

Caleb EVans (8)

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[0:00] I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

! This fourth Sunday in Easter is referred to as Good Shepherd Sunday. Any guesses as to why that might be the case? The readings kind of give it away, don't they? And spoiler alert, I'm going to be preaching about Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

I'll bet you didn't see that one coming, did you? The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is, of course, a little tricky for us. As 21st century Americans, because most of us haven't tended sheep. It's not something I know about in great detail.

One time I was preaching on Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and kind of off the cuff, I asked if we had any shepherds in the house. And to my surprise, it turned out that we did.

The whole rest of the day. The whole rest of that sermon, I was worried that I was going to totally reveal my ignorance on the topic. I don't think we have any shepherds in the house this morning, but if we do, I really don't want to know.

[1:38] So Jesus says that He is the Good Shepherd. What does He mean by that?

This morning, I really want us to zoom in on three aspects of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and really think about what that means for us and for our relationship with Jesus. If He is the Good Shepherd, after all, and we are Christians, that means we are His sheep.

What does it mean to be sheep? Well, it doesn't mean that we're woolly, although some of us are with facial hair. But it does mean that we are vulnerable, that we easily go astray, and that we really need a shepherd to guide us.

What does Jesus mean when He says that He's the Good Shepherd? Well, let's start here. Let's begin in John chapter 10, starting with verse 11, where Jesus says, I am the Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees.

[2:52] And the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. Remember what I mentioned a second ago about sheep being vulnerable.

We are. Aren't we? We are vulnerable to attack. For one, there is a devil, and he prowls about like a roaring lion, and he would love nothing more than to devour us.

If we didn't have a Good Shepherd, that is precisely what he would do. Death is out there waiting to consume the sheep. Without a Good Shepherd, death would eat us alive.

Remember what God says to Cain in Genesis chapter 4. Sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you. Sin desires to have the sheep.

Against wolves like these, we are vulnerable indeed, my brothers and my sisters. Without someone to protect us, we will certainly be destroyed or scattered.

[4:06] And the thieves and robbers, false saviors, false prophets, false religion, false gods, can do nothing to help us.

No. The thieves and robbers can do nothing but flee at the first sign of trouble, and that is what they will do if we put our trust in them. But praise God, there is a Good Shepherd, and His name is Jesus.

He is always trustworthy. He is always strong. He will defend His sheep at all costs, even if it means death for Him.

And it turns out that it did mean death for Him. He died to win forgiveness of sin for all who trust in Him. He died to conquer death.

He died to crush Satan. And He did not die in vain. His sheep are safe forever, and He is risen and victorious over every wolf that might come against us.

[5 : 14] Praise the Lord. Because our shepherd is victorious, because no wolf is a match for our shepherd, because He loves us and defends us as His own, we are safe.

And that is why we can say, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.

If Jesus is with us, do you think that any serious, lasting harm is going to come to us, even in the valley of the shadow of death? I mean, death itself is no match for the one who carries us and who defends us.

The good shepherd gave His life for His sheep. And that means that the wolves are all broken, bloodied, beaten, and conquered.

They're defeated. But He's not just holy and strong, and He is, that's awesome enough, but He is loving.

[6 : 33] Our good shepherd has a deep, tender, unending, unchanging love for His sheep. What the Jesus storybook Bible so eloquently calls, His wonderful, never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.

That brings me to the second point of our exploration of what it means for Jesus to be the good shepherd.

We read, started in verse 14, I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. Think for a second about what that means.

The Father and the Son have known one another in perfect love for all eternity. Think of how great and unchanging that love is.

And Jesus goes so far as to say that the loving relationship between the good shepherd and the sheep is like that. Isn't that astonishing and amazing?

[7 : 46] We love Him because He first loved us and He loves us perfectly so much that He gave His life for us.

The 19th century Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon said this about the saving love of the Lord Jesus. Let us not fear any danger for He is mighty to save nor is this all.

He abides evermore the same. He saves. He finds rest in loving. Excuse me. He will not cease to love. His love gives Him joy.

He even finds a theme for song in His beloved. This is exceedingly wonderful. Isn't it? What kind of good shepherd do we have?

One who has called us by name into salvation and into relationship with Him not because we deserved it but simply because He is merciful and He loves us.

[8 : 58] We read in Titus chapter 3 but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared He saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness but according to His own mercy by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

He calls us by name. We hear His voice and we follow Him. He calls us into relationship with Him and it is the greatest love we could ever possibly know.

