

Fil-Am Community Church

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I am the Good Shepherd

John 10:11-18

We're continuing our series on "got Jesus?" a series that explores the meaning of the "I am" statements of Jesus in the book of John. We already looked at two statements, first is "I am the Bread of Life" from John 6:35 and the second one is "I am the Light of the Word" from John 8:12. Now, the third one is "I am the Door" but that's not what I'm going to share with you this morning. That would be next week. Pastor Dave is supposed to speak today on "I am the Door" but because I'll be away next week together with my family to attend a Pastors Conference in Florida, we agreed to switch. We'll be traveling by car so please pray for us.

God is good? All the time? I started with that because Jesus, our God, is a good Shepherd.

Let us read John 10:11-18: *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.* ¹² *The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.* ¹³ *The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.* ¹⁴ *"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—* ¹⁵ *just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.* ¹⁶ *I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.* ¹⁷ *The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again.* ¹⁸ *No one takes it from me, but I lay it down*

of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

The image of Jesus being the Good Shepherd has brought encouragement to millions. This metaphor of Jesus has its roots in the Old Testament. For example, here are a few verses that refer to God as our Shepherd:

Jacob says in Genesis 48:15 as he blessed Joseph, *"May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day."*

Then, Isaiah says this about God in Isaiah 40:11, *"He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young."*

And in Ezekiel 34:12, we read, *"As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness."*

And, of course, the most beloved Psalm of all, Psalm 23, talks of God as a Shepherd. Let me show you a cute video about Psalm 23.

VIDEO: Psalm 23

So in the Old Testament, the Israelites know that God is the shepherd and they are the sheep. Then, Jesus comes to earth and tells them "I am the Good Shepherd." Right after that, the Bible says that some believed him and some did not. I hope all

of us are in the first category. I hope we all believe that Jesus truly is God and that he is the Good Shepherd.

Now, Jesus depicts himself as a Shepherd, not because it was a common vocation of people back then but because, I believe, to bring home the point that we are people who are in need of love and care and, most especially, guidance and direction just like sheep. I don't know about you but I think it's a most unflattering comparison. Would you like to be compared to a sheep?

Sheep are known to be the dumbest of all animals. The truth is sheep are known to jump off cliffs when put into pressure situations and they don't know what to do. They are followers by nature. They need a leader.

Sheep are known to be stubborn. If left to their own devices, they will find themselves in danger. So, they are not real bright and they are stubborn. They are not known for their superior qualities, anything that would make them stand out in a crowd. They pretty much are defenseless. They are not fast. They don't have a lethal bite or sting. They have no secret weapon to defend themselves; they pretty much are lunch on a platter if they are not protected by some outside force.

Knowing all this information helps us understand how important the Shepherd is to the sheep. The truth is that the Shepherd makes all the difference, in life and death to the sheep.

In our text we find that Jesus is our shepherd. And not only is He our shepherd, but He describes Himself as the "Good Shepherd." And today we will find out that the

difference between Jesus and all other shepherds is that the Good Shepherd--Jesus--truly loves His sheep.

We know that Jesus loves us because from these verses we learn that:

I. THE GOOD SHEPHERD'S LOVE IS DISPLAYED ON A CROSS

Four times in these verses Jesus says the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. Now that is a very unusual thing for a shepherd to do. But the truth is, a shepherd faces many dangers in the course of tending the sheep. The Bible gives us examples of different wild animals that would threaten a flock. David mentions his fight with a lion and a bear while he was looking after sheep. Amos speaks of the shepherd who rescued two legs or a piece of an ear from a lion's mouth. At an earlier time Jacob said to his father-in-law Laban, "I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself..."

So it is plain that there were many dangers that could arise for the shepherd. But the shepherd didn't plan on dying. The job certainly had its dangers--but nothing that the shepherd thought he couldn't deal with. Allowing for the fact that there would be problems as he looked after the sheep, he thought he could cope--otherwise he wouldn't be a shepherd.

He knew that there was always the possibility that he could be seriously hurt, or even die, but he knew that death would be an unlikely result of his profession. One thing is clear. No man willingly dies for animals like sheep.

But Jesus explained that what made Him different than any other shepherd is that He would **voluntarily** give up His life in order that His sheep might live. That for Jesus was the central thing, that was His purpose. He had come to this planet to bring salvation, and that meant death on behalf of His sheep.

Usually, the sheep would serve as a blood sacrifice for the Shepherd.

But Jesus is the Good Shepherd, in that He served as a blood sacrifice for the sheep. Jesus emphasized the substitutionary nature of His death for the sheep. He specifically says that He lay down His life "**for** the sheep." That word "**for**" is the most important word in history. Jesus died "**for**" us--that is--He died in our place. His death was substituted **for** the death of the sheep. That is what we mean by the theological term "substitutionary atonement".

Let me explain this further. Atonement according to the dictionary is the satisfaction for a wrong or injury. It is to make amends for something wrong you have done. In fact, atonement literally comes from the Middle English phrase "at one + ment" which means being in harmony. So, substitutionary atonement is Christ dying in our place in order to bring us in harmony with God. Why did he have to do that? Because of our sins.

The Scriptures teach that all men are sinners. The penalty for our sinfulness is death. Romans 6:23a says, "*For the wages of sin is death.*"

That verse teaches us several things. Without Christ, we are going to die and spend an eternity in hell as payment for our sins. Death in the Scriptures refers to a "separation." Everyone will die, but some will live in heaven with the Lord for eternity, while others will live a life in hell for eternity. The death spoken of here

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Jesus Christ died in our place when He was crucified on the cross. We deserved to be the ones placed on that cross to die because we are the ones who live sinful lives. But Christ took the punishment on Himself in our place—He substituted Himself for us and took what we rightly deserved. *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). Then also in 1 Peter 2:24, it says, *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed”*. Here again we see that Christ took the sins we committed onto Himself to pay the price for us. A few verses later we read, *“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit”* (1 Peter 3:18). Not only do these verses teach us about the substitute that Christ was for us, but they also teach that He was the atonement, meaning He satisfied the payment due for the sinfulness of man.

