

Jesus, in His Own Words

The Good Shepherd

John 10:11-18

March 16, 2025

HDBC

This morning we come to the fourth of the seven word pictures of Jesus. He is **the good shepherd**. That is a powerful statement, jammed pack with truth. Once again Jesus turned to the commonly understood relationship between sheep and shepherds. I think it is safe to assume He was thinking of the 23rd psalm as he spoke of being **the good shepherd**. In that psalm, David had declared, with great conviction, that the Lord was His shepherd.

David, having been a shepherd himself, was flipping the script. When it came to his relationship with the Lord, he was no longer the shepherd, but was the sheep in need of a shepherd. Jesus extends that reality beyond David, to all believers.

Let's read the text and then dive into some details. **John 10:11-18.**

1. He is uniquely equipped to shepherd the sheep.

He has declared that He is **the good shepherd**. That descriptive word, **good** is important. When we pull back the veil a bit and understand the word John used, we get an even greater view of just how well He is equipped to be our shepherd.

First, John uses multiple definite articles in quoting Jesus. If we translated it literally, it would read, ***I am the shepherd, the good one.***

Second, Jesus used a particular word that we should note. There are two words, at least, in the language of the New Testament that He could have used. One is **agathos** from which we get the name Agatha, which **means the good one**. It means good in the sense of **moral quality, and that's all.**

I might create a painting. It might be good in the sense of moral quality. I mean, it might just be of a tree or a flower. There would be nothing obscene about it. Morally it would be good. Artistically it would be lousy because I'm not an artist.

There was another word available to Jesus and John that we could translate as **good**. It described something not only as morally good, but as good in terms of its quality, beauty and value. It was the word **kalos**, and that is the word used here. Jesus is the good shepherd not only in terms of His moral goodness, but in terms of his quality, beauty and value. He declared that **in every way** He was ***the good shepherd***.

He is the preeminent shepherd. He's above all other shepherds. He is the only one who is truly good. The Pharisees and Scribes claimed to be shepherds of Israel, but they were like the hirelings who leave the sheep defenseless, and actually devour the sheep to satisfy their own appetites.

So, Jesus claimed to be **the good shepherd**. What does it mean?

2. He has a sacrificial love for the sheep. (11-13)

Having stated His identity, He then shared what ***the good shepherd*** does to demonstrate His great love for the sheep. He gives His life; He dies for the sheep.

In Israel in Jesus' day the shepherd was responsible for the safety of the sheep. Keep in mind that sheep have almost no way to defend themselves. Dr. Bob Smith used to say sheep were the greatest evidence against the theory of evolution. He said ***there is no way they could have survived in a system of the survival of the fittest!*** They must be protected by another.

If a sheep was killed or lost, the shepherd would be asked for evidence that he had done all that he could to prevent it. In some cases, even showing the injuries incurred while defending the sheep.

He contrasts the shepherd with the hireling. One of the main differences between the shepherd and the hireling is what they do when trouble comes. **Wolves, bears, lions. The hirelings head for cover.** They will let the sheep be ravaged and eaten, rather than risk their own lives. **Not the shepherd.**

He stood between the helpless and the attackers. **David was the great example of a shepherd. He was willing to stand up to the bear and the lion. He even protected them to the point of death.**

Notice here the word in verse 11 is **gives**, do you see it there? Did you know that if the wolf or the lion came after the sheep, **the sheep could not persuade the shepherd to defend them?** How could they do that? There's no way. That shepherd must voluntarily protect the sheep.

That's what Jesus did. He gave His life, freely, voluntarily, He gave His life. And you see it in verse 17. He says, **I lay down My life**. Then in verse 18, **No man takes it from Me**. Jesus voluntarily gave His life for the sheep. He did it that we might have access to God.

Some say that it was not a big deal. It was only the body of Christ that was crucified. After all, He was God. He simply came down from Heaven, took a body, lived a few years. Then when they were ready to crucify Him, He simply left the body behind and allowed them to crucify it. No big sacrifice. **The only problem with that is it's not true.**

If you notice carefully in verse 11 you'll see the word **life**. In the English version you never would understand the significance of this because it's not there. But in the Greek there are two words for life, neither one of them is used here.

Bios from which we get our word biology which means life in terms of breathing. Being alive as opposed to being dead. Opposite of death.

Zoe which means the circumstances of life. When Jesus gave His life He didn't just give up His biological breathing, He did not just forfeit the circumstances of life.

Here it is the word **psuche**, that's the word that's translated soul. It means the total man inside. When Jesus died, He wasn't just throwing His body up there, you want to read the verse right read it this way, ***The Good Shepherd poured out His soul for the sheep.***"

When Jesus died, He was totally involved in that death. And to make sure we don't misunderstand that, God even looked through the Greek language, picked out **psuche** and stuck it in there. Jesus did not in a detached fashion give up His **zoe** or **bios**, He poured out His **psuche**, His entire being into death.