C.S. Lewis once said that when we see God He will look to us like our first love because that's what He is. Without understanding this loving relationship with Jesus we will not understand what Christianity is.

without it we're maybe left with moral principles or without it we're left simply thinking that the gospel is a mere fire escape from hell.

But if we understand that Jesus by grace grants forgiveness then calls us to follow Him calls us into relationship with Him calls us to become more like Him then we understand what drives the Christian life.

[10 : 23] it is driven by love and gratitude for the extravagant love of Jesus. And this is love that purifies us as He is pure.

Isn't that glorious? Now He not only calls us He finds us and He rescues us when we are lost.

Which brings me to the third point I want to raise this morning as we think about Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Back to John 10 Jesus says I have other sheep that are not of this fold I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice so there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Now most commentators think that Jesus at this point is talking about the Gentiles talking about those outside Israel who would come to faith in Him. But I think it's also a reminder more broadly of

how Jesus operates as the Good Shepherd.

He finds and rescues lost sheep. That's what He does. We read in Luke chapter 15 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to Him and the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled saying this man receives sinners and eats with them.

[11:49] It's a scandalous thing in their eyes. So He told them this parable. What man of you having a hundred sheep if he's lost one of them does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

And when He has found it He lays it on His shoulders rejoicing and when He comes home He calls together His friends and His neighbors saying to them rejoice with me for I have found my sheep that was lost.

Just so I tell you there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Jesus the good shepherd finds and rescues lost sheep. And if we know Jesus we know this by experience because we also know that we were once lost sheep ourselves.

We were lost we were gone astray we were dead in trespasses and sins. And what did Jesus do?

[12:58] I know what He did in my life He found me and rescued me and carried me to safety.

What about you?

Because here's the truth all of humanity each one of us falls into one of two categories either we are lost or we once were lost but now we're found.

my Christian brothers and sisters praise Jesus that He found you when you were lost. Praise Him.

This is good news.

Now it's not unusual for people to say I found Jesus but the reality of it is this Jesus found me. It should be encouraging to realize that no one in this life is so lost that Jesus is unable to find them.

The Good Shepherd is an expert at finding lost sheep. I know that many of you probably all of us have loved ones friends family members neighbors who are lost or who have gone astray.

[14:16] I want to encourage you this morning Jesus is able to find them and save them. entrust them to Him knowing that He is able and realize that He very well might work through you to do it so don't stop bearing witness to them knowing that Jesus might work through your witness to find them.

this morning praise God for the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep who knows His sheep and calls Him by name who finds the lost.

Thank you Jesus. What does all of this mean for us? Well first of all it means that we are loved that we are safe and that our Good Shepherd has found us and will never let us go.

I would call that good news. What about you? But let's think for a second as well about what we are called to do. I was struck the other day when on our clergy call our Cana East clergy call Bishop Benna pointed out to us that as Christians we are Jesus' sheep but were also under shepherds of the Good Shepherd and that's true not just of the clergy but of every Christian.

As good Anglicans after all we believe in the priesthood of all believers that every one of us is called to ministry clergy and laity alike. So what does it look like to serve as under shepherds of the Good Shepherd?

[15:56] There are so many things that Jesus has done that we can't replicate. We can't after all save anyone from their sins by our deaths.

Now fortunately we don't have to. That's already been taken care of. But we can certainly proclaim salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus to the lost so that they know where salvation is to be found.

The question is are we willing to do that? It's true as well that no one should be following us in the way they follow Jesus but we can still be an example to others and help them to grow in Christ.

Mature believers can disciple and mentor newer believers in Christ. We can disciple and mentor our grandchildren or grandchildren. If you don't have children or grandchildren you're not off the hook because the church is one big family and the children need your witness and example.

I think the church is one of those areas where it takes a village to raise a child is actually true. It's true that unlike the great shepherd we can't find and rescue the lost.

[17:16] That's not within our power to do. But we can certainly seek out the lost and share the gospel with them. Seek them out and love them in the name of Jesus pointing them to the one who can rescue them.

Brothers and sisters let's pray let's cry out to the great shepherd of our souls that he would choose to work through us to seek and to save the lost.

And we agree as a church that that will be our constant prayer. Here's the thing Don't we want others to know Christ?

Don't we want others to know the good shepherd? Don't you? Of course we do. Because what an incomparable treasure it is to know Jesus. What joy it is to know that even if we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we need not fear because he is with us always.

What a privilege it is to know that we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever because Jesus gave his life for us because Jesus rescued us when we were lost and because Jesus knows us and has called us by name.

[18:36] Thank you Jesus. Thank you good shepherd of our souls. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.