

Title: “I Am The Good Shepherd”**Text:** John 10:11-30**Main Idea:** Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, lays down his life for the sheep, which distinguishes Himself from hired hands, creates a bonded relationship with His sheep, unites His sheep, and secures His sheep.**Introduction**

If you brought your Bible with you, I invite you to open to the book of John, specifically, John 10:11-30.

This week we’re going to see Jesus as the “Good Shepherd” and I’m going to open with a story from Lynn Anderson’s book, *They Smell Like Sheep*. Anderson writes, “Several years ago in Palestine, Carolyn and I rode a tour bus through Israel’s countryside nearly mesmerized as the tour guide explained the scenery, the history, and the lifestyle. In his description, he included a heart-warming portrayal of the ancient shepherd/sheep relationship. He expounded on how the shepherd builds a relationship with his sheep—how he feeds them and gently cares for them. He pointed out that the shepherd doesn’t drive the sheep but leads them, and that the shepherd does not need to be harsh with them, because they hear his voice and follow. He then explained how on a previous tour things had backfired for him as he was giving this same speech about sheep and shepherds. In the midst of spinning his pastoral tale, he suddenly realized he had lost his audience. They were all staring out the bus window at a guy chasing a ‘herd’ of sheep. He was throwing rocks at them, whacking them with sticks, and siccing the sheep dog on them. The sheep-driving man in the field had torpedoed the guide’s enchanting narrative. The guide told us that he had been so agitated that he jumped off the bus, ran into the field, and accosted the man, ‘Do you understand what you have just done to me?’ he asked. ‘I was spinning a charming story about the gentle ways of shepherds, and here you are mistreating, hazing, and assaulting these sheep. ‘What is going on?’ For a moment, a bewildered look froze on the face of the poor sheep-

chaser, then the light dawned and he blurted out, ‘Man. You’ve got me all wrong. I’m not a shepherd. I’m a butcher’” This poor unwitting fellow had just provided the tour guide and all of us with a perfect example of what a ‘good shepherd’ is not.”¹

Before we jump into John 10:11-30, lets recap the series we’ve been going through for the last three weeks, *Metaphors of the Messiah*. Pastor Brian has lead us through three of Jesus’ “I Am” statements beginning with “**The Bread of Life**” where we learned that only Jesus can satisfy the supreme hunger of life. Then we moved the “**The Light of the World**” where we learned that Jesus can guide us because He, Himself, is light. And last week we looked at Jesus as “**The Door**” and learned that Jesus is the only way to have salvation and security.

Well let’s look at John 10:11-30 and find out what a Good Shepherd is. What we’re going to see is that Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, lays down his life for the sheep and in doing so distinguishes Himself from hired hands, creates a bonded relationship with His sheep, unites His sheep, and secures His sheep.

I. Jesus is The Good Shepherd (v. 11a)

Our text begins with Jesus speaking the words, “**I am the good shepherd.**” Without a doubt, the occupation with the most workers in America is Retail Sales. In Palestine during the time of Jesus, the occupation with the largest employment was shepherd. Now, here in the west, we tend to think of shepherds as sentimental beings with their arms full of cuddly lambs. But that couldn’t be further from the truth. Though many held the position, the job itself came with little fanfare. Sheep are helpless, defenseless, straying, dirty animals that require constant oversight, leading, rescue, and cleaning or they will die.² Being a shepherd is tiring. But shepherds aren’t

¹ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-stories-peopleinacts-61688.asp>

² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 1-11*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2006), 424.

usually in the business of shepherding for their own profit. Rather, a good shepherd knows how to serve their sheep.

Jesus says that as the Good Shepherd, he “lays down his life” for the sheep but before we get to that, I want to take a minute and focus in on the word “good.”

This past week I was in “Music City USA”, Nashville, Tennessee for the National Religious Broadcasters convention. The event is held at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. If you’ve never been to this place, it’s incredible.

