

I Am the Good Shepherd

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John 10:7-16

"Two men were called on, in a large classroom, to recite the Twenty-third Psalm. One was a published orator trained in speech technique and drama. He repeated the psalm in a powerful way. When he finished, the audience cheered and even asked for an encore that they might hear his wonderful voice again. Then the other man, who was much older, repeated the same words--'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want...' But when he finished, no sound came from the large class. Instead, people sat in a deep mood of devotion and prayer.

Then the first man, the orator, stood to his feet. 'I have a confession to make,' he said. 'The difference between what you have just heard from my old friend, and what you heard from me is this: **I know the Psalm, my friend knows the Shepherd.**'"

We are in the season of Advent. Last Sunday I asked you to take light of Jesus into your heart and let it glow out from you.

While we are waiting in anticipation for the coming of Jesus, I am going over the I AM sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John. Jesus said, "**I am the good Shepherd.**" (John 10)

Today we lit the second candle, the **candle of JOY**. Hope and Joy, both candles are shining in the darkness. LIGHT reveals; it reveals the path on which we need to walk; it also reveals our heart, the inner part of our heart. The good news is that light does not just reveal; it gives life.

"**I am the Good Shepherd.**" How comforting is this picture. Jesus is our Good Shepherd. Please notice how Jesus uses his metaphors. His audience knew exactly what it meant to be a shepherd. Maybe some shepherds were even right there listening to him. Like a real shepherd, Jesus is concerned with the care of His sheep.

The question I raise again will come from the story I read in the introduction. You could have learned all about the Shepherd since your

childhood. You could have been raised with the psalms, such as the famous Psalm 23. You could perhaps even recite these psalms by memory. But do you know the Shepherd personally?

If you don't know the Shepherd personally, may this sermon lead you to hear his special call for you.

If you do know the Shepherd personally, may this sermon help you experience the "abundant life" Jesus promised.

The image that God is our Shepherd comes from the Old Testament.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1)

"I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God." (Ezekiel 34:15)

When Jesus says he is our Shepherd, what does this imply?

1. Jesus is a genuine Shepherd.

He himself says: I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 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. (John 10:11-12 ESV)

Jesus is a genuine Shepherd, the one expected to come according to prophecy. He is not hired. He lays down his life for sheep. There are many evidences that Jesus is the expected one. Many prophecies were fulfilled by the coming of Jesus.

- a. Jesus was born from a virgin - Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:21-23
- b. Jesus was born in Bethlehem - Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:4-6
- c. Jesus was Jesse's (David's father) descendent— Isaiah 11:1
- d. Jesus was brought out of Egypt - Hos. 11:1; Matt. 2:14-15
- e. His arrival provoked the rage of the enemy - Jer. 31:15; Matt. 2:16-18.

Many prophecies were fulfilled by the coming of Jesus.

- a. Jesus was born from a virgin - **Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.** (Isa. 7:14); Matt. 1:21-23
- b. Jesus was born in Bethlehem - **But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.** (Micah 5:2); Matt. 2:4-6
- c. Jesus was Jesse's (David's father) descendent— **There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.** (Isaiah 11:1)
- d. Jesus was brought out of Egypt - **When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.** (Hos. 11:1); Matt. 2:14-15
- e. His arrival provoked the rage of the enemy - **Thus says the Lord: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more."** (Jer. 31:15); Matt. 2:16-18

Jesus is not just any shepherd; HE is the genuine one.

2. He CALLS, the sheep hear HIS VOICE

To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. (John 10:3-4 ESV)

We all are invited to hear his voice, the Shepherd's voice. In the village of Kessab, one of my earliest memories is the shepherd calling his sheep every morning with a special call. The animals knew the shepherd's voice, came out of the stable and followed him.

How do we know his voice?

John answers in his Gospel:

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:44 ESV)

God's Spirit works in different ways to prepare our hearts to hear HIS VOICE.

