

Signs: The Gospel of John, John 10:11-21

Here, John records for us the fourth of seven, “I am” statements that Jesus makes. Here he draws an even sharper contrast and distinction between himself and the Jewish leaders. Before he called them “thieves and robbers,” now he refers to them as “hired hands.” “Good,” as it’s used here, is deeper than just a quality to be desired and more about the nature of one’s character. In the original Greek *agathos* (ag-ath-os) speaks to an intrinsic goodness, one that is present whether it is seen or not. It describes what originates from God. To call Jesus “good” is to call him God. (Mk. 10:18)

The image and concept of a “divine” Shepherd goes back to the Old Testament. In the Psalms (Ps. 23:1) and other OT books we see the imagery of the Shepherd as caring for the people of God, His flock. We also see it used in prophetic instances looking forward to the coming Messiah (Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-16.)

Jesus describes four aspects of his person and purpose using the imagery of the Good Shepherd: **He dies for the sheep, He knows His sheep, He brings in His sheep, He takes up His life again.**

v.v. 11-13, The Good Shepherd dies for His sheep

Under the Law, the sheep die for the shepherd, but now, the Good Shepherd dies for the sheep. Five times in John 10:11-18 Jesus clearly affirms the sacrificial nature of His death. Jesus didn’t die as a martyr, killed by men; He died as a substitute, willingly laying down His life for the sheep. **He laid down His life, it wasn’t taken, it was given.**

Jesus draws a deeper distinction between himself and the Jewish leaders: “hired hand.” The hired hand, while not actively seeking the sheep’s destruction, is more concerned with his own well-being than the sheep’s. He may take them to pasture, but he’s not going to endanger himself for them. The difference isn’t so much about activity as it is attitude. Simply, these are not the hired hand’s sheep—why should they lay their lives down?

v.v. 14-15, The Good Shepherd knows His sheep

In John's Gospel "know" is much deeper than an intellectual awareness—it speaks to a deeper more intimate relationship. The Good Shepherd knows his sheep—there is trust and understanding. **He knows the sheep best, and therefore, knows best what they need.**

Jesus states again that "I lay my life down for the sheep," these sheep are valuable to him because he has paid a high price for them.

v.16, He brings in His sheep

Jesus is referring to the Gentiles who, after his death, the apostles would reach as they took the Gospel to the world. **A Good Shepherd leaves no sheep behind.**

There is one flock, one people of God, who belong to the Good Shepherd, they hear his voice and they come. (John 10:3-5)

v.v. 17-18, He takes up His life again

Jesus' voluntary death is followed by his victorious resurrection. Jesus had spoke to his power to take up his life, to "have life in himself." (Jn. 5:26) The Jews rejected this claim because it was synonymous to saying, "I am God," which is what Jesus is saying.

The Great Divide

v.v.19-21—we see the division that arises about what Jesus has said about himself. The Jewish leaders accuse him of insanity, while in the crowd, they are beginning to question the concerns of the Pharisees.

Jesus is "the Door," division is to be expected, because a door shuts some out on the other side. Jesus is "the Good Shepherd," and the Shepherd must separate His sheep from the goats.

It is impossible to remain neutral about Jesus, what you believe about him is life or death. (John 8:24)