

Jesus is the Good Shepherd
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
December 14, 2025

Text: Psalm 23 and John 10:11-18

Purpose: We need to see Jesus as the Good Shepherd. He has come, translating God's message to us in the flesh. He has come to deliver that message personally to us. And Jesus has come as God's loving sacrifice, redeeming us and freeing us from the bondage of sin.



A man is visiting his adult children to celebrate Christmas. When he walks into the house, he sees a beautiful nativity set.

His granddaughter walks up to him, and he asks her if she knows what it is.

She replies, "Yes, it's breakable."¹

Sometimes you will see shepherds and sheep added to the nativity scenes to remind us that they were one of the first to visit the manger that night so long ago.

Throughout the Bible the imagery of shepherds tending their sheep is repeated many times. The Psalmist David wrote poetically about the relationship the Lord has with His people in Psalm 23.



We see **Abel** tending flocks and bringing an offering unto the Lord from the firstborn of one of those flocks.



We see **Abraham** and his descendants involved in rural life centered around a nomadic lifestyle of tending flocks of sheep and goats.

When **Jacob's** family of 70 members moved to Egypt, under the leadership of Joseph, we find that they mostly were shepherds of flocks of sheep and goats.

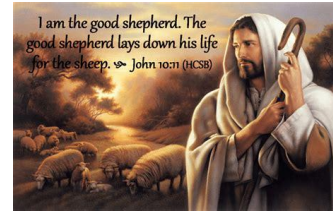
We read of **King David**, who when he was a little boy, was responsible for watching flocks of animals and protecting them from any predators.

When King David wrote in Psalm 100:3 about sheep, it was because that was a situation with which he could closely identify. David wrote, *"Know that the Lord, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture."*

The **prophets of Israel** even spoke to the people in a language they could understand. Isaiah said in chapter 53, verse 6 *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."*



When Jesus came to earth and was born in Bethlehem, He was born as the "Lamb of God." A name that signaled one day, He would willingly lay down His life for the sheep of His pasture – that is us!



Over the Advent season, we have been examining several of the statements Jesus made concerning Himself. On the first Sunday of Advent, we examined the phrase, ***"I am the Bread of Life."*** Last week we explored the idea that Jesus shared with those listening there in the temple, just the day after the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Light, how He was the ***"Light of the World."***

This week I want us to see how ***"Jesus is the Good Shepherd."***

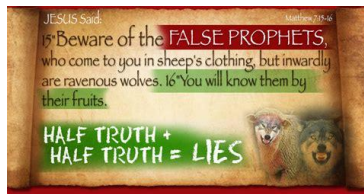
I. Jesus Is Our Shepherd – He translates Gods Message to Us – in the Flesh

First Jesus demonstrates to us that He is our Good Shepherd by translating the message of God in a way we can understand.



I must admit, I don't know very much about sheep. From what I understand shepherds in the east lead their sheep by chanting to them and the sheep learn and understand what it means. It is as if they talk to them and the sheep learn to understand the voice of the shepherd. Over time, those sounds, songs or chants become dear to the sheep. They learn to trust and obey the voice of the shepherd. When they are out in a field and it is time to move forward, they know the signal and obey. They know the shepherd is watching out over his flock and they trust him to be on the outlook for danger. I am sure during the day as they are grazing, the shepherd would simply call out to them to let them know he was right there.

Jesus walked with His disciples daily for three years. He ate with them. He taught them about the Kingdom of God. He demonstrated the power of God over and over with His various miracles. He modeled prayer for them. He displayed humility when He was persecuted. He exhibited strength when needed by turning over the money changers tables in the Temple. He was tender when needed and tough when the circumstances required it.



