

We are once again going to look at the Gospel of John and more specifically John 10. In this chapter Jesus, using the imagery of sheep farming attempted to communicate with His listeners how truly dangerous and untrustworthy the Pharisees were as their so-called spiritual shepherds, compared to Himself.

So how did Christ attempt to make this contrast? He did this by first of all talking about Himself as the true shepherd in John 10:1-6. Then He attempted to do this by talking about Himself as the gate in John 10:7-10. Now He will seek to paint this contrast even further between Himself and the Pharisees by talking about Himself as the good shepherd in John 10:11-18.

John 10:11-18, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. (12) He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them. (13) He flees because he is a hireling, and is not concerned about the sheep. (14) "I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me, (15) even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. (16) And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd. (17) "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. (18) No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative, I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

As we study this passage we will see the type of commitment that Christ has made to His sheep. Let us consider for a moment how Christ's commitment to His sheep would impact how elders might view their responsibilities to the sheep.

1 Peter 5:1-4, which was specifically addressed to elders, "I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, (2) shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; (3) not yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. (4) And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

So what is John 10:11-18 all about? These verses are all about Christ being “the good shepherd.” So let us for a moment consider this phrase. Notice that Jesus does not say that He is “a” good shepherd. He does not say that He is the “best” shepherd. He says that He is “the good shepherd.”

When Jesus called Himself “the good shepherd” He was putting Himself in a class all by Himself. In other words, Christ was saying that there was absolutely no one in the past, present or future that could ever shepherd the sheep in the way that He was prepared to shepherd the sheep. This is why when it comes to shepherds He was and is in a class by Himself. But why is this?

He is able to shepherd the sheep in a way that others are not able to shepherd the sheep because He is good in a way that others are not good. So how is He good in a way that others are not good?

Christ is good in a way that others are not good because He is God (Mark 10:17-18). Let me ask you a question, is anyone truly good other than God? The answer would have to be, No! God is the only one who is truly good. So when Jesus said that He was the good shepherd, I believe that He was implying that He was God.

But someone might say, “But how do you know this? How do you know that He was thinking about an intrinsic goodness that only God possesses when He called Himself the good shepherd?”

Let me read for you Mark 10:17-18, “And as He (referring to Christ) was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and began asking Him, “Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life.” So how did this man address Jesus? He addressed Him as “good teacher.” Did this address capture Christ’s attention? Yes! Let us continue to read, “And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.”

This statement by Christ in Mark 10:17-18, I believe certainly has implications for us when it comes to understanding what Christ meant when He referred to Himself as the

good shepherd in John 10:11. Certainly He made it clear to the man who ran up to Him in Mark 10 that the only person who could be truly called “good teacher” would be God and therefore I don’t believe that we could think that Christ meant anything less when He referred to Himself as “the good shepherd.”

Why is Christ able to shepherd the sheep in a way that others are not able to shepherd the sheep? He is able to shepherd the sheep in a way others are not able to shepherd the sheep because He is God and has an intrinsic goodness that is not shared by any other shepherd. He is in a class all by Himself.

But this is not all. Not only did Christ as God have an intrinsic goodness that set Him apart from other shepherds, but the expression of that intrinsic goodness also set Him apart from other shepherds.

So what were some of those expressions of Christ’s intrinsic goodness in John 11:11-18? There are four of them but we will only consider the first one.

The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11-13). Let me read for you, John 10:11-13, “I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down for the sheep. (12) He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them. (13) He flees because he is a hireling, and is not concerned about the sheep.”

My hope for us as we consider this very first expression of Christ’s intrinsic goodness as the shepherd in John 10:11-13, is that it might motivate us to strive to love His sheep as much as He loved His sheep and continues to love His sheep.

The first expression of Christ’s intrinsic goodness was that Christ was not only willing but actually did in fact lay down His life for the sheep.

Christ, laying down his life for the sheep is the most important feature of His role as the good shepherd. We not only see this feature highlighted for us here in John 10:11, but we see it again highlighted in John 10:15,17&18.

In biblical times were there shepherds that were prepared to risk their lives in order to protect their sheep? And the answer would have to be, "Yes." In biblical times there were shepherds who were willing to risk their lives in order to protect their sheep (1 Samuel 17:34-37).

34 But David said to Saul, Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock,35 I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him.36 Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.37 And David said, The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Go, and the LORD be with you!

Was David willing to risk his life in order to protect the sheep? Absolutely! And could we therefore suppose that there were other shepherds who were also willing to do the same thing if they were put in a similar situation? I would think that the answer would have to be, yes if they genuinely cared for the sheep.

So let us take this a little further. If there were shepherds in biblical times who were willing to risk their lives in order to protect their sheep, were there actually shepherds who lost their lives? I would think that the answer would have to be yes. Not only were there shepherds in biblical times willing to risk their lives, but also there were shepherds who actually lost their lives. And I would not think that the number of shepherds who lost their lives seeking to protect their sheep was a small number. All we have to do is to consider the testimony of David shared with Saul in 1 Samuel 17:34-37. It would appear that death was a real possibility for those shepherds in Israel who were committed to protecting their sheep.

Those shepherds who lost their lives while protecting their sheep would certainly have been considered good shepherds but their death could not be compared to the death of Christ. But why can't we compare the death of Jewish shepherds with the death of Christ?

Jewish shepherds who lost their lives protecting their sheep did so inadvertently.

Christ, the good shepherd in seeking to protect His sheep purposefully gave up His life

So let me ask you this question, What in the world was Jesus thinking? How in the world did He think that by laying down His life that He would save His sheep? If earthly shepherds were to do that, their flocks would be destroyed.

This is explained for us in Isaiah 53:4-6.

4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Why did Christ think that He, by laying