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*“The Good Shepherd”*

*JOHN 10:11-18*

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*PASTOR BRIAN SMITH*

*WILDWOOD CHURCH*

*EAST MOLINE, ILLINOIS*

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## BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT

The bible teaches that all we like sheep have gone astray. The good news of Christmas is that Jesus came as the Good Shepherd!

## INTRODUCTION

Two weeks ago I felt the Lord's lead to abandon the sermon I had prepared for that day and instead turn to Psalm 9 as I presented Jesus as “Lord of lords.” He impressed on my heart that even at Christmas time, our people are hurting, struggling, going through difficult times and they needed to hear that Jesus is a good and gracious, caring and compassionate Lord.

Not much has changed for most people in two weeks. We still battle the same concerns, are going through the same trials, and are flooded with the same anxious thoughts. As I have said before, Christmas is my favorite time of year. But that doesn't mean I think we need to pretend our problems have dissolved because we threw tinsel on the tree, though.

I don't mean to be a “Debbie downer,” but I want to acknowledge that Christmas is a time of rejoicing *because* of our hardships in life. It is because we face difficulties and trials and let downs that can rejoice that God sent Jesus to rescue us. Like a shepherd sent for his sheep, He came to rescue us from sin and death and to give us eternal life.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. And that is really good news for us because, “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.” Isaiah 53:6

## JOHN 10:11-18

**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. 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. For this reason the 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 my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”**

## UNLIKE THE HIRED HANDS

In verses 11-13, Jesus illustrates who He is with the concept of a shepherd compared to hired hands. Jesus knew His listeners were quite familiar with the concept. Raising sheep and goats was normal work in Jesus' day. It is also common knowledge that a hired hand would do his job, would lead the

sheep to water and grass; he'd even spend the night to be among them, but given the choice to lay down his own life or flee, a hired hand would flee, leaving the sheep vulnerable and scattered.

However, as the owner of the sheep, the shepherd has a vested interest in protecting them. He will protect his sheep even with his own life. He does so because He loves them. For the Shepherd the sheep are more than a job. They are his beloved responsibility.

## AGAINST THE SHEPHERDS OF ISRAEL

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep unlike the supposed shepherds of Israel. Listen to the indictment against the shepherds of Israel in Ezekiel 34.

*“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.” Ezekiel 34:2-6*

This breaks the Father's heart. Can you hear that in these words? Our Father is so compassionate. These shepherds had consumed the sheep rather than feeding them. They used and abused them, rather than binding and leading. They ruled over them with force and harshness. Far from laying down their own lives for the sheep, these shepherds took life from the sheep, leaving them vulnerable and scattered.

When Jesus spoke in John 10 about being the Good Shepherd, he did so in response to the Pharisees who balked every time Jesus did something to help someone else. In this present context, Jesus has healed a blind man on the sabbath, which outraged the Pharisees. "This man is not from God for He does not keep the sabbath!" they declared in John 9:16.

It was these, and men like them, Jesus compared to hired hands. These men abused their authority, cared not about the people of God. What an indictment on supposed men of God.

I am reminded of my own short-comings as a pastor and how I have had to confess to you my own harshness and my own failures as your pastor. This is a reminder that elders are sheep, too...prone to wander, prone to get it wrong.

Never forget, you and I are His sheep, too. He knows that we need Him, He knows our needs because He knows His sheep.

## JESUS KNOWS HIS SHEEP

**Verse 14 and 15 says 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 sense the intimacy with which Jesus speaks? How does the Father know the Son and how does the Son know the Father? In the same way, Jesus knows the Sheep and the Sheep know Jesus. There's an intimacy, a full-knowing. There's a closeness between the Good Shepherd and His sheep.

Jesus knows what is hurting you right now. He knows what causes you anxiety and fear and anger. He knows who has betrayed you, discouraged you, failed to do what was right.

He knows your situation, what you wish you could change, where you wish you were. He knows what you long for and what keeps you awake at night. He knows you've cried yourself to sleep this week. He knows you'd do anything to get it, to have it, to make it.

He knows how you wish you were loved but aren't. He knows the ways you've sought for love and failed. He knows your heartbreak. He knows you've given up hope.

He knows you have done everything by the books, you've done everything the way it's supposed to be done, at least you've tried your best and yet life is falling apart.

He knows you've been rejected, been mistreated, wronged, abused, scorned, and shamed.

