

“I Am The Good Shepherd”

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not a shepherd and does not own sheep, sees the wolf coming and abandons the sheep and runs away.” (John 10:11,12)

The heart of Jesus’ statement ‘I Am the Good Shepherd,’ is this: ‘Why did the Lord Jesus lay down or fully surrender His life for His sheep?’ Jesus wants us to know what moved Him to die on our behalf, to give His life to rescue the sheep from their sins, and to bear the wrath of God in our place. Therefore, Jesus gives us three of His motivations as our good shepherd that motivated Him to give up His life for our sake.

First, Jesus laid down His life for His sheep because He loves His sheep.

To help better comprehend the love of Christ for us as His sheep, Jesus creates a contrast between Himself and a new character: the ‘hired hand.’ Jesus is once again contrasting Himself with the religious leaders, the” hired hands” of Israel. They were thieves and robbers in a previous context because they intentionally prevented people from finding life through Christ. In this passage, they are hirelings because they use the sheep for their own enrichment and the Lord Jesus knows they lack any genuine love for God’s people.

Jesus, then, stands in contrast to the “hired hands” because He, unlike the religious leaders, is concerned, in fact, has the greatest level of love for the sheep. Jesus loves His sheep, and this explains why He gives His life for them. Jesus will never flee to save Himself, as does the hired hand. Jesus is genuinely concerned for the wellbeing of His sheep.

Second, Jesus gave His life for His sheep because He knows His sheep.

At first glance, this seems to be a good reason for Jesus not to die for His sheep! Think about what sinners we are – with all our flaws, failures, and weaknesses. Charles Spurgeon once said, *“If any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him. For you are worse than he thinks you to be.”* It is nothing less than astounding to think that one of the reasons the Savior died for His sheep is because He has intimate knowledge of each of His sheep.

Jesus knows us. He knows our names, and He knows us better than we know ourselves. With this intimate knowledge, He died for us, knowing all our sinfulness, failures, weaknesses, and even the ways we would deny Him.

Here's something even more incredible: not only does Jesus know us, but even in our present condition, we get to know Him. We know our shepherd, which means that He is known to us and we are in a close, intimate, and personal relationship with Christ. To know Jesus is the heart of the Christian life. This was all that mattered to Paul, whose life was dominated by the desire to know Christ more. To know our shepherd is the heartbeat of every believer.

All believers in Jesus Christ have the same shepherd and are part of the same flock. That unity should express itself in how we love and treat every believer. If there is one thing the world should see from Christians, it is that we love one another and are unified to love each other and our Good Shepherd. There are times when we will certainly disagree with one another about various issues, but we should always desire to glorify our good shepherd who laid His life for us. In fact, we should be so overwhelmed by the grace Christ has shown us in laying down His life for us while knowing everything about us, that we quickly act to forgive, to show mercy, to love, and to the best of our ability preserve the unity the Spirit works to produce in the church.

Finally, the good shepherd lays down His life for His sheep because He obeys His Father.

Jesus died for us because He is perfectly obedient to the Father. The Father gave Him the authority to lay down His life, and to take it up again. The Father commanded Him to offer Himself up for our sins and rise from the dead. The Lord Jesus obeyed the commandment of His Father. The Lord Jesus is stating a fact-- that He, the Son, has the authority to obey and do the Father's will.

As such, the Father loves the Son because the Son is infinitely lovable. Everything about Christ elicits the Father's love. When the Father looks at the Son and sees who He is-- the perfect image of the invisible God,-- the exact representation of the nature of Deity, His beloved Son -- the Father rejoices in, delights in, and loves His Son because the Father sees that the Son is lovely and lovable.

The Father's love of His Son is the exact opposite of us as sinners: the Father does not love us because we are lovely. We are worthy of nothing but divine

contempt for all eternity because of our sin. Jesus, though, is worthy of nothing but divine love for all eternity because He is infinitely lovable. His loveliness and perfection expresses itself in His submission to the will of the Father. The Father does not love us because we are lovely. The Father loves us because He is gracious and merciful. The sheep are so identified with Christ, that He sees us in Him. We are loved because we are in Christ. Because we are one with Christ, the Father will make us lovely by conforming us to the image of His beloved Son.