Watch out, there are many voices around us calling us. WATCH OUT.
Watch out from false teachers, false shepherds, false“sellers” ...
Illustration:

On line I saw this add. 8 ways to increase Hope

- 1 Be Kind to each other: have a cup of tea...a brisk walk...some relax time
- 2 Have 5 minute silence, look to a candle, pray, mediate...
- 3 Treat Each Day Like a Precious Gift
- 4 take a break, look to the sky...
- 5 Say this words every day: “I am the key to peace...”¹

None of those will help you without genuine faith in Christ as your Shepherd.

Paul says in Romans,

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (3:23)

And in Ephesians he says

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins. (2:1)

The voice of the Good Shepherd is the only one that can awaken the dead heart; the only one that can give us hope; the only one that sounds right to a desperate soul; the only one can bring JOY to our heart.

Tune in your heart to God’s voice. Once you hear HIS voice, you will not be lost. You will follow Him. Because you will know Him (having an intimate relationship) and He will protect you and lead you.

3. The Good Shepherd as the DOOR

So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. (John 10:7-9 ESV)

It is a great picture of Jesus being the door of the sheep. In the Middle East, when shepherds took their sheep outdoors to graze far away, sometimes they could not come back home at night. They found areas where they could gather the sheep in a corner, and the shepherd would lie down in front of them to become the door.

This is a dangerous thing to do. The robbers or wild animals would attack him first. The shepherd kept the flock and even put his life in danger for the salvation of his flock.

I find here Jesus preparing us for the cross. Our Lord is a genuine shepherd, not hired like the one who will escape when he sees the danger. Our Lord is ready to lay down his life for our salvation. Isn't it this the message of the cross and resurrection?

4. Sheep out of this Fold (the Good Shepherd Seeks the Lost)

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. (John 10:16 ESV)

This is an important call; Jesus warns his Jewish audience that this call is not exclusive for certain people and nations. There are others outside who can join this flock.

In the OT, we find in prophecies that God acts like a shepherd gathering His lost sheep.

“For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them...” (Ezekiel 34:11-12)

In the two gospels, Matthew and Luke, Jesus tells the parable of lost sheep. Going after the lost one and bringing that sheep back into its community (flock) is very important.

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’” (Luke 15:4-6 ESV)

And the only way the shepherd can bring this lost one is to carry him on his shoulder. I was reading Kenneth Bailey's book, "*Finding the Lost.*" Early paintings and sculpture present this image, Jesus as good shepherd carrying the lost sheep. The proportion of the sheep with the shepherd is so different. The sheep is larger than shepherd. ² Why? Bailey answers: Surely the high price the shepherd must pay to carry such an extraordinary weight is the impression the artist intends to leave with the viewer. ³

What a Shepherd.
I want Jesus to be my Shepherd.
He is the Good Shepherd.
He is my door, gatekeeper, from evil
He is my salvation.
He is my comfort and JOY.

*God, my shepherd!
I don't need a thing.
You have bedded me down in lush meadows,
you find me quiet pools to drink from.
True to your word,
you let me catch my breath
and send me in the right direction.
4Even when the way goes through
Death Valley,
I'm not afraid
when you walk at my side.
Your trusty shepherd's crook
makes me feel secure.
5You serve me a six-course dinner
right in front of my enemies.
You revive my drooping head;
my cup brims with blessing.
6Your beauty and love chase after me
every day of my life.
I'm back home in the house of God
for the rest of my life. (message)*

1 <http://www.beliefnet.com/wellness/health/increase-hope.aspx?p=5#AMeOPsellQrOLBOV.99>

2 There is a sculpture of Jesus Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria in Egypt
(<http://www.touregypt.net/algraec.htm>)

Also there is painting in Syria of Jesus as Good Shepherd carrying the lost sheep.
(<http://users.stlcc.edu/mfuller/DuraChurch.html>)

Dura Europos, in Syria the oldest synagogue and oldest church ever found. Due to its remarkable preservation and has sometimes been dubbed the "Pompeii of the Syrian Desert."

(<http://www.sacred-destinations.com/syria/dura-europos>)

3 Kenneth Bailey, *Finding the Lost*, p 76