

Jan. 24, 2010 "I Am the Good Shepherd" John 10:11-21

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. 17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life — only to 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 authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

19 At these words the Jews were again divided. 20 Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?" 21 But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

This is the 4th in a sermon series on Jesus' "I AM" sayings. John 10 has two "I AM" images (the "Gate" and "the Good Shepherd.") The good shepherd image is easier for me than "The Gate" because a shepherd is a person, not an inanimate object.

Here are the people represented in this story:

1.) There are many different images for God (Father, protector, counselor, comforter, healer, provider, and leader). Some of these perspectives may deal with the stages of life we are in. In John 10, Jesus is "**THE**" "**GOOD**" Shepherd.

a.) ONLY Jesus is **THE** Good Shepherd. He is more than just "A" shepherd. This is an exclusive claim. This goes back to the "I AM" God concept of Jesus. No other religious leader can make this claim – and validate it based on resurrection.

b.) He is the **GOOD** Shepherd. "Good" means authentic, genuine, true, trustworthy, and faithful. He is not a "**BAD**" shepherd. He won't abandon, abuse, or kill the sheep. The bad shepherd doesn't care. The "Good" Shepherd provides, protects, is patient with, suffers for, and even sacrifices his life. He looks for the lost sheep that have gone astray, too. He doesn't beat the sheep.

Psalms 23 *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.* This is about learning contentment. *"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."* Philippians 4:11-13

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. (Food and water are provided which are the basic physical necessities of life)

He restoreth my soul: (The spiritual aspect of our lives)

he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. God guides us in good and loving ways, which are true to His character.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: "No Fear!"

for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. God comforts His people with His presence and power

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Note that neither "Death Valley" nor his enemies are removed. But he is able to go through them without fear.

thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. This is a description of a man who is blessed.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: God's presence is with us in this life

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. God's presence is with us in the life to come.

2.) We're the **sheep**. It helps us to remember that we are the "sheep-like." Again, this is not a very flattering image. Americans don't like to be considered "as sheep" we see ourselves as being independent.

Think of the mascot's sports teams adopt. Raptors, Lions, Tigers, Cougars, Grizzlies, Eagles, Razorbacks - I'd rather be a sheep than a slug (disgusting). Of course the team name that most puts fear into the hearts and minds of their opponents:

the Cardinals (definitely not the Cubs, who are only cuddly ☺). Sheep are known for being stupid and inattentive to detail. The job description of the sheep is to stay in relationship with the shepherd. To listen to his voice and to obey (follow) him.

3.) “The **hired hand**.” He has no genuine **concern** for the sheep. He doesn’t really care - it’s just a job to him. “Mercenary” = the term used in warfare. He is first and foremost looking out for #1. And that’s not the sheep! Because he has no real concern for the “business” – and is only interested in compensation, he may be lazy and negligent. He may be incompetent. You get what you pay for. It reminds me of one of the attitudes that will kill a business: “That’s not my responsibility.” Over against, “I’ll help you find where you need to go.”

Another thing is that in addition to being unconcerned for the sheep, he might be **incompetent**. The two often go together.

Or, he might be competent, but is not **committed**. He’s not committed enough to lay down his life for the sheep. That’s too steep of a price to pay for “just a job.” Or, he’s not committed over the long-term. When we were in Vici, there were the “roughnecks” who worked in the oil fields. They worked hard. Some of them would go from job to job with the sole goal of making enough money so they could party after they got paid. When the party money ran out, they went back out and started working again. They were not “long term” thinkers.

4.) The **Wolf**. In this context, you think of the wolf as being the “Bad Shepherds.” But you also think in terms of the wolf as being the “devourer” of the flock. It has the distinct image of the presence of evil.

We also must remember that this good shepherd protects from **the wolf**. Our adversary. There are 2 conditions however: a.) we really need to listen to the voice of the shepherd, and we need to obey that voice. As the old song goes, “Trust and Obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”

b.) To be with the **other sheep**. The wolf scatters people into isolation. That’s the strategy to pick off the wounded animal. The Body of Christ – one flock, one shepherd.

2 Points of Application:

1.) If Jesus is the “Good Shepherd” Am **I being a good sheep**? Sheep are asked to follow by faith, to listen for His voice, and to obey Him. How’s your relationship with the Shepherd and with the other sheep?

2.) Am **I being a good shepherd**? Yes, there’s only one that is THE Good Shepherd, but Jesus calls us into ministry to His flock. Jesus said to Peter, “Feed my sheep.” We are all to be “good shepherds, too.” That’s part of what it means to be followers of Jesus. We are to serve, and we are to lead.

We see this from the perspective of American history. 4 names, in particular: George Washington – never left his troops. Also gave up power – wouldn’t become a king. Others would have. He took the leadership role but not just for himself. He lived beyond himself. He would have preferred not to have had the Revolutionary War. But once it happened, he was willing to sacrifice and even die for something beyond himself. Francis Asbury was a contemporary of Washington; Abraham Lincoln; and Martin Luther King, Jr. We see this in some who have been our contemporaries as well: Mother Teresa, Bill Mason, and our Bishop Bob Hayes are all illustrations of good shepherds. Yes, there is still only one “Good Shepherd” who is “I AM,” but every one of us are all called to be shepherds, too (of our family, business, community). Adults, students, and children can watch over others. We can do that with our spouse, friends, and business associates. We are ALL called to watch over one another in love. I saw this yesterday, as we had the memorial service for “A Little Giant,” Mitchell Cupps. You may have read about Mitchell in the Tulsa World. It told of his achievements. He was born with a rare form of dwarfism – only 4 in the U.S. But he lived in a magnetic way. His parents and siblings watched over him; so did a number of people. The medical community, our church, special friends, and Metro Christian Academy, have all been there in a significant way for their son.

After the service, a 4 year-old came up to me. She was delighted to meet me. She was mesmerized to meet me because I’m on “TV.” She goes to the V68 service and watches the service on the screens. So to her, I’m a TV star. Here is the one suggestion she had to say: “**Don’t say so many words.**”