

JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

He cares for his Sheep -- Does he care for you? -- John 10:11-18

TEXT: *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns 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. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-and I lay down my life for the sheep. 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. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-only to 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 authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Among the great "I AM's" in the Gospel of John, those claims of Jesus identifying himself with God's name revealed to Moses when the Lord said to him: ***I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'*** Ex 3 ... those claims recorded in John's Gospel, like when Jesus declared: ***I am the bread of life...*** Jn 6; ***I am the light of the world...*** Jn 8; ***I am God's Son...*** Jn 10; ***I am the resurrection and the life ...*** Jn 11... Among those claims of those great "I AM's" is the one before us today that connects Jesus to King David's wonderful Psalm 23: ***The Lord is my Shepherd!*** Jesus declares: ***I AM the Good Shepherd.*** Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the Lord who cares for his sheep. Does He care for you?

If Jesus is the Good Shepherd, then he is responsible for all those blessed promises and assurances claimed by King David and all who are one of Jesus' sheep. Psalm 23: ***The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.*** Jesus will supply the needs of his sheep, both physical and spiritual. ***... he restores my soul. ...*** Jesus will give spiritual life so that the soul is restored, that is, alive again for eternal life. ***... He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*** ... That is, Jesus the Good Shepherd leads his sheep through this life, ***... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me*** ... No other religion on earth offers this powerful assurance! Jesus does it all! From beginning to end, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, cares for his Sheep!

The proof of this is set before us in the words he spoke to his disciples as well as to those who were his enemies: ***I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ... The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-only to 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 authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.*** The Good Shepherd would be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He would do this voluntarily. None of his enemies would take his life from him. Satan would not kill him. The Jews and Romans would not kill him. Not even the torture of crucifixion would kill him. Jesus would ***lay it down of my own accord.*** Jesus is God, he has the power to say: ***Father, into your hands I commend my spirit...*** and THEN he died. Jesus said: ***I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.*** The entire event was salvation of all humanity by the sacrifice of the Good Shepherd who himself is the Sacrifice, the Lamb of God!

Here is the proof that Jesus, the Good Shepherd truly cares for his sheep. The question, then, is DOES HE CARE FOR YOU? Are YOU one of Jesus' sheep?

The Bible says that while his disciples stood there mulling these amazing claims in their hearts and minds, Jesus' enemies declared: ***He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?*** Jn 10 These people obviously were NOT Jesus' Sheep. Their attitude was: Why listen to him? Isn't that the fatal question of so many in this world today? Why listen to him?

Concerning Jesus' coming to this earth to be our Redeemer, Paul writes: ***He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers...*** Eph 4 Jesus established the Gospel Ministry so that the voice of the Good Shepherd would be heard until his return at the end of the world. That you have a pastor and teachers among you is a wonderful sign that the Good Shepherd is among you. But the Gospel Ministry, the preaching of God's Word, is despised by all who are not God's Sheep. Those who are not God's Elect, His Sheep, look for other shepherds whose voices and words please them in their sinful desires. It was true in Jesus' day and it is true today. Paul also warns: ***...the time***

will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 2 Ti 4 That time is now. We are surrounded by many who will not listen to the shepherds, the pastors, Jesus himself has called.

But then Jesus did say: *The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns 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. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.* Who are these “hired hands?” Am I, your own pastor, being paid a salary to preach the Gospel to you? Am I a “hired hand?” No, for Scripture says that the Lord has commanded that *those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.* 1 Co 9

The Old Testament Prophet Jeremiah speaks of our day when, as the Lord says: *I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.* Je 3. Here is the promise of the pastoral ministry, that there will be shepherds, pastors, who will work after the heart of the Lord Jesus Himself, and who will lead you with the knowledge and understanding of what Jesus did for us for the forgiveness of our sins.

That they are “hired” is not the issue. It’s that they don’t care about the sheep. They feed them false doctrine and find those wandering sheep who want these false shepherds to teach and preach what their sinful hearts want to hear. In reality, they listen to false preachers instead of listening to the voice of the Good Shepherd as it is proclaimed in the Gospel.

So now, let me proclaim to you those blessed proofs that you are among those Sheep who are being led by Jesus, the Good Shepherd. For Jesus told his disciples: *I know my sheep and my sheep know me- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-and I lay down my life for the sheep. 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.* Let me offer you proof from that beautiful “Shepherd Psalm 23” written 1000 years before Jesus declared himself to be the Good Shepherd who cares for you.

In Psalm 23, David declared: *... your rod and your staff, they comfort me.* What identifies the comforting presence of the Lord? Is not the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, that is, the preaching of the Gospel of life and salvation through faith in Jesus, that assurance to you that the Good Shepherd has called you into his pen? Speaking of God’s Elect, His Chosen Ones, Jesus’ Sheep, Paul wrote to the Ephesians: *(God) made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ ... And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit ...* Eph 1 Yes, through the “foolishness of preaching” Jesus’ voice is heard and you are among those who listen!

David said: *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.* Is there not a more blessed table spread before us this morning where Jesus will feed us his body and blood in the Lord’s Supper? Flaunting this love before the faces of those who hate and despise us? In the face of death itself, is there a more powerful promise given to you who eat and drink than that here is the Good Shepherd who died for you, now with you and in you with the forgiveness of your sins? What can Satan and death possibly say about this?

Then David writes: *You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* It wasn’t oil that was used, but water, because Jesus commanded Baptism which is simple water applied in His name. But with this simple promise applied to you with the application of water, Jesus the Good Shepherd has laid claim to you, body and soul, as one of his Sheep.

Does Jesus care for you? What is written in Scripture clearly tells you that! It doesn’t suggest that you are a sheep, or urge you to try to examine yourself to see whether you are a sheep of his sheep pen. No, by the promised forgiveness of sins won by Jesus when he laid down his life and rose again also to tell you to believe the promises of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, Jesus has identified you before the world as one of his own.

Listen to his voice and you will always be assured that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, loves you and cares for you very much! Amen.