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Jesus The Good Shepherd

Key verses: John 10:1-21

Key personalities: God as the Trinity, Jesus

Timeline: The God of Eternity; He enters as a Man, being fully God and fully Man, walks this earth as our Lead, 28-29 A.D.

How does God treat His children? With the love and care of a protector, comforter, and guide. Jesus is described as a Shepherd. This is one of His most passionate and intimate illustrations, portraying His people as sheep and He as the Good Shepherd. He is also the Gatekeeper who watches over us, calling us to follow His voice of instructions.

Key Happenings: Jesus the Good Shepherd!

I am the God Shepherd. Christ comes to us bringing the Gospel. He puts our concerns and needs before His. For our sins, He steadfastly obeyed the Father's Will, and He is the One who saves, leads, equips, and guides us--all things that we so desperately need. God is the Shepherd for His people, and His people are described as a flock that needs His leading and provision. It is our call to hear His voice and obey, as a good sheep does, in order to be fed and cared for so that we may grow in maturity and not be taken by predators (Gen. 48:15; 49:24; Psalm 23; 28:9; 77:20; 78:52, 71; 79:13; 80:1; 100:3; Isa. 40:11; 63:11; Jer. 23:1; 31:10; 34:11-16; Ezek. 34:6-16, 31; Hos. 6:6; Zech. 13:7; Matt. 26:31; John 10:1-8; 16:13-15; Rom. 10:7; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 7:17).

- *Lays down his life.* Jesus IS "The Lamb of God", and He is the only perfect sacrifice of blood--the offering so we can be forgiven of our sins. He represents the only effective and ultimate sacrifice--He takes away the sin of the world. The price was invaluable and could not have been paid by human measures. These are not just good-sounding words; rather, He is giving to us a depiction of protection, comfort, contentment, and His Lordship. He lovingly corrals His sheep for spiritual nourishment, personal growth, and security. This is also an image of Christ who comes as a suffering servant and becomes the sacrifice to atone for our sins (Ex. 12; Lev. 16; Isa. 53:7-12; John 19:30-36; Acts 2:32; 3:15; 4:10; 1 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 1:1; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet 1:19).
- *Shepherd.* This is the person tasked with the guarding and caring of the sheep. The person who owned the sheep had a vested interest in them and would do all it took to protect them, as their family's livelihood depended on them (Gen. 31:39; Num. 27:15-23; 1 Sam. 17:34-37; 2 Sam. 5:2; Psalm 78:71-72; Isa. 63:11; Jer. 3:15; Ezek. 34:1-24).
- *Hired hand.* This is a metaphor for the careless leader who is a coward and not concerned versus a true representative of God who is entrusted to feed and care for His people. Since he was hired, the hired hand is only motivated by self-interest and getting paid and was not ultimately responsible for the sheep. With no vested interest, he would not stay and fight a lion or fend off robbers. Religious leaders who did not invest themselves in the care of their people were like robbers (Jer. 23:1; Ezek. 34:6).
- *Wolf,* indicates predators, false teachers, bad leaders, the devil, and those who are enemies of God and His people. They act on self-interests whereas Christ is concerned with our interests. Our Lord nurtures, loves, and cares for us and calls us to do the same for others (2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 5:1-2).
- *Abandons the sheep.* This is a warning to callous and manipulative leaders. We have the Truth; what we usually lack is the listening and follow-through!

- *Sheep* is a metaphor for God's people. Although sheep are notoriously stupid animals and can't survive on their own, they show us that without God, we are just like them. They are totally dependent upon their caregiver, the Shepherd. A sheep that gets out and lives on its own will starve because it will not go where the food is. It will hurt itself by rubbing itself to death on a tree, falling down and breaking its leg, or falling off a cliff. Sheep need constant care and attention; the sheep that skips out on that care will die. The shepherd is the one who graciously cares for the sheep in his care, even laying his life on the line against predators and rustlers. This is precisely what Jesus has done for us-- He laid down His life and rose again because He is the Good Shepherd and the epitome of what a good leader does for the people in his care (Psalm 77:20; 78:52; 100:3).
- Jesus becomes our *sheepfold*, where those who do not belong or who desire to hurt His sheep, His people, are thwarted and His people are protected and loved. He is the God who cares, loves, and leads us to the safety of His arms. God's role in offering us eternal life and that by Jesus' life and work, He becomes that door (Psalm 118:20; Matt. 7:13-14; John 6:35; 14:6).
- In contrast, the rich and sophisticated Greeks, Egyptians and Romans detested shepherds because of the smell and considered shepherds vulgar. Ironically, Jesus uses this image to instruct and convict the pious frauds as well as to model to the good leaders how they should be.

