

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD, JOHN 10:11-21

Who Is I AM? #4

◆ **Intro:** The coronavirus is upon us. The world is at a standstill, and a standoff, for that matter. Could you really use someone who knew just what to do? Well then, you could use a good shepherd. Do you feel a degree of helplessness, like you're a lamb that just can't compete with the bears of the world, or of the market? Well then, you could use a good shepherd. Do you wish you knew where there was the right medicine, or maybe even just a store that still had "*papier toilette*"? Well then, you could use a good shepherd. Does the overflowing, rushing river of life frighten you with the unstoppable force hidden beneath its surface? Well then, you could use a good shepherd. I'd like to tell you about him.

◆ Jesus made some audacious claims when he walked our earth, claims that would either prove him a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord he claimed he was. But we know we can't just settle for thinking of merely a nice man. So far in this Lenten season we've looked his claim to be:

◆ **The Bread of Life:** which is a description of him as Creator God, and provider, just as God provided miracle bread in the desert for Israel.

◆ **The Light of the World:** which indicated that he was the very presence of God, just as the pillar of fire that led the Israelites in the wilderness.

◆ **The Door/Gate:** which would make him your true and loving owner, and the protector of the universe.

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◆ Jesus also used that famous "I AM" name of God to tell us that he is the Good Shepherd, and we'll meditate a bit on that today. We already met the gentle, yet fearless image of the Shepherd last week in the opening verse of John 10. Our text today helps us understand why Jesus is the one qualified to truly be called the Good Shepherd.

◆ **1. Jesus is the Good Shepherd because he laid down his life for his sheep.** This fact is repeated no less than five times in our text today! It must be significant.

◆ **A.** A poor shepherd, as he points out in verse 12, is the mere hired hand, the fill-in who is interested in making an extra buck but really has no skin in the game. The coyote comes slinking up and he's on the 4-wheeler head'n for the farm! Whereas a good shepherd knows that sheep are sitting ducks when it comes to predators. They can freeze up, stand there for the killing. Let's just say, sheep aren't the sharpest tool in the shed. A good shepherd knows this, and a good shepherd is more like a mother bear separated from her cubs. "Oh no you don't come near one of my babies!" A good shepherd is good because his love is voluntary which proves it is real.

◆ Shepherd Phil Keller lived among the Masai tribe in Africa and tells of a small, slim boy about ten years old being carried up to his house. He had single-handedly attacked young lioness that tried to kill one of his flock. In total self-abandonment and utter bravery he had managed to spear

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the lion but took a mauling that almost cost him his life.

Why? the Masai pride themselves as herdsman. Each animal is known personally, and it is not unusual to see them speaking soft and endearing words to each one. Their sheep delight in the attention. This boy's love, loyalty and honor was at stake. He was no hireling.

◆ Listen friends, in just weeks we recognize Good Friday, the day the man Jesus was nailed to a Roman cross in Palestine over 2000 years ago. What many people don't realize is that he went there willingly! They didn't need the nails to hold him there. He "laid down his life" in a spiritual transaction with God the Father to pay the killing your sins deserve! Jesus wants to save you!

◆ **B.** Furthermore Jesus says he is "the" good shepherd, not "a" good shepherd. So he is not just a fellow who has taken a course in muttonology, inherited a flock from his uncle. Jesus reminded the people of Israel that in ages past God had consistently said that a "good shepherd" would come to the aid of his people. In the prophecy of Ezekiel God confronts the leaders of Israel as poor shepherds who only use the people for their own benefit. He says he will come and rescue the nation.

◆ *"For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places*

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where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.” Ezekiel 34:11, 12, NIV.

◆ God was going to come to shepherd his people. Jesus is the good shepherd because he is the promised shepherd. This was no accident of history. It was foretold, preplanned, prepared for. It was thought out, and determined. *Listen, God made a way for your sins to be wiped out ever before you were born to sin them! God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him will not die, but have eternal life. Take him up on it!*

◆ **2. Jesus is the Good Shepherd because I deserve his death. That means his death was substitutionary.** There are many theories of atonement in the world. Some think that they can atone for their sins by doing good things, but good things don't change history. If you've cheated on your spouse, giving groceries to the homeless doesn't make you a person who has never cheated. If you've shoplifted some socks or jewelry, mowing the neighbors yard doesn't change your history. You're just a nice shoplifter, and that doesn't cut it. As my farmer friends like to say, you can't dress up a turd. Guess what. In heaven no turdiness is allowed. None. Nada. Not any. You will never step in any on the lawns of heaven!