If the Father loves Christ because He is infinitely worthy of love, we should love Jesus with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The Good Shepherd is infinitely worthy, beautiful, and lovely. Let us always make Jesus, the good shepherd, the chief object of our affections.

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all... (2 Corinthians 4:17).

We must not look at life as the world around us does. The pressure of “now” is a tyrant known for its mental anxiety weighing heavily on the believer. The thoughts that emanate from this tyrant say that this is the only opportunity to get this or that. You have to move now, to grab it now, to take it now. You’ll never get another chance. This is the only chance you’ll ever get. This is the only chance

you are going to have to find fulfillment. The spirit of our Adversary in the world says, "If you don't take it now, you are never going to have it come around again." This impulse promises great things, but takes so very much. Personally, I have seen those who obey that internal impulse forsake their marriages and to decide to spend so that a new financial obligation leads to years serving a debt. Discontented people hope that this decision, whatever 'now' demands, can fulfill one's dreams. Discontentment makes one feel that life is slipping away and rescue is by self. Save yourself! Do it now!

Christians are not to think that way. Scripture pictures life as a time of school, a training period. Life is where believers are being prepared for something that is incredibly great, but it is yet to come. It doesn't come now, but beyond today and beyond this time. That preparation is passing over, saying no to that impulse to "jump" in the dark.

I don't understand all that the Lord has prepared for us, but I believe every promise about eternity is true and will be fulfilled. I can hardly wait until it happens. So don't succumb to the philosophy that you have got to have it now or you will never have another chance. The best is not offered here and now.

You can pass by many things now and be content having not taken advantage of the "sell job" of the tyrant. You know that what you will be getting, what God has promised and is sending you in your present experience, is just what you need to get you ready for what He has waiting for you when you step into eternity. So don't lose hope. Resist the urge to have it now, to do it now, because if you don't, you'll miss out.

If you are a genuine believer, are headed for those things for which we now hope, headed for life, headed for glory. All of this life is working toward that end. You don't need to be depressed or feel that everything is useless, that you can't do anything, that you are getting too old, that you have lost your ability and so many thoughts that contribute to the pressure to have it now. Paul prays that these Christians may feel in their hearts the great hope to which his preaching and teaching has called them. It is all waiting for you on the other side of death; it is the shining hope toward which all believers are moving.

You can see from these chapters that Satan, though he has faded from the visible scene, is still there in the background, still there in the thinking and arguments of Job's comforters. Satan uses these friends as channels to beat Job down, to push him to turn away from confidence in the LORD, to become cold to the God he has trusted. The apostle Paul called this kind of Satanic work, "the flaming arrows of the evil one" (Ephesians 6:16). Flaming arrows are the accusations of the accuser against believers. In Job's case these Satanic accusations are asserted and defended by men he thought would be helpful and comfort his sorrows. Job didn't expect them to heal him, only to comfort him in the midst of his pain. Because they argued a point of their private philosophy of life, they were "miserable comforters." What a warning to believers! Let us be alert. Let us beware of becoming a channel for Satan's accusations against someone who is suffering, as Job is suffering here.

Then Job goes on to state the facts, as he understands them. He says, "All I can conclude from what I am suffering is that God hates me. God assails and tears me in his anger" (Job 16:9a). Job experiences the abandonment of those who should have loved him, those who should have above all else, wanted to relieve his pain. Instead, they have rejected him. They have added to his misery making life unbearable. He falsely ascribes responsibility for those circumstances to God: "God has turned me over to evil men and thrown me into the clutches of the wicked" (Job 16:11). Perhaps Job is having trouble balancing two doctrines, that of God's power and ability and His allowing evil. God could change things, but he didn't. He could have, but He didn't. Why doesn't God rescue righteous Job? He has the power to do so. That is Job's question and it remains unanswered, even to our day.

Job charges God with all that is wrong in his life. Yet God is wonderfully patient. He does not turn against Job, nor does He punish him, even though he has sinned. Job accused God, and in doing so, Job diminished the glory of God. He made God look badly to others, which is a grievous sin. God has great mercy! If you are ready to stop arguing with God, God is ready to be merciful to you. Come to Him. Allow God to be God. Trust His wisdom to care for you.