Spread out over 9-acres that are all indoors, you’ll find 2,881 rooms, 17 restaurants, a full service salon and spa, a fitness center, three swimming pools, a river boat cruise on a ¼ mile long river, over 50,000 plants in three different atriums, several different fountains and waterfalls, miles of walkways, a radio studio, a Fed Ex store, and over one-million square feet of event space. This is all indoors spread out over 9-acres. The Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center is the largest non-casino hotel in the continental United States outside of Las Vegas. This place is in a class all by itself. And that’s exactly what Jesus is saying when he says, “I am the good shepherd.”

Listen, when Jesus speaks the words, **“I am the good shepherd.”** He’s separating Himself from all the other shepherds. **Jesus isn’t just a shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd and there isn’t another shepherd like Him.**

I think sometimes we see the word “good” and we look at it like we would an evaluation or a letter grade. So, there’s “average” and then there’s “good” which is better than “average” but not quite “excellent.” Or sometimes we see “good” and we think “beautiful” or “useful.” Jesus’ statement here in verse 11 doesn’t allow room for there to be an option that is higher than “good.”

He is not just the “good” shepherd. He is the “best” shepherd and there are no other shepherds that even come close to reaching Him. Jesus is in a class all by Himself.

Jesus isn’t just the Good Shepherd. He is the only Good Shepherd. He is in a class by himself. Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

II. Jesus Lays Down His Life for the Sheep (vv. 11b-18)

Now that we’ve established that the Good Shepherd is set apart, let’s see exactly why He’s in a class by Himself. The reason is found at the end of verse 11, “[He] **lays down his life for the sheep.**” One of the roles of the shepherd was to rescue and/or defend helpless sheep from predators. Robbers and wild animals such as wolves, lions, and bears were a constant danger so shepherds had to be willing to put their own life on the line to protect the sheep. What Jesus is saying here is that he doesn’t just risk his life for the sheep, he voluntarily lays it down for them in a sacrificial way. Jesus doesn’t merely risk his life and lose it in some type of accident. He lays it down and that is exactly what qualifies him to be the good shepherd. Look, there’s an assumption being made here and it’s this: the sheep are in mortal danger and the only way to defend them...to protect them...to save them...is for the shepherd...the good shepherd...to lose his life; that by His death they are saved. That, and that alone, is what makes him *the good shepherd*.³ Is he your good shepherd?

Notice next that Jesus’ laying down his life for the sheep does three things:

A. It Distinguishes The Difference Between a Good Shepherd and a Hired Hand (v. 12-13)

Take a look at verses 12 and 13, “**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**

³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 386.

snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.”

That line, “he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep” reminds me of an article I read recently about a Spanish government employee who took a six-year break from work and still got paid before his bosses finally discovered him what was going on. Did you hear about this? He was paid \$42,000 per year (or \$252,000 over the six years) and his job was to supervise the construction of a waste-water treatment plant. Apparently, though, nobody knew what he did or who he worked for. Water company officials thought he worked for the government and government officials thought he worked for the water company. But here’s my favorite part of the story: He started skipping work in 2004 and was finally caught in 2010 after the deputy mayor called him to give him a plaque for 20-years of service. During the conversation, the deputy mayor asked him this question, “What did you do yesterday?” He couldn’t answer the question.⁴ This guy is a hired hand. He cares nothing for the government or the water company or the constituents. His concern is himself. He’s a hired hand.

Suzy and I have neighbors who will be retiring soon and are thinking through whether they will stay in their home or move to be closer to grandchildren and warmer weather and other things soon to be retirees think through as they approach retirement.

If they move, they’ll have to put their house on the market and one of the things people think about when houses are selling around them is not just who will live next door, but will those people be renters or owners? Will the owner of the house next door be an absentee landlord, or will he be a homesteader in the building?

⁴ <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/02/14/spanish-man-skipped-work-for-6-years-still-got-paid.html>

Why does that matter? Honestly, it might not matter at all. Statistically it matters because homesteaders, in general, tend to take better care of their property than renters do.