Two of the primary foundations of the Gospel Message are who Jesus is and what He did on the cross for us.

We have to trust in our *Good Shepherd* to lead us to the good pastures. We are also to do our part with gratitude and diligence and not run away from His pen. We are called to be led by the Word and not by our pride or by false teachers, the thieves who would rob us of God's instructions and replace them with nonsense, the dangerous cliffs from which we could fall.

- *Sheep follow.* Even though God is the One who gives life and protects, a responsibility is given to leaders to be watchful and aware of people who would fleece and hurt the flock of our Lord (1 Sam. 17:34-37; 2 Sam. 5:2).
- The key for us is to recognize His voice, trust in Him, and follow Him. As usual, those who oppose Truth, the thieves and robbers of the day, objected to Jesus' words and called Him a demon. Others were comforted and reassured that Jesus was the Messiah.
- This is so important for us today: *Anyone who teaches falsely is a thief and robber; my true sheep will listen to me and not to them. Those who come to me will be saved.* There is so much false teaching. There are too many prideful leaders taking us astray. Jesus calls to us, His own, by name with intimacy and care, and leads us to where we need to be. He gathers us together to be with one another for mutual support and protection and tells us to be careful and not follow bad shepherds who would hurt us.
- Jesus gives us real true Truth and is Truth! *I tell you the truth/truly, truly.* Meaning "I am" and "I have God's Truth". This is not theoretical or relative truth or some idea manipulated by one's faulty reasoning based on the man's relativistic ideas, personal or political agendas. Jesus brings us real, effectual Truth. He is the only One who can lead us to God the Father. (Num. 27:17; 2 Sam. 5:2; Matt. 5:18; John 3:1-15; Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:1-8; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:18)
- *Be saved.* Only Christ can guarantee and give salvation to those who would receive His gift and trust in Him. Christ's most amazing and wondrous gift is imputed to us, so our most inward being is transformed and renewed! Without this, we cannot be justified or do any good (John 3:15-16, 36; 14:6; 17:2-6, 24; Acts 16:31; Rom. 8:18-30; 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 1:1)!
- *Have life.* This means that through our relationship with Jesus Christ, we have joyful abundance now, personal favor of God with real fellowship with Him, a purpose and meaning for our daily lives, and eternal life to come (John 3:1-16).

- *Why listen to him?* The people in Jesus' day who were in His presence were just as divided about Him as people are in our day, even with all of our resources and history. People are divided over who and what Jesus is. Some listen and put their faith in Him; others, by conceit and a refusal to be convicted, demonize Him and His Truth (Ex. 4:11; Psalm 146:8; John 7:20, 43; 9:16).

Not my sheep/part of my flock. Scripture tells us the Holy Spirit enables a person to receive Christ and the Father sends them to Him. Yet, there are those who refuse Him and, therefore, are not in the Kingdom of God. They are so self-deluded by pride, they can't see beyond themselves to what disables their eyes and ears like sin, prejudice, and/or damage to emotions and thinking and conceit, all of which can easily be reversed in Christ. This is also a retort to those who refuse to listen to God and accept His most precious, undeserved gift. The Israelites heard God's voice when they obeyed Him but went into apostasy and judgment when they refused. (Ex. 33:12-17; Isa. 43:1; John 3:3-7; 16:13-15; Rom. 5:4-5; 8:14, 26-27; 1 Cor. 12:3; Gal. 4:6).

- The Gospel is not limited to the Jews. Even at the time of Abraham, the Jews were meant to be the display of God and a beacon so others would come to know Him. The image of the shepherd here is of one who gathers his sheep that have been scattered by predators and indecision, common in sheep. Here, God claims His children, both the children of promise and those who are Gentiles (Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 56:8; Ezek. 37:21-24; Mic. 2:12; John 17:20-23; Eph. 2:11-22).
- *Snatch them.* Meaning we are preserved in faith by the strength of Christ; our salvation is secure and cannot be lost. The Good Shepherd guards and preserves His sheep from spiritual thieves and gives us the resources and ability so we won't be carried away. If we are, it is by our own willful disobedience and apostasy (John 6:37-40; 10:28-29; 17:2-24; Rom. 8:29-30; Phil. 1:6; 1 Cor. 1:8; 9:1; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:32; Tim. 1:12; 4:18; 1 John 2:19).

Who we are? *My sheep.* This is a metaphor for Christians and the Church, people whose faith is in Jesus Christ. This is a call to trust and obey. Even though there are many churches and denominations, there is ultimately only one Flock, one Christ, the Body of Christ, and One Shepherd, Jesus Christ!