◆ **A. In comparison to the holiness demanded of heaven, every human has stepped in a turd. We are all as foolish as sheep.** What many don't realize is that entrance into eternal life requires

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not a balanced scale of good and bad, but a scale with nothing on the bad side at all! That's like saying that no sheep can ever qualify for the love of a shepherd!

◆ People are often compared to sheep in the Bible because sheep are helpless, dumb and unable to save themselves. Sheep have no natural defenses, no spikes like a porcupine, no claws, no "stink" like a skunk. Sheep are prone to wander even in peak conditions for less desirable pasture. Sheep can get stuck on their backs like a turtle. It's called a "cast" sheep and they can die in a few hours. Sheep will eat anything, even poisonous roots and weeds. Sheep will trot right into water, get soaked and pulled down by the weight of wet wool. People are just like sheep. "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way".

Isa.53:6

◆ B. Time to notice something? Jesus knows his sheep (v14, 27). When he left heaven he left with names on his mind. He left with divine intention that would not be stopped. This, in spite of the fact that he knew the dirt his sheep had gotten into. That's right. He knows everything you've ever thought, imagined, fantasized, done, committed, hidden. He knows exactly what you hope no one in the room knows about you. There is nowhere you've ever been that he wasn't right there too.

◆ *"O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts*

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from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD." Psalms 139:1-4, NIV.

◆ That could make you feel kinda cold about God. Shiver! Would anyone like to share one of the worst things you've ever done? Of course not! We don't want to be known like that because you might not like us much then. You might think less of us. But here's the thing that God's Word never gets tired of saying. Jesus is the Good Shepherd because he knows all about us and loves us still. That's amazing grace. Like a good parent, God loves us in spite of our turdiness, hence the problem: how will he save those he loves who deserve death? Here's the answer.

◆ *"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished--" Romans 3:22-25, NIV.*

◆ When someone pays your debt and you go free, that's called substitutionary atonement. This is the truth of Christianity. Oh God abhors sin alright, but it was not God's anger that sent the Christ. It was his love. That's what makes him the Good

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Shepherd. Listen to what the prophet Isaiah said 600 years before Jesus lived.

◆ *"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." Isaiah 53:6, 7, NIV.*

◆ Did you catch the substitution? First **we** are the sheep who go astray. Then **Jesus** is the lamb lead to be killed, without objection, voluntarily! The Shepherd of us all becomes the sheep that crawls up on the altar to sacrifice himself so we don't have to be. Have you ever heard something so amazing. This is amazing grace.

◆ Has anyone ever stood in front of you so you didn't get hurt? Has anyone ever taken a punch, or a bullet for you? Did anyone ever get burned so that you were safe? Or bit by a dog so you didn't get bit? Or said that they were the one who broke the rule, so that you didn't get punished? Or paid to get you out of jail? This is what Jesus the Good Shepherd has done.

◆ **Conclusion:** Did you ever notice that the song doesn't say, "Jesus loves us this we know"? It's true, but it's also more. He loves me. You. Jesus laid down his life to pay for our sins. His death was voluntary. It was substitutionary. It was in full

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knowledge of our deserving, it was foretold and preplanned.

What does all this say about the Good Shepherd? That Jesus going to the cross was not an accident. It wasn't a mere reaction to the world going off course. It wasn't a patch job or a balance job. No, Jesus planted the tree from which the cross would be carved. He placed in the earth the ore from which the nails would be cast. Christ set in motion the great Roman military machine that would place Pilate in Jerusalem when he himself revealed himself to the world.

◆ Do you want to live and die in the power of that love? Would you like him to be *your* Good Shepherd. Then do this. Look at your hand. Starting with your thumb, touch one finger for each word in this verse: The - Lord - is - my - shepherd. Now grab your ring finger, the one representing "my" and pray with me.

◆ Jesus I see that you are the Good Shepherd. I know that I have sinned and am a sinner. I believe that your death will pay for my guilt and I accept. Please forgive me and be my shepherd. I want to follow you as best I can from here on. I know I am going to mess up and stray sometimes, and you will surely need to rescue me more, and I welcome that. Thank you for your love. Amen