Kids, for example, get angrier about the misuse of their own bikes or toys than they do about their misuse of other's. And adults are a lot more likely to throw trash out the window of their car than they are to throw it in their own backyard.

Our standards for our own homes and our own car and our own toys and our own tools is higher than our standards for the things of others. That's not good. It's one of the things Jesus came into the world to change. But that's the way human nature is apart from the transforming grace of God through Jesus Christ. And Jesus knew it and used it to contrast his commitment to his own sheep with the commitment of hired help.

He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand, and is not concerned about the sheep.

To the hired hand, sheep-tending is just a job. (It's just rental property, not a homestead.) They don't really care about the sheep. They are doing this to earn a living, not because they love sheep. And so they say, "No job is worth your life. If you're just working for a living, then you sure don't need a job that might kill you." So if a pack of wolves attacks your sheep, and you're just a hired hand, you run. You don't risk your life and fight the wolves. Who cares about a few sheep?

Who cares if the place gets trashed; it's not our house anyway. We understand and can relate to these hired hands.

But the reason Jesus mentions these hired hands is to show that he's not like that. He's not a hired hand. He's the good shepherd and the owner of the sheep. Verse 14: "I am the good shepherd; and I know my own, and my own know me."

The difference is that the hired hand loves his life more than the sheep, but Jesus loves his sheep more than his life. Four times in this passage Jesus says he lays down his life for the sheep. Verse 11: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Verse 15b: "I lay down my life for the sheep." Verse 17: "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life." Verse 18: "No one has taken [my life] away from me, but I lay it down on my own initiative."

So Jesus is not a hired hand, because the sheep belong to him and because he loves the sheep more than he loves his own life.

When he sees the wolves coming, he does not leave the sheep to be destroyed. He fights the wolves and saves the sheep. And in doing it, he lays down his life for the sheep.⁵

The test of a true shepherd and a false shepherd is in what the shepherd does when a predator appears. The false shepherd cares only for himself and his reputation. The true shepherd shows who he is by being prepared to die for the sheep.⁶

Every one of us in this room is being shepherded by someone, some-thing, some idea. Listen. Don't settle for the hired hands of sex outside of marriage or wrapping your identity up in another person or position or status. Follow the voice of the shepherd who is in a class all by Himself, Jesus Christ.

⁵ John Piper, *I Have Authority to Lay It Down and I Have Authority to Take It Up Again*, <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/i-have-authority-to-lay-it-down-and-i-have-authority-to-take-it-up-again>

⁶ Tom Wright, *John for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-10* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 152.

B. It Creates a Bonded Relationship Between the Good Shepherd and the Sheep (vv. 14-15)

Notice a second thing that happens as a result of The Good Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep. Notice that it creates a bonded relationship between the Good Shepherd and the sheep. Take a look at verses 14-15, **“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”**

Do you see the incredible relationship that’s at work here between the shepherd and the sheep? Jesus says, “I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father...” The term “know” is an intimate term that describes the love relationship between a husband and a wife. Now the problem that we have is that we have a skewed view of “know” and its synonym, “intimacy.” See our minds have been conditioned to hear “intimacy” and think “romance” or “sexual” and that’s not it. Those two things are the results of intimacy with your spouse but they aren’t intimacy.

Focus on the Family has a very helpful article on the topic of intimacy and they defined it like this: Intimacy means “in-to-me-see.” They describe it as a blending of our heart with another’s, so we can “see into” who they really are, and they can “see into” us. Being intimate involves the mixing of our life with another’s and it’s something we all long for because it’s how God made us.

Real intimacy makes us feel alive; like we’ve been found, as if someone finally took the time to peer into the depths of our soul and really see us there. Until then, until we experience

true intimacy, we will feel passed over and ignored.⁷ Listen, true intimacy doesn't come from the hired hand. It's only found in the Good Shepherd.

