

Good Shepherd Sunday

April 29th, 2018

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John 10:11-18 ¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ¹² "But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³ "The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. ¹⁵ "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd. ¹⁷ "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. ¹⁸ "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

There is no doubt that Jesus is a shepherd. He gathers us together. He leads us. We follow him, in fact the scriptures urge us to follow Him unquestioningly as sheep follow their shepherd. In every way it is an apt description of the relationship between us and our Lord.

Even the unbeliever would agree that we are sheep and He is our shepherd, although they will often use it as a way to mock us, "you are just sheep following without thinking."

So the real question is, "Is He the GOOD shepherd."

This is the very question before Jesus and the very point He goes to great length to make clear. That He is the GOOD shepherd.

Remember that Jesus is talking to the Pharisees. They also are shepherds. They have flocks. They gather those flocks and lead them.

But Jesus is not like them because He is the **good** shepherd. They are only hirelings, that is they are only worried about their pay, in this case their pay was earthly fame and glory.

Jesus proves that He is the GOOD shepherd with 3 major points

1. He lays down His life for the sheep

We were talking about the fact that God is love at the women's meeting this month. And we were talking about the fact that the World has many objections to this: why does He allow evil? Why does He send people to hell?

Now there are a lot of points we could argue here and a lot of things we could point out. But the simple fact is you can't know. When all those people were shot and killed in church a while back, was that God being good? We simply don't know the end result. And so we could debate endlessly with every atheist out there.

But the answer is much simpler than that. It is as simple as a little child's song.

The fact that God is love, that Jesus is the GOOD shepherd is this simple, "He gives his life for the sheep." Jesus doesn't just talk the talk, He walks the walk, and He walks it all the way to the end.

John reminds us, "In this we know love, because He laid down his life for us." Not only is the cross the final proof of God's goodness and love, but it also sets the standard for what it means to be good and to love.

Now the fact that He is the "good" Shepherd is beyond any doubt.

As Paul says, "that every mouth may be stopped." At the cross all arguments have to stop. The cross proves them all wrong.

Instead of getting bogged down in an endless discussion of philosophy, instead of always trying to figure out how this or that bad thing can end in something good. We can simply acknowledge that we don't know BUT Jesus died for me. He is the Good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep.

As a comparison we are warned about the hireling. He doesn't own the sheep. He doesn't care about the sheep. He is not willing to die for the sheep. He is not even willing to fight for the sheep.

Jesus really hammers this point home. Remember that He is talking to the Pharisees. In John Chapter 9 we have that amazing story about a man born blind whom Jesus heals. The Pharisees were investigating that healing. Of Jesus they say, "We know this man is a sinner."

This is basically Jesus' rebuttal. You want to accuse me of sin. I'm willing to lay down my life for the sheep, but you run and flee every time the sheep are in danger.

Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees, no doubt about that but the warning is there for all of us as well.

To those of us in the ministry (pastors and teachers) the warning is that we need to make sure we are serving the sheep. We need to be sure that we are not doing it for earthly gain, but that our first and primary goal is the sheep. Even to the point where we should be willing to die for those whom Jesus has put into our care. We do not lay down' our lives on purpose as Jesus did, but we should be willing to give our lives if it comes to that.

The danger here is not that we are on the front line with a sword. But that we are persecuted or killed for speaking the truth of Christ. If we are true to our calling as shepherds, we will preach the truth of God's will even at the point of death.

To those of you in the pew the warning is simple. Make sure that you seek out an earthly shepherd who is a true sub shepherd to the one Good Shepherd. Not someone who is doing it for money, not someone who will tell you what you want to hear. There are many popular preachers who are so fun to listen to, but do they really care about the sheep or are they just lining their pockets?

A good pastor is **not** one who gives an entertaining sermon on Sundays and leaves you alone. A good pastor is **not** one who doesn't seem to care if you come to church or if you receive the sacrament. A good pastor is one who does stick his nose "in your business" and wants to know why you aren't coming to the Lord's Supper, or why you aren't coming to church. Because He knows how easy it is for sheep to wander. And the same Jesus who died for your sins has instructed him to go find the wandering sheep and bring them back, even if he has to grab them around the neck and pull them back.

2. He knows them each by name

Jesus continues with two more examples of His love for the sheep, He knows us each by name.

Again as the little children's song goes, "even knows me by my name."

I asked the children the other day why they name their cats and dogs but not their cows. If you have 200 cows for milking you don't name them. They are just there to make you money. But a pet is something close to you and special. You give it a name because it is not just there to make you money.

So we are not just seat fillers to Jesus as if his only concern is filling up heaven

He knows each and every one of us by name. He calls us by name.

3. He gathers them together

One of the images we know so well concerning the Good shepherd is the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 and goes to find the one lost sheep. This image isn't explicitly referenced in our text but it is certainly hinted at, when he speaks of other sheep which He will go and bring.

That image of the one lost sheep is a wonderful one to remember because we are often that one lost sheep. We love to wander. It's good to know that when we wander Jesus will not give up on us.

But it is also good to know this when we think about mission work. It is good to know that Jesus *is* going to find those who are His and bring them into his care. He is going to find his sheep and bring them in

A lot of people think it's unfair and cruel that if you never have a chance to hear the gospel you can't be saved but in the Good Shepherd we find this promise He will find those who belong to him.

When we talk about mission work we talk about our need and responsibility to go out and get the message out. This is right. We are talking from a human view point. God's grace is not an excuse for us to be lazy. But all the time in faith we know, He will gather His sheep. We have that promise. So even though it may sound a daunting task to share the gospel, its not our task. We are not alone. Christ is there by our side and will accomplish this through us.

He is the GOOD Shepherd:

Who gives His life for the sheep

Who knows us each by name

Who gathers His own to Him

AMEN