He knows what tempts you and trips you up. He knows your heart and He knows you really want to be set free.

He knows that you regret what you did and that you cannot bring yourself to move on from it. He knows you hate your sin but can't shake free of it.

No one knows you like Jesus. No one loves you like Jesus. No one lays down their life like Jesus. And no one can speak life into your heart like Jesus.

Jesus said, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."* John 10:10 and *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life..."* John 10:27

Jesus is the source of your life, your hope, your joy, your peace, your satisfaction, your contentment, your purpose, your everything. He is what you crave, long for. He is what will fill the void. Until Christ is this for you, you will never be content. But when you find satisfaction in Him, you will finally know what satisfaction really is.

Jesus concludes His Good Shepherd discourse in verse 30 saying, *"The Father and I are one."* John 10:30

## JESUS IS GOD'S SOLUTION TO OUR PROBLEM

Again, there is oneness between Jesus and the Father. He knows the Father and the Father knows Him. The Father knows what Jesus is claiming, what He is doing. Jesus knows what the Father wants Him to say and wants Him to do. "The Father and I are one." This is so important because it reminds us that Jesus is God's solution to our sin problem.

What Jesus did, He did with God's full knowledge. He did with the Father's blessing. He did because the Father wanted Him to do it. Jesus is God's solution.

Verse 17 and 18 speak to this point and we'll come back to verse 16. **Verses 17 & 18 say For this reason the 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 my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."**

Jesus came to the earth obedient to the Father. He came only to do the will of the Father. Jesus was charged with this task by His Father and He came willing to obey even to the point of death on the cross. Jesus' life was not taken from Him; He gave it.

He told His disciples that if He wanted to, He could have called down twelve legions of angels to defend Him. They would have destroyed the earth. Can you imagine the scene in Heaven as the angelic army, under the command of the archangel Michael, watched in disgust and horror as their King, their Lord, their holy One was treated the way Jesus was treated? To observe the Roman soldiers spitting in the face of their beloved prince. To watch as they mocked Him, and beat Him, and led Him away in shame and agony? All Jesus had to do to command His army to come to His rescue was ask the Father. (cf. Matthew 26:53) But if He asked, *"How then should the scriptures be fulfilled?"* Matthew 26:54

So, He refused to ask. Because He **received this charge from His Father**. Because He came to give His life as a ransom for many. Because the Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep. Because He came to die for you and for me.

## JESUS BRINGS IN THE SHEEP

**Verse 16** says **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.**

All we like sheep have gone astray. None is righteous, no not one. We are far from God, alienated from Him. Wandering and hopelessly lost. But Jesus came as the Good Shepherd to bring His sheep into the fold, to make us **one flock** with **one shepherd**.

People from all over the world, from every nation, every tribe, and every tongue. This is just as Isaiah prophesied, *“He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms...”* Isaiah 40:11

One day Jesus was hanging out with His typical crowd of tax collectors and sinners and the religious hypocrites responded in typical fashion bemoaning, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” (Luke 15:1-2) And Jesus responds to them with three parables that I’m sure you’ve heard – the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son.

Since we’re unwrapping the name of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and seeing that He says the Good Shepherd brings in the sheep, it seems fitting that we read what He said about the lost sheep in Luke 15.

*“So he told them this parable: ‘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.”* Luke 15:3-7

Did you hear that? There will be *more* joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous, and by “righteous” Jesus meant self-righteous. We know that because in Luke 18:9 Luke annotates that Jesus taught another parable to some who *“trusted in themselves that they were righteous.”* So, in this parable and in the others like it, Jesus removes all doubt who He came for. What type of person, what sort of relationship this is, who He is looking for.

The people He came for are sinners, lost sheep, people who have no reason to trust in their own righteousness. *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”* Luke 19:10

Jesus came into the world seeking lost sheep...sheep who have gone astray...and sheep who are prone to wander even after they’ve been brought into the fold.

Lost sheep who need to be found.

Wounded sheep who need to be bandaged up.

Sin sick sheep who need to be redeemed.

Broken sheep who need to be made new.

Our Good Shepherd was born *for you*. He came *for you*. He came to call you and to love you and to lead you and to give you new life, abundant life.

He came because He loves you and He came to lay down His life for you.

Will you receive the Good Shepherd today as Lord and Savior?

Will you be found?

Christ is born for you.