- Sheep were used for sacrifice. This is also a depiction of our need to sacrifice our will, our mindsets, our hurts, and our fears over to Christ. Sheep also produced essential goods for an agrarian culture like wool for clothes, especially when it was cold. There was no better material. There was also the milk that was made into cheese, a necessary life sustaining food, and there was the meat (Psalm 23; Isa. 53:6; Rom. 8:36; 12:1-2; Acts 4:32; 1 Pet. 2:25; 2 Pet. 2:20-22).
- *Follow me.* This means to follow the teaching. Here, many of these people literally followed Jesus on the road, but this indicates a need for a response by faith. It means that when powered by the Holy Spirit, this pronouncement of faith will change a person to the very core, so one pledges and commits to trust and to learn (Matt. 4:19; 9:9-13; Luke 6:39-40).
- *Eternal life.* The Good Shepherd protects His sheep from perishing spiritually and gives us everlasting fellowship and abundance beyond description. Jesus makes it emphatic: He is the only way, and we must believe in and trust Him by faith! It is alone a faith in Christ through the grace of God that we are saved. We have never been and never can be saved by faith in one's religion, ideas, or self no matter what the origins are, even from Moses himself.
- *Charge from the Father.* Meaning our assurance, that we are doubly secure. The Supreme Omnipotence of God gently leads us to Christ and gives us the ultimate guarantee for spiritual safety and salvation. If God does not call you, you can't come, because you will not want to. This is also a warning to those pretenders who think they know God but only use Him for their purposes of power and control, or people who teach falsely.

What we need to do: *Listen to my voice/sheep listen.* This is a metaphor of God allowing us to hear and to come to Him; for, without His lead we would not be willing or able to be saved. In theology, this is called "elected grace." We are not forced; rather, we are inspired and given the ability to respond by the work of the Holy Spirit. Sheep have the uncanny ability to hear only their master and will only follow that

one person. A multitude of sheep from different owners were penned together then (as today); each shepherd would call to the sheep, but only their sheep would respond. This is also a metaphor of hearing God's voice calling us by name, meaning by intimacy, true knowledge, and relationship. Additionally, this is a call to Christians to renew our faith with further dedication, confidence, and submission (Ex. 33:12-17; Isa. 43:1; John 16:13-15).

Key Takeaway: Jesus The Good Shepherd is how Christ came to us and how we are to serve. Yet, what gets in the way of this? Our life of contentment is trapped between the walls of experience, the ceiling of things we desire, and the mire of our hurts, while we tend to ignore the door of the truth and real joy. For us to be in the safety of faith, we not only need to be in Christ, but we also have to obey Him. This is a result of our intimate relationship with Him. We know Him; He knows us, and we do what He says. We are concerned with what concerns Him, and we act accordingly. Like sheep, we can't lead ourselves or others without being forever lost and unfed. Jesus is the Good Shepherd; we are the sheep. The question is: Are you a sheep under His care or one that is out on the lam (pun intended) on the run (1 Sam. 17:34-36; John 2:19; 3:14; 6:51)?

The Call to the Church? Sheep, like people, are prone to wander and hurt themselves and make bad choices; they must have good, nurturing shepherds to guide them. That is what our job is as a pastor! Jesus anoints people to be His leaders for His people. Why would a leader neglect or twist this call? The pastors and church leaders are responsible for their part of leadership to model as Jesus did as being a good shepherd.

Questions to Ponder

1. Do you now or have you had a pet you love? How did it respond when it heard your voice? What can be learned from this for your spiritual life?
2. What does it mean to you that Jesus Christ is the God who cares, loves, and leads us to the safety of His arms? What is the key for us to recognize His voice, trust in, and follow Him?
3. Are you a sheep under His care or out on the lamb on the run? What have you done to declare your faith in Jesus Christ?
4. Jesus compares Christians with sheep that were cared for and loved, used to produce the livelihood of the community, and sacrificed to God in the Temple. How is this like your life?
5. How has God used you and your church to bring *other sheep* to Him? What can you do better to respond to His call?
6. God wants to keep you; the question is *do you want to be kept?* How do you feel that no one can hurt you spiritually? How can or how have you hurt yourself?
7. How have you needed protection, comfort, and contentment? How have you shown these traits to others? What do you need to say and do for God to give you mercy, guidance, and salvation (if you do not have it)?
8. What does it mean to you that Jesus calls to you personally and intimately? How can you communicate to others how Jesus knows His sheep by name with intimacy and care, and desires to lead us where we need to be?
9. What does it mean to you that this all comes from a caring, loving, nurturing God?
10. How does one's own willful disobedience and apostasy get in the way of an effective, God-loving life?
11. Why is Jesus so concerned about unfaithful leaders? How have you seen such leaders steal from God's people what they need to have?
12. What must happen to renew your faith with further dedication, confidence, and submission?