

“I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD”

John 10:11-18

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

INTRODUCTION

Something very important ought to be repeated for emphasis. **Two times** in this passage Jesus calls Himself “THE GOOD SHEPHERD.” **Five times** in this passage Jesus speaks of LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP.

Notice that Jesus does not say that He is “a good shepherd”; He says that He is **THE GOOD SHEPHERD**. There is no other good shepherd; He is the only One!

Please note that the word “good” used here is also the word that means “beautiful”—cf. our Hymn, “Beautiful Savior.” This word in itself emphasizes the *attractiveness* of goodness. In Jesus, “the nobility of the conception” is matched by “the beauty of the realization” (Westcott).

Compare Hebrews 13:20 where Jesus is called “the Great Shepherd of the sheep,” and I Peter 2:25 where He is the “Shepherd and Guardian” of our souls, and I Peter 5:4 where He is the “Chief Shepherd.”

Yes, Jesus is the perfect shepherd, the true shepherd, and the good shepherd. He is the ideal shepherd described by numerous Old Testament passages—Ps. 23; Is. 40:11; Jer. 23; Ezek. 34; 37:24; Zech. 11:7, etc. He is Yahweh’s representative here on earth to save and care for the Father’s sheep.

In this passage, Jesus shows us that as the Good Shepherd He **knows** His sheep, He **brings in** other sheep, He **lays down His life** for the sheep, and He **takes up His life** again.

I. THE GOOD SHEPHERD KNOWS HIS SHEEP (14-15)

A. The Knowledge is Mutual (14)

1. He Knows **His Sheep** (cf. v.5, v. 27).

Unlike the “strangers” of v. 5.

Notice that He owns them—cf. 6:37, 39; 17:6, 24)

2. His Sheep Know Him (see v. 3).

B. The Knowledge is Compared to the Divine Knowledge (15)

1. The Father knows Him.

2. He knows the Father.

His will and the Father’s will are in complete harmony. The mutual knowledge here involves “sympathy, love, and community of nature” (Westcott).

We must not be scandalized by this comparison. It is the similarity in the mutuality of the love that is stressed here, not the similarity in the degree of the love.

II. THE GOOD SHEPHERD BRINGS IN OTHER SHEEP (16)

A. These Sheep are not of the Jewish Fold

Notice that Jesus already “**has**” these sheep!

B. These Sheep **Must** be Led to Him.

This is a compelling necessity for Jesus—like that in John 4—He “**must**” go through Samaria.

C. These Sheep Will Approvingly **Hear** His Voice (cf. vv. 3, 4, 5)

D. These Sheep Will Become a United Flock with Saved Jews.

The word here is not “fold”: Christians are not merged into Judaism! The middle wall of the partition has been broken down. We are not to carry out the institutions of Judaism today in a merely modified form of Christianity! The unity is not a national unity, nor a mere external unity.

E. These Sheep Will Have the Same Shepherd.

It is the Shepherd that brings about the unity.

There is a wordplay in the original. We can approximate it by saying, “One flock, and one Flock-master.”

III. THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP (11-13)

Notice that He states this in v. 11, v. 15, v. 17, and v. 18 (2 times). This expression is found only in John’s writings; it is not used elsewhere in the Bible—Old or New Testaments.

He lays down His “soul” (life) for His sheep—compare Mt. 27:5—He yielded up His spirit; Lk. 23:46—“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit”; and John 19:30—Jesus delivered up His spirit.

A. His Death is **Extraordinary**.

1. Unlike the Average shepherd

The death of a shepherd is not a frequent occurrence.

The shepherd is expected to defend the sheep, but not to die for the sheep. When the shepherd died, it was an accident, not a planned event.

THE NORMAL SHEPHERD PLANNED TO LIVE FOR HIS SHEEP; JESUS PLANNED TO DIE FOR THEM!

2. Unlike the “Hireling”—*One who was serving for the money* (13).

a. He is not really the shepherd (12).

The expression is unusual: “This man is certainly no shepherd” is the idea.

b. He is not really the owner of the sheep (12); cf. the “thieves and robbers” of vv. 1, 8, 10).

c. He does not really have their best interests in view (13).

d. He is unwilling to face serious dangers, let alone risk his life (12).

(1) He fears the wolf—when he sees it.

(2) He flees the wolf—having his own best interests in mind.

(3) He forsakes the sheep—not concerned with their fate.

3. Unlike the Wolf (12)

- a. The wolf snatches sheep.
- b. The wolf scatters sheep.

Note in 10:28-29—Jesus never allows anyone to snatch His sheep!

B. His Death is Substitutionary (vv. 11, 15)

The preposition “for” in this context **Must** have the **substitutionary** concept.

The passage is the background of Jesus’ thought is likely Isaiah 53:4-8.

This word means “in the place of” when the context requires it. Such is the case here, as can be seen in passages like II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13. *His death benefits us when He keeps us from dying*. Compare Mt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45 (using a preposition that must mean substitution).

C. His Death is Beneficial

Generally, the death of a shepherd is very detrimental to a flock of sheep! The sheep would be without a guide, a provider, a protector, and a caretaker.

This shepherd is **concerned for** the sheep—unlike the hireling (v. 13).

IV. THE GOOD SHEPHERD TAKES UP HIS LIFE AGAIN (17-18)

A. His Father Approves Him

1. He obeys His Father’s command (18d)

Compare many other such statements in John—e.g. 4:34; 5:30; 6:38.

2. He is the object of His Father’s love (17a)

If Jesus had not taken up His life again, the Father could never have approved of His sacrifice; He had to take it up again in order to reverse the sentence of death—in order to save man!

WE WOULD YET BE IN OUR SINS APART FROM HIS TAKING IT UP AGAIN! (I Cor. 15:17)

Then, Jesus would not have been much better than the hireling; He would not have finished His job. He would have left us in our sins and lost condition!

B. Death Assists Him

1. His purpose in dying is in order to live again (17b)
2. His death is due to His own initiative (18b)
3. His authority over death is absolute (18c)

Compare other statements of His great authority—1:12; 5:27; 17:2; 19:11.

a. He lays down His life

b. He takes it up again (compare John. 2:19—“I will raise it up.”)

Normally the Father is said to be the One to raise up the Son.

C. Adversaries Yield to Him (18a)

1. Satan did not kill Him.
2. Pilate did not kill Him.
3. Roman soldiers did not kill Him.

4. Jewish leaders did not kill Him.

All of His enemies simply accomplish His Purpose!

CONCLUSION

Jesus is in complete command of every situation—even of His death and resurrection!

Jesus has formed His new flock. He has laid down His life for His sheep; He has taken it up again through His resurrection.

Are you one of His sheep?

Are you following your Shepherd and listening to His voice?