3. **He has a special relationship with the sheep** (14-15)

This is so good. Your relationship to Jesus Christ is not just theological? It's personal. Jesus actually loves you and **He loves me in an intimate and personal way**. That is emphasized in these verses. Look at verse 14. ***I am the Good Shepherd***, repeats the statement and adds, ***and I know My own and my own know me.***

The word **know**, *ginosko*, means to know experientially. It's not to know by reading it in a book, it's to know through experience. And this word is often used in the Bible to describe a love relationship.

For example, in the Old Testament it says, ***"Cain knew his wife and she bore a child."*** It doesn't mean he knew her name. It implies the most intimate kind of love relationship. It implies a union of love.

Christ loves you, with such a love that He wants you to be one with Him, die with Him, rise with Him, walk with Him, be like Him.

4. He creates a spiritual unity among the sheep (16)

And I have other sheep that are not in this fold. Now that does not refer to men on Mars, that refers to Gentiles.

He unites the sheep. He reaches around the world to Jew and Gentile, whoever it may be, and gathers them into one flock. And the word translated *fold* at the beginning of verse 16 is the same word translated *flock*. That's what He means, we are one flock. We're not two flocks crammed into one-fold; we're one flock.

And the unity does not come from the fact that we're all shoved into the same fold, it comes from the fact that we all love and serve the same shepherd. Our unity comes from our mutual relationships with Jesus.

When you read the accounts of the N.T. church, no characteristic stands out more sharply than unity in diversity. Beginning with Pentecost, the church dismantled the barriers of race, gender, and social class. Where else except the church can you find such a diversity of people who see themselves as equal partners.

Here at HDBC we have teachers, factory workers, lawyers, pharmacists, doctors, utility workers, salesmen, computer techs, electricians, engineers, therapists, farmers, nurses, exterminators, surveyors, child-care workers, small business owners, food service personnel.

We are short/tall, big/little, black/white, old/young, educated/uneducated, Country folk/City folk, wealthy/poor, healthy/sick. Yet those distinctions mean nothing in the fellowship.

5. He provides a secure future for the sheep (25-29)

The Israeli shepherd could extend the natural life of his sheep by protecting them from danger. Jesus, the good shepherd extends the

eternal life of his sheep by giving us salvation. Not only does he give it, but **he preserves it**.

Note how safe you are guarded by the good shepherd. **Never perish**. No one shall **snatch** them out of his hands.

The Father who is greater than all, is also holding us in his hands and no one will be able to snatch them out of His hands.

Imagine the emotional state of a child who does not know from day to day whether or not he is a member of the family? Today, since he was good, he is considered a member. But tomorrow, if he misbehaves, he may no longer be a member. Today he is loved by his father. Tomorrow he may not be. This child would be an emotional mess!

You are a part of your family, regardless of your behavior. So it is in the family of God, too. If you belong to Christ, you are part of the family, and can enjoy the security of that relationship.

When they built the first section of the Golden Gate bridge, there was no safety net to protect the workers. Twenty-three workers fell to their deaths in the perilous waters far below the bridge. The city of San Francisco decided to spend an enormous sum to put a safety net under the next section, but once the safety net was in place only a handful of workers ever needed it. The work went faster, and the workers could concentrate on their jobs without worrying about the danger of death.

There is a story that comes out of the late 1800's. It was a time before most of our modern entertainments - before movies, before television, before the internet, even before radio. Entertainment consisted of traveling groups of actors who went from town to town.

One such actor went into a small midwestern town. The largest hall in town was packed, the audience was wildly enthusiastic as he recited passages

from great plays, poems, and literature. At the end of the performance, they shouted for more. The actor agreed to take a few requests.

Immediately, a hand shot up. The hand belonged to an older man with a weather-beaten face and clothes that were clean, but definitely patched and had seen better days. "***Would you, could you, recite the 23rd Psalm, please?***" he asked.

The actor thought for a minute, then said, ***I'll do it on one condition. After I have finished, you will come up and recite it also.*** Puzzled, the old man agreed.

The entertainer began, *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.... As he went, he infused the words with all the tricks of his art. One by one, the phrases known and loved by so many rolled off his tongue. He leadeth me beside the still waters, he restoreth my soul ...Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. When all the beloved words of the great Psalm were delivered with great art, the audience gave the actor yet another enthusiastic ovation.*

Then the man who had requested the Psalm came up. His face was not handsome, and his voice was thick and uncultured. Yet as he began to **spea**k, his face took on such a glow of joy, and the love almost leaped from his mouth with the words.

When he concluded, *Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever,* **the only sound in all the hall was the rustle of handkerchiefs as they brushed away tears.**

The silence went on until the actor stepped forward and said, ***Now you know why I wanted him to follow me. It is as I thought. You see, I knew the Psalm, but he, he knows the shepherd.***