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, the simple truth is that Jesus loves you and knows you and claims you as His own. Jesus knows you, you know Him, the Father in love knows Jesus, and He in love knows the Father. If you are a follower of Christ, you are caught up in the deep and intimate affection that is shared between God the Father and Jesus Christ.⁸ You are bonded with Christ in a relationship that will go as deep as you want it to go and Christ is standing here inviting you, "in-to-me-see." Are you willing to know the Good Shepherd? Or will you settle for the hired hand?

C. It Unites the Sheep into One Fold (v. 16)

Let's take a look at the third thing that happens as a result of the Good Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep. His action unites the sheep into one fold. Look at verse 16, "**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.**"

Jesus' words here are part of a conversation that began with Jewish religious leaders back in John chapter 9. Jesus' statement to these leaders implies that His mission and the advancement of Christianity is just beginning. The work is not yet complete and, actually, it continues to this day. So, until the work is complete, Jesus is calling sheep. He is calling Jews and Gentiles (or said another way, all of mankind) to follow Him. Those who hear that call to salvation and respond by placing their faith in Christ will become one flock with one shepherd. This idea was revolutionary. Jews and Gentiles despised each other and here Jesus is saying that there won't be

⁷ <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/preparing-for-marriage/what-it-means-to-be-intimate/what-it-means-to-be-intimate>

⁸ MacArthur, 433.

factions with separate leaders (as was the custom of the day). Just one group, one party, one fold, with one leader, one shepherd, Jesus Christ.

D.L. Moody told the story of a friend who was traveling in the East and heard that there was a shepherd who still kept the custom of calling his sheep by name. His friend went to the man and said, “Let me put on your clothes, and take your crook, and I will call them, and see if they will come to me.”

And so he did, and he called one sheep, “Mina, Mina,” but the whole flock ran away from him. Moody’s friend said to the shepherd, “Will none of them follow me when I call them?”

The shepherd replied, “Yes, sir, some of them will; the sick sheep will follow anybody.”⁹

If we’re honest, apart from Christ, we’re all sick sheep, aren’t we? In our sinfulness we’ll follow just about any hired hand and the false promises they make. And yet the Good Shepherd still calls, still rescues, still lays down His life to rescue and redeem you. And you share that common ground with other sheep with similar stories because the Good Shepherd, the Shepherd who is in a class by himself laid down His life uniting the sheep into One Fold. Do you know that Good Shepherd? He is calling out to you.

D. Jesus protects His sheep by Securing Their Eternity

Well, you can read for yourself how the rest of this conversation goes but I want you to jump down to verse 22. John writes, “**At that time the Feast of Dedication took place in Jerusalem.**”

Two months have passed between the end of verse 21 and the beginning of verse 22 and now we’re at the Feast of Dedication. We know the Feast of Dedication by a different name today. The Feast is not an authorized Old Testament celebration. In 167 BC the Syrian,

⁹ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-sermon-central-staff-stories-parablelostsheep-81428.asp>

Antiochus Epiphanes, overran Jerusalem and desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar and setting up a pagan altar to Zeus in its place. Antiochus forbid the Jews to read the Old Testament scriptures and copies of it were destroyed. Jews were also forbidden from religious practices such as observing the Sabbath and circumcising children. Antiochus was the first pagan king to persecute the Jews for their religion.¹⁰

Under the heavy hand of Antiochus, the Jews revolted and developed the art of guerilla warfare. Eventually they grew strong enough to overthrow the oppressor, and, under the leadership of Judas Maccabaeus, they recaptured the temple and re-consecrated it to God on the 25th of Kislev (approximately December 25th), 164 BC. The people celebrated the rededication of the temple for eight days, and it was decreed that a similar eight-day Feast of Dedication (we know it as *Hanukkah*) should be held every year, beginning on the 25th of Kislev.¹¹

That's important to know because it shows us that this should be a celebratory time and even this event, just like all of the other feasts, finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, who we find walking in the temple. This should be joyous...but it's not. Look at verse 24, **“So the Jews gathered around him...”**

These guys aren't just dropping by for a friendly conversation. If you've ever watched a TV show or movie where one of the characters is walking down the street and the next thing you know they're surround by thugs who want to beat them up, this is that scene. Jesus is surrounded by religious leaders who are looking to pick a fight. The opening shot is fired with this statement, look at the rest of verse 24, **“How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.”**

¹⁰ MacArthur, 439.