One more passage that talks about the substitutionary atonement is Isaiah 53:5. This verse talks about the coming Christ who was to die on the cross for our sins. The prophecy is very detailed, and the crucifixion happened just as it was foretold.

This verse says, *“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his*

wounds we are healed.” Notice the substitution. Here again we see that Christ paid the price for us!

We can only pay the price of sin on our own by being punished and placed in hell for all eternity. But God’s Son, Jesus Christ, came to earth to pay for the price of our sins. Because He did this for us, we now have the opportunity to not only have our sins forgiven, but to spend eternity with Him. Which brings us to the second point of this message.

II. THE GOOD SHEPHERD'S LOVE IS PROVED BY AN EMPTY TOMB

Jesus emphasized the ultimate purpose of His death. In v.17 He says He lays down His life, "only to take it up again." The resurrection was the ultimate purpose of His death. Jesus died so that He might live again.

You see, if Jesus died only for us, what good would that do us? Any person can die for anyone. Like we hear great stories about men in combat dying for their own. I remember reading a story years ago about this soldier in the Vietnam war who jumped over a grenade that was hurled against his squad by the enemy. As soon as he saw the grenade hurled in the air, he ran toward it, and used his body to smother the grenade, saving the lives of his fellow soldiers. That was sacrificial, something to be commended, but ultimately, it didn’t save the spiritual lives of those men. In the same way, if Jesus died only, it really doesn’t mean anything. In fact, our faith is in vain. This is what Paul teaches. In 1 Cor. 15:14-18, he says, *“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead*

are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men."

What's the point of being a Christian if there is no resurrection? We are still dead in our sins and going to hell. But Jesus Christ is risen, Amen? As the Bible says, he has conquered sin and death forever by his resurrection. And that is what separates us Christians from the rest of humanity. So, that is why when we share the gospel or we witness to others about Christ, we talk not only about his death, but about his resurrection as well. They go hand-in-hand. One cannot be without the other. And that is the complete gospel. Without both, no one can be saved.

You see, Jesus' desire is for all of us to experience the resurrection. But as F.F. Bruce, a leading Bible scholar has said, "If he was to impart resurrection life to others, He must receive resurrection life Himself." The death of a shepherd would be a disaster for his sheep. But not the death of the Good Shepherd--because He comes back to His sheep. He experienced death so we wouldn't have to. But He experienced resurrection so that we might share in it ourselves.

The resurrection is proof of the Good Shepherd's love. Jesus said concerning his life (v.18), *"I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again."* Jesus did this by His own power. He chose to die and He chose to rise from the dead all for you and for me. Nobody made Him do it--He did it of His own accord. Sometimes the scripture teaches that it was the Father who raised the Son. But here Jesus states that He had the authority to take up His life again. Both are true, for the Father and Son work together in perfect harmony. The Son is not greater than

the Father, and the Father is not greater than the Son--they work together for the same purpose--to save us from death because of their love.

The Good Shepherd's love is proved by an empty tomb. Lastly we see Jesus' love for us in these verses for we learn that

III. THE GOOD SHEPHERD'S LOVE IS MANIFESTED WITH OPEN ARMS

In John 3:16 we learn that *"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* We need to concentrate on two specific things in that famous verse:

1. God loves the whole world--not just a part of it.
2. Whoever believes in Jesus will receive eternal life.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a Universal Gospel. Here in John 10:14 Jesus says, *"I know My sheep and my sheep know me"*, and He was talking about the people of Israel. In Mat 15:24 Jesus says, *"I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."* But the wonderful news for us is found in v.16 of our text: *"I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."*

Jesus was speaking of all the non-Jews of the world who would be called to salvation. Notice He says, *"There shall be one flock and one shepherd."* Jesus was saying that there was coming a day when there would be no division between Jew and Gentile, or black and white, or yellow and red.

We all are one in Jesus Christ. There are no longer any divisions to be made between the people of Israel and the rest of the world--we can all be one through our relationship with Jesus.

God holds no special place in His heart for any nation or tribe--His chosen people are all people who will come to the Son--regardless of nationality. That's why Paul could write to the Galatians, (Gal 3:28-29) *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

Understand that the ones who are from Abraham's seed are not those who have inherited his blood--Abraham's seed consists only of those who have given their lives to Christ. The true Israel has been manifested through the Church.

We are no longer Jews, or Greeks, or Americans, or Filipinos, or Hispanic, or Chinese--we have become one flock and we have only one Shepherd--His name is Jesus. And the love that comes from the Good Shepherd is shown in that His arms are open wide. What was once made available only to the people of Israel has now been given to everyone who believes.

Israel was once considered God's chosen people but 1 Peter 2:9 says to all of us who are Christians, *"you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God..."* Jesus says *"there shall be one flock and one shepherd."* His arms are open wide.

As we learn of the Good Shepherd, I am still somewhat uncomfortable with being a sheep--that is--until I begin to understand of what infinite value I am to God. The

Good Shepherd loves us so much that He died in our place, He rose from the dead, and He welcomes us into His fold with open arms.

When I know that I find that my only desire is to be one of His sheep.

This morning, I'm wondering if there's anyone here who would like to be one of his sheep too. If that is your desire, just give your heart to Jesus and tell him that you'd like to follow him, that you'd like him to be your Good Shepherd. I'd like you to think about it as I sing a song of giving your heart o Jesus.

Song: I Will Give You My Heart