

I Am...
The Good Shepherd
John 10:11-18

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Text Introduction: We are in the Gospel of John again today. We began this year considering the 7 miracles of Jesus as told by John. Now, we are considering the 7 “I Am” statements of John. Seven times, John records Jesus proclaiming Himself with the introductory formula “I am.” We have considered the statement “I am the bread of life.” We said that just as bread sustains our lives physically, Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the One who sustains us spiritually and eternally. We have considered the statement, “I am the light of the world.” This statement gives us a radical claim (I am the light of the world) which calls us to a radical discipleship (anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness) which guarantees for us a radical promise (but will have the light of life). Last time, we considered Jesus’ saying, “I am the door.” We said that this tells us that Jesus is the one door that must be entered into for salvation, and that the door is open and offered, but He will not force any to enter. This brings us to the fourth statement, which is actually a continuation of the illustration on shepherding begun in the previous statement.

Text: ¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and doesn’t own the sheep, leaves them and runs away when he sees a wolf coming. The wolf then snatches and scatters them. ¹³ This happens because he is a hired man and doesn’t care about the sheep.

¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd. I know My own sheep, and they know Me, ¹⁵ as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father. I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ But I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ This is why the Father loves Me, because I am laying down My life so I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from My Father.”

Introduction: I told you last week that there is an illustration in the beginning of chapter 10 that actually serves as the basis for two “I Am” statements. As such, let’s have a little quick review today. The illustration in verses 1-5 deals with shepherding in the first century world. Read again verses 1-5.

A Quick Review:

If we are going to understand Jesus’ use of the illustration we must understand this. The illustration is not an allegory.

Not an allegory, so don’t press the details; seek to understand the main point.

The illustration is used to make two main points:

1. Jesus is like the door in a sheep pen.

2. Jesus is like a good shepherd.

The Illustration Expanded:

The illustration is expanded to another illustration from the world of shepherding—Jesus as the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. The shepherd illustration is expanded by comparing the good shepherd to a bad shepherd. The good shepherd is in it for the good of the sheep. The bad shepherd is in the business for profit. So, when tough times come, the hired shepherd is out of there.

Let's talk about that today.

Jesus as the Good Shepherd:

Visualize the Statement

The analogy of God as a shepherd is used throughout the Bible. Consider these:

- Genesis 49:24
Yet his bow remained steady,
and his strong arms were made agile
by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,
by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,
- Genesis 48:15
Then he blessed Joseph and said: The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,
- Isaiah 40:11
He protects His flock like a shepherd;
He gathers the lambs in His arms
and carries them in the fold of His garment.
He gently leads those that are nursing.
- Ezekiel 34:12
As a shepherd looks for his sheep on the day he is among his scattered flock, so I will look for My
flock. I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered on a cloudy and
dark day.
- Matthew 9:36
When He saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were weary and worn out,
like sheep without a shepherd.
- Psalm 23
King James Version (KJV)

23 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

The analogy here in John 10 is powerful. Last week, we observed Jesus saying that He was the gate, as in the gate of the sheep pen. Now, visualize this. He is willing to lay His life down in the gate to become the gate.

If you are a good father or mother, you probably get this illustration better than others. In fact, since we don't understand shepherding nearly as well as hearers of the first century did, visualizing my role as a husband and father serves me well. Here is what I visualize. If someone seeks to harm my wife or either of my two boys, he is going to have to come through me. Multiply that times infinity and you get what Jesus is saying as the Good Shepherd.

Internalize the Statement

So, what does that mean? I think there are several key things expressed in this text to help us to internalize this truth.

- He is the Savior who seeks.

It seems that you can't read this text and not think about Jesus' parable in Luke 15 about going after the one sheep. There is a description of intimacy in this passage that parallels the relationship between the Father and the Son.

- He is the Savior who serves.

This is His decision. He lays down His life. He has the right to lay it down.

- He is the Savior who sacrifices.

Jesus gave His life so that we might have life.

- He is the Savior who is our substitute.

He did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

- He is the Savior who secures our salvation.

There is an old story about a tour group in Israel. The tour guide had been explaining to the group about the close relationship shepherds had with his sheep, and how he is able to walk in front of them, call them, perhaps whistle or play a pipe, and they will follow him. During the tour, the group came upon a

shepherd who spotted a man in the distance driving a small flock of sheep with a rather menacing stick. Was the guide mistaken, then? He immediately stopped the bus and rushed off across the fields. A few minutes later he returned, his face beaming. He announced, "I have just spoken to the man. Ladies and gentlemen, he is not the shepherd. He is in fact the butcher!" (John Stott, "The Church's Pastors" in *The Contemporary Christian*, p. 284.)

Personalize the Statement

This passage tells us that Jesus is the Good Shepherd, but the New Testament does not stop there.

- Hebrews 13:20-21-- Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus—the **great** Shepherd of the sheep—with the blood of the everlasting covenant,²¹ equip you with all that is good to do His will, working in us what is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ. Glory belongs to Him forever and ever. Amen.

The emphasis has shifted from the cross to the resurrection, but it doesn't stop there. He certainly continues to be good, but the "empty tomb declares Him to be great." (Greg Matte, *I Am Changes who I Am*, p. 156)

- 1 Peter 5:4-- And when the **chief** Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Now, the emphasis is on His return.

Jesus is described as the good shepherd, even the great shepherd, even the chief shepherd, but the question is: **Is Jesus my shepherd?**

This is the question of this text. This is the question of the cross. This is the most important question of all.

Greg Matte, pastor of First Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, has written a book on the Gospel of John. I love his title—*I Am Changes Who I am*. Indeed, it does.