



**"The Good Shepherd"  
John 10:1-18 (NRSVUE)  
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***"Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."*** <sup>6</sup> Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

<sup>7</sup> Therefore Jesus said again, ***"Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.<sup>[a]</sup> They will come in and go out, and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. <sup>11</sup> "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> The***

***man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.***

***<sup>14</sup> "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. <sup>18</sup> 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."***

As we continue on our journey of Christian discipleship and seek to walk closer with Christ, we are reminded of the words of the prophet Isaiah, as they echo in our ears, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

We should be sure today that we know and are in a right relationship with the good shepherd, Jesus, the Christ. We find these potent, picturesque words in the Gospel according to John, who helps us see and understand the spiritual nature of Jesus and gives us spiritual insights into the mission and ministry of Jesus. This passage helps us, who are the sheep, to examine our kinship, friendship and relationship to the shepherd, Jesus.

Jesus simply says to his disciples, "I am the good shepherd." Good not necessarily in the sense of benevolent or kind; although he *is* those things. But good also, as true, genuine, and real. I am the true shepherd. I am the genuine shepherd. I am the real shepherd.

Now, we need to know something about the sheep. Sheep can only see what's *right* in front of them. They cannot look so far ahead and see what's down the road. They are short-sighted, near-sighted. They have myopic vision. That sounds like us, doesn't it?

The other thing about sheep is that you have to keep your eyes on them, because they have a tendency to go off on their own. You think they're with you and you look around and they have gone off somewhere and have lost their way.

Have you spent time watching or keeping a toddler? They're all over the place, aren't they? And you take your eye off of them for one second, there's no telling what they've gotten into.

We're like sheep, aren't we? Poor vision; no faith to see. Easily misled and influenced; go along with the crowd just to be popular and liked by the crowd. Doing and posting things on social media to get more followers and likes to feel validated.

We are easy to wander off somewhere, to backslide, to do everything but the right thing. We, like sheep, have gone astray and have turned to our own way. We launch out on our own, as if, we know the way, as if, we know where we're going; as if, we know where green pastures are to feast upon; as if, we know where still waters are, from which to drink.

And then, we look up and we're all alone. Out there in some desert place; some dry place; some lonely place. We look up and we're surrounded by a pack of wolves, who want to distract us, discourage us, and even devour us. Then we look for the shepherd to save us, deliver us, and protect us.

Jesus is the perfect divine example and epitome of what it means to be a shepherd. We who are pastors and leaders in the church are to follow Christ's example and *strive* to also be good shepherds and under-shepherds.

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd." During the time of Jesus, these words were an oxymoron or a paradox, because they didn't go together. A *good shepherd*? How can a *shepherd* be *good*?!? We see the pictures, images and artists' rendering of a shepherd, wearing the clean, long, white flowing garments. We see the shepherd holding the rod and staff in his hand, and the sheep over his shoulders. We see the shepherd standing in the midst of beautiful green pastures.

But there's another picture! This is the true, real, genuine picture and *reality* of being a shepherd. For the shepherd was seen in Jesus' day as someone at the bottom of the job respectability list. How in the world can you say a good shepherd and who wants to be a shepherd?

A good shepherd was one who rose early in the morning while the dew was still on the grass and he called the sheep out of the sheep pen. And the sheep followed him, because they knew his voice. A good shepherd was one who stood at noonday, in the heat of the sun and found water and green pastures for the sheep. The good shepherd was responsible for the welfare, health and care for these defenseless, helpless sheep. When it got late in the evening and the sun was going down, the shepherd gathered the sheep into the sheep pen and would lie down in front of it and across the gate to guard and protect the sheep. The shepherd would lie down in the mud and mire and pig waste, just to be the door to the sheep pen to protect and guard the sheep. If anything wanted to get to the sheep, it had to go through the shepherd.

I'm talking about the good shepherd. If a thief or robber wants to get the sheep, they must go through the shepherd. If a wolf wants to get to the sheep, it must go through the shepherd. The good shepherd will lay down his or her life for the sheep.

Who is a shepherd? Look at Jesus. Who is the shepherd who loves unconditionally? Look at Jesus. Who is the shepherd who cares? Look at Jesus. Who is the shepherd who will lay down their life for the sheep? Look at Jesus. The good shepherd is not a hireling; not in it for the money; not doing it for attention; for self-glory; but loves the sheep and will protect the sheep from thieves and wolves, even from wolves in sheep's clothing.

I remember when a member of the church that I served as pastor in MD came into my office one Sunday morning with her grandbaby's stuffed animal. She showed it to me and it was a beautiful sheep, but then she loosened the Velcro around the sheep's neck, lifted back the head of the sheep and underneath was the face of a wolf. I thought it was quite interesting for many reasons. It was a wolf in sheep's clothing.

There is somebody, the good shepherd, who will make you to lie down in green pastures and his name is Jesus. He will lead you beside the still waters; yes, he will restore your soul. Yea, though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death (the darkest valley); his rod and his staff will comfort you. I'm talking about Jesus, the good shepherd.

He will prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies. He will anoint your head with oil. Surely, goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life and you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

The question for you today, is, do you know the good shepherd of your soul? Do you know him, when your bills are due and you can't make your ends meet? Do you know him, when you've got money in the bank? Do you know him, when you're alone and can't see your way through? Do you know him, when folk talk about you, scandalize your name? Do you know him, when doctors have said they've done all they can do? I'm talking about Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Someone online may be saying, who are you Jesus? I'm new to this. I'm just starting out on this faith walk. Who are you Jesus? I used to be in church but I've lost my way and need to get back into the fold. Who are you Jesus? Jesus said, I am the good shepherd, who gives his life for the sheep. No one can take my life, but I give it and can take it back again.

Who are you Jesus? I am the door of the sheep. I am the true vine, and my father in heaven is the vinedresser. Who are you Jesus? I am the way, the truth and the life; I am the light of the world. Who are you Jesus? I am the bread of life. I am the resurrection and the life; they that believe in me, though they were dead, **yet** shall they live. Somebody needs to meet this good shepherd. Somebody needs to follow and get to know this good shepherd. Jesus said, there are sheep that are not of this fold, I must also bring them. Jesus invites you, wherever you are and whatever your past is.

He invites you to come to him; to deny yourself, take up your cross daily and to follow him. Jesus is the good shepherd.

Let the Church say, "Amen."