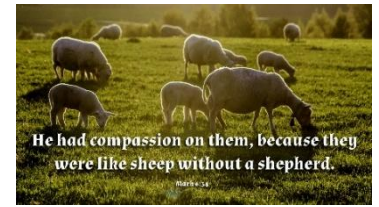
Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd. We must be very careful to the voices we are listening to. Today there are so many voices easily accessible to

us and it's difficult to know what is true and who we can trust. So many people parade themselves as a good person, when in fact they are simply a fraud. Jesus knew of many different kinds of shepherds. In Matthew 7:15 Jesus said this: *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."*

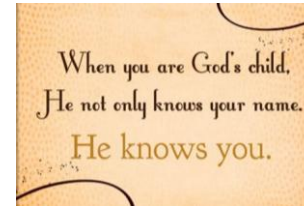
Many false leaders or teachers have come and gone since Jesus was born. We as His sheep need to have what I call, a "spirit of discernment," to be able to know the real voice of God and the voice of a false prophet.

Jesus is calling us into a relationship with Him and has invited us to be a part of the Family of God. He has invited us into the fold of the sheep. He has called all to come unto Him, but so many have turned aside and gone their own way.

"When He (Jesus) saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." (Matthew 9:36)



He longed to be the shepherd of His people Israel, but they rejected Him. Today the heart of God desires that none perish but that everyone would come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Jesus came to translate God's love letter to us in the flesh. He came so that we might have life and have it more abundantly.



II. Jesus the Good Shepherd – He Gives Us God's Message Personally Secondly, Jesus is the Good Shepherd and knows us and calls us by name.

He has come to deliver God's message personally to us. He knows us and those that have received Him as Savior, know Him. The Good Shepherd knows us intimately. In the East, the primary purpose of sheep is not for food, but for their wool. The shepherd knows each sheep by name and probably has a nickname for each one. I can see the shepherd calling each one by name like brown leg or black ear.

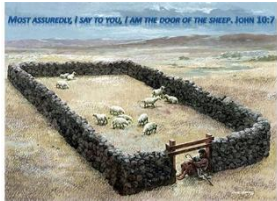
Prior to Jesus Christ coming, we could only speak of God as one very far away and unapproachable. God was "way out there" and we were simply a "speck of dust" way down here. We were not sure that God really liked us – we could only guess. The Baby born in Bethlehem that first Christmas lets us know that God personally came to tell us He loves us and came to reunite us with God. John 3:16

reminds us that *“God so loved the world that He gave us His one and only Son.”*

III. Jesus the Good Shepherd – Leads Us to God by a Loving Sacrifice

Third, Jesus is the Good Shepherd and has come to lead us to God through a loving sacrifice. The kind of relationship God has with us is that He wants to be our Shepherd and loves us so much that He was willing to lay down His life for us.

In John 10, Jesus tells us he is the *“Door of the Sheep.”* That is a difficult example for us to understand if we are not familiar with the way sheep were kept during Jesus’ day.



I can picture various shepherds daily going out with their sheep to graze in green pastures and beside still waters. As evening approached, they would work their way back home where the

sheep would be gathered safely into the pen for the night. I am sure there were many shepherds and many different flocks mingled together. At night, the shepherds would take turns lying down at the entrance of the pen to protect the sheep and to give them assurance that their shepherd was nearby. When morning came, each shepherd would call out to his sheep and they would follow their own shepherd because they knew his voice.

When Jesus said he was the *“Door of the Sheep”* – He was literally saying – He was the door! The only way into the fold of His sheep was through Jesus. Nothing could touch His sheep without first going through Him.

Jesus said, *“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”* (John 10:9) What a great illustration for us to see. Jesus is our Good Shepherd that leads us as we follow Him. When we stray, we are not walking in safety. We are actually taking a great risk because we do not trust the Master with our life.

We need to see God as loving and leading us. We need to see Jesus as the one that will be with us no matter what happens in life.



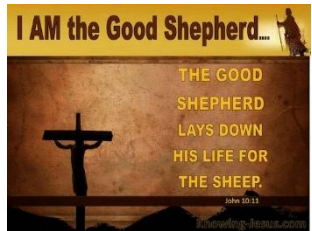
The comparison Jesus gives us concerning other shepherds is quite striking. Jesus describes false shepherds as thieves and robbers. He describes some shepherds as hirelings. There is a difference between the two.

