

“The Good Shepherd”

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When Jesus says, “*I Am*,” He’s describing Himself as being one with God, Yahweh. Israelites considered the name Yahweh too holy to be spoken by human lips. In fact, it was only spoken one day a year on the Day of Atonement at the temple in Jerusalem. If the name had to be written, the scribe who wrote it would take a bath before writing it and then destroy the pen afterward!

Jesus says, “*I Am the Good Shepherd*.” “*Good*” here in Greek means beautiful and valuable. Jesus is beyond being morally good, He’s incapable of doing anything bad. He’s good in every attribute as God. To the listeners that day, His words would have been shocking and scandalous. In their minds only God was good and King David was their shepherd. But Jesus was declaring Himself to be their Shepherd and their God.

Look at verses 11-13, “*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 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 snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.*”

The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. A hired man is not a real shepherd. The sheep mean nothing to him. He sees a wolf come and runs away, leaving the sheep to be snatched and scattered by the wolf. He’s only in it for the money! The sheep don’t matter to him!

But that’s not the way Jesus as our Good Shepherd acts! He gives His life willingly on benefit each lamb! Listen to Romans 5:8, “*But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*”

Jesus died in our place, not as a martyr, but because He willingly took our place as our substitute as the required payment for the penalty of our sins. C. S. Lewis once said, “*It cost God nothing, as far as we know, to create nice things, but to convert our rebellious wills, it cost Him crucifixion.*”

When we look at someone like the hireling, who’s in it for personal gain, we make accusations questioning their commitment. But what about you? Are you committed to God? Is worship a priority? Is spending time studying His Word a regular habit? Are you using your gifts to serve His Church and the Great Commission? Do you tell others about your relationship with God?

The Good Shepherd knows His sheep. Look at verses 14-16, “*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. 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 knows you and everything about you, good and bad, and He loves you anyway! You matter to Him. Just as a shepherd knows sheep, the Good Shepherd knows every detail about you.

He Provides. He knows your basic needs. He Pilots. He knows your need for direction through life. He Protects. He knows your need for security. He Pursues. He knows your need for compassion, so He wants you close.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus says it’s important for Him to gather the sheep together into a fold, but notice He doesn’t stop with just the sheep that are already His! No, He says that other sheep must be brought into the fold. The fold, the church, is always changing and growing.

The church is an alive place, a place where things happen. It's where changes are made, where people grow in faith. It's where people meet new people of faith, who help us to understand God's love. It's a place where we gather in His name. God's here with us this morning! His spirit is here leading us in our worship of Him. As we leave to go back out to world, God's Spirit will go with us, as we share Jesus with those around us!

The Good Shepherd wants you to know Him. He knows the sheep and the sheep need to know the Shepherd. You need to know His voice, His touch, His compassion, His love, and His discipline, as you experience His leading every day.

Your Good Shepherd is alive. Your Good Shepherd, who loved you so much that He died for you, is alive. He's always at your side. Your Good Shepherd is victorious. He's won the victory over the Devil for you. The Devil can't devour you even though He wants to! As long as you're in the Good Shepherd's arms, you're safe!

Until Jesus comes again in victory, you and I can live each day in confidence as we take to heart the words of our Good Shepherd and listen closely and carefully to His voice!

A famous actor was once the guest of honor at a social gathering where he received many requests to recite favorite excerpts from various literary works. An old preacher, who happened to be there, asked the actor to recite the 23rd Psalm. The actor agreed on the condition that the preacher would recite it also.

The actor's recitation was beautifully done with great dramatic emphasis for which he received a lengthy standing ovation. The preacher's voice was rough and broken, and his recitation was anything but polished. But when he finished there was no applause and not a dry eye in the room. After the gala had concluded, someone asked the actor what made the difference in the two recitations of the Psalm. He replied, "I know the Psalm, but he knows the Shepherd!"

Jesus says, "*I am the Good Shepherd*". What a picture! Hold that picture in your heart and mind as you hear His Word, as you remember your Baptism, and as you receive the Lord's Supper.

Say to yourself, "*I AM Jesus little lamb*", and picture yourself being safe in His arms. For in His love for you, He laid down His life. See the nail marks in His hands and feet. He gave up His life for you! Feel safe in your Good Shepherd's mighty arms!