Spirit

because He promises to be here with us as we gather in His name. God is here with us this morning, His Spirit is here leading us in our worship of Him.

And as we leave to go back out into the world, God's spirit will go with us, helping us with life, giving us direction, giving us courage, giving us His peace to cope with all the brokenness of life. The Good Shepherd gathers His sheep together in a fold, in the church, because here, we are cared for, here we are fed, here we can learn from each other about faith, here we can help one another as we face all the difficulties of life.

Being in the fold, the church is important for the members.

NOTICE ONE OTHER THING Jesus says about being in the fold. He says that as He calls sheep to the fold they will heed his voice.

They will listen to Him. When we come to the fold, we come to listen to the voice of Jesus. We come to hear Him, we come to encounter Him. And notice Jesus says those of the fold will heed His voice. They will listen to Him. Jesus is saying something here about responsibility, about our job as members of the fold, as members of the church. We are to listen to Him. To obey what He says.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd of our lives. He laid down his life freely for us, He knows each of us personally because we are important to Him, and He gathers us together in His fold, the church, so that we might listen to Him.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the one who leads us down the pathway of life. He is our guide, He is our companion, He is the one who will take care of us. Jesus is our Good Shepherd. He is the one who loves us. Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd."
Amen!