¹¹ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 391.

This was hardly an honest question. These guys are trying to trap Jesus and discredit Him. He was, after all, the greatest threat to their power and prestige. Jesus unsettled them by the miraculous signs He performed; tired them by the division He caused...even within their own ranks; Jesus caused the leaders to fear the revolt He might spark against Rome...which would jeopardize their privileged political status; He angered them by His public rebuke of their hypocrisy; and, most of all, He outraged them by His unapologetic claims to be God.¹² The Jewish leaders needed Jesus gone because He was affecting their quality of life.

Let's read Jesus response to their question in verses 25 and following, **"I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."**

Christ's words reveal **five realities that bind every true Christian forever to God. First, believers are His sheep, and it is the duty of the Good Shepherd to protect His flock.** John 6:39-40 reads, "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." Jesus Christ is not an incompetent shepherd that is somehow unable to hold on to those entrusted to Him by His Father.

Second, Christ's sheep hear only His voice and follow only Him. John 10:5 says, "A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of

¹² MacArthur, 441.

strangers.” Since they will not listen to or follow a stranger, they could not possibly wander away from him and be eternally lost.

Third, Christ promised that His sheep will never perish. Were even one to do so, it would make Him a liar

Fourth, no one—not false shepherds or false prophets, nor even the Devil himself—is powerful enough to snatch Christ’s sheep out of His hand.

Fifth, Christ’s sheep are held not only in His hand, but also in the hand of the Father, who is greater than all; and thus no one is able to snatch them out of His hand either. Infinitely secure, the believer’s “life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).¹³

Conclusion

As we close out our time together, I want to invite you to do something that might make you uncomfortable. I’d like you to close your eyes. And while you’re doing that, I’m going to jump in my Bible to Psalm 23 and let me read this parallel passage and listen to God’s Word as it provides some practical application to our passage on The Good Shepherd. Psalm 23 reads, **“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”**

¹³ MacArthur, 442-443.

My daughter, Brynleigh, will be turning three-years-old in April. I'm sure you did this with your kids or as a child but there are times with Bryn where she will be walking in-between Suzy and me and she'll grab our hands and want us to swing her. You know, when we swing Brynleigh, it really doesn't matter how tight her grip is, does it? No, what matters is how tight my grip and Suzy's grip is on her little hands.

Jesus' sheep hear His voice, He knows them, His sheep follow him, and their eternal destinies are secure. But listen, there are those who stand indicted because they are not His sheep and they don't hear His voice, and He doesn't know them, and they do not follow Him, and they will perish for having never been in His hand.

When we recognize our status as depicted in John 10, we understand that Christ is saying that our safety does not depend on our immature, futile grip upon him, but on his hold on us. "No one will snatch them out of *my hand*" (v. 28). And no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. We are doubly safe.

This brings incredible relief to those of us who are true children of God. You know, John 10 was written to people who considered themselves to be sheep. Do you consider yourself one of God's sheep? Then your position as part of the Good Shepherd's flock is already established. Are you going through a dark valley? Are you afraid? Remember that your Shepherd is with you. Are you cast down? Depressed? Helpless? Have you settled for the hired hand? Cry out to your Shepherd. He will pick you up, love you, lead you, and restore you.¹⁴ Remember, He's not the mistreating, hazing, and assaulting butcher. He is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for you distinguishing Himself from anyone else, allowing you a bonded, uniting, secure relationship with Him. Let's pray. ***Present the Gospel during your prayer.***

¹⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *John: That You May Believe*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 278.