- A shepherd leads his flock to the best places, even if it is difficult to get to or a long journey, and protects his flock from danger.
- A hireling will lead his flock to the places that are easier for the hireling, not necessarily best for the flock. A hireling will run when danger appears and leave the sheep to fend for themselves.

Jesus said this about a hireling, *“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. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.”* (John 10:12-13)



There have been false prophets (shepherds) throughout the centuries that only said what the king wanted to hear. They would bless the plans of the king when in fact the king's plans were not in accordance to what God would want. There were false teachers in Jesus' day that did not do what was best for the people. Even today, there are false ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ parading themselves as teaching and preaching the word of God, when in fact they are frauds.



We need to look to Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd and not get caught up in following one particular minister or preacher. We need to study God's word and know God's word so we can test what is taught by the words of

Jesus and not simply get caught up in feel good sermons or emotionally charged praise and worship songs. Good sermons are needed for today. Good praise and worship songs draw us nearer to the Lord. But the words that are said and the meaning behind the songs can draw us closer to the Good Shepherd or lead us away.

Jesus saw Himself as the Good Shepherd that was willing to lay down His life for the sheep. Jesus was the Lamb of God that knew He was born to die and would live again. Jesus said, *"Therefore My Father loves Me because I lay down My life that I may take it up again. 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."*

We know the rest of the story. As foretold in Isaiah (53:7), it says, *"He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He*

opened not His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth."



Jesus willingly laid down His life for us His sheep. Christmas may have its cradle, but Easter has its cross. God gave us a Babe in a manger in Bethlehem and a Savior on a cross in Jerusalem. In a manger – life, on a cross – death. Jesus did not have to die; he could have followed the advice of his disciples and destroyed his enemies by calling down legions of angels. But the Good Shepherd died because that is the only thing that would bring life to the sheep – you and me. He laid down His life so that we, His sheep might have life – eternally and abundantly.

Conclusion

One day Jesus told a story to reveal what the Father is like. A shepherd had one hundred sheep in his care. During the business of the day, as they were coming back home, he discovered one of his sheep was missing. He could have said to himself, "I have ninety-nine, why worry about the one that is missing. Maybe the lost one will turn up tomorrow."



But that is not the way of a good shepherd. This good shepherd even though he was tired, hungry, and thirsty, left the ninety-nine and went looking for the lost sheep. He found that lost sheep by himself, alone, scared, and in need of the comfort and security of the shepherd.

Luke 15:4-7 describes the reunion this way:

“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.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

The point Jesus is making is God is like that Shepherd. He looked upon His people Israel and saw they were like lost sheep. Jeremiah 50:6 says, *“My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray, turning them away on the mountains. From mountain to hill they have gone. They have forgotten their fold.”*



God knew He needed to send the only one that could bring all into the fold of God. That was Jesus Christ. God’s plan included sending

His Son to search out those that are lost and call them to repentance and invite them to the banquet table. That search began in the heart of God and was manifested by the Birth of Jesus in the Manger of Bethlehem.

God is still on a search for lost sinners. God is speaking to our hearts today to repent and receive the Christ Child personally as our Savior. When we do that, angels rejoice over every sinner’s repentance.

The meaning of Christmas is found in the cradle of Bethlehem. The Christ Child is searching for you. That is God’s Christmas gift to you. If you have never received Christ as your Savior, you are among the ones that are lost and in need of Salvation.

In exploring the topic of sheep and shepherds, I recalled Jesus’ commissioning of Peter after Jesus’ resurrection. It is His word to the other ninety-nine in the fold.



Jesus said these words to Peter: (John 21:17)

He (Jesus) said to him (Peter) the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

May we be found feeding each other the word of God – until the Good Shepherd calls us home.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹Mikey’s Funnies, A Creche Funny, Dec. 14, 2024