



The Good Shepherd

Message Notes, July 24, 2016

John 10:11-18

Last week we discovered how Jesus is the one true shepherd who gives us freedom and “life to the full.” But we will only follow one we trust - Jesus is not only the true shepherd, he is also the *good* shepherd.

There are two Greek words for “good”:

- *Agathos*: Good in the moral sense; one who does what is right.
- *Kalos*: Has a more emotional, personal connotation – goodness that is noble and beautiful.

A great example of these two “goods” can be seen in “Les Miserables”:

- Javert was *agathos* – heartlessly committed to doing the right thing.
- Jean Valjean was *kalos* – a supposed criminal who courageously treated others with loving-kindness.

John uses *kalos* in his description here of Jesus as the good shepherd. Jesus is good – “altogether worthy, altogether lovely, altogether wonderful,” as the song “Here I Am To Worship” says.

Jesus lays down his life for his sheep. His life is not taken from him; he lays it down willingly. He gives his life freely as a gift for us. A shepherd would fight (wolves, lions) to defend his sheep, but he would not die in such a fight, for then he would not be there any longer to protect and care for his flock. But Jesus says, “I will take it [my life] up again.” i.e., He will rise from the dead and return to care for His sheep.

Surely Jesus had Psalm 23 in mind as he described himself as a good shepherd. It was written by David in the real laboratory of life – his years running and hiding for fear of his life. Through David’s words, God is addressing the deepest needs of humanity:

1. Will my relational needs be met? He is *my* shepherd – personal, intimate. He knows me (my very name) and I know his voice. I belong to him.
2. Will my physical needs be met? Green pastures, still waters (not rushing), so I can relax and drink. I lie down because I am full and content. (Sheep don’t lie down if they are troubled in any way). How does Matthew 6:25-26 echo this assurance of our physical provision?
3. Will my emotional needs be met? “He restores my soul” – literally, “gives me my soul back.” Like cast sheep who end up stranded on their backs, our Good Shepherd will come and restore us to our feet when life knocks us down.
4. Will my spiritual needs be met? “He leads me in paths of righteousness” – Our Good Shepherd will guide us, leading us in the ways of righteousness (which give life!). Our spirits will flourish. As in all these provisions, he is with us. We are not on our own to figure it out and make life work.
5. Will I face trouble I cannot bear? Even in the valleys of shadow – heavy, fearful things like failure, rejection, sickness, despair, death – “Thou art with me.” Even here, especially here, our Good Shepherd is present, guiding (his staff), protecting (his rod), comforting, sustaining – to bring us through. The thing we clearly need not fear is “evil” – if we stay with our Good Shepherd, even in struggles and suffering, evil (the evil one) cannot get at us. Our Good Shepherd is a “shield about us, a mighty fortress.”



As we hear our Good Shepherd's voice and follow him, "we shall not be in want." The Lord is my shepherd – what more could I want!

And then David shifts the analogy a bit from pasture to banquet hall:

- His head is anointed, a lavish feast is prepared for him before his enemies, his cup overflows!
- Here he captures the extravagance of God's goodness and love for him and there is a shift in his identity from sheep to son. It is a good thing to be His sheep, but a far better thing to be His children, His beloved sons and daughters. We are family (much more than valuable livestock), and "[His] goodness and loving-kindness will follow us all the days of our lives and we will dwell in the house of our Lord [our Shepherd, our Father] forever!"

Reflection Questions

1. Do you know your Good Shepherd? His deep love for you?
2. Do you listen for his voice?
3. Do you follow him?
4. Do you trust in his loving care and provision for you?
5. Are you in the midst of a worry or struggle about any of these "core needs"? How can you take this to your Good Shepherd and ask for his help? (You can even ask the Holy Spirit to help you trust this need to Jesus.)
6. Do you know someone who is in the midst of struggle? Will you pray for them – that they will turn to Jesus and cry out for his help; that they will hear his voice; that they will trust and move with him. Even ask how you might be a part of Good Shepherd's provision for them.
7. Sometimes, we may be in a "valley of shadow" and we can't hear his voice. How do we listen? How do we follow? How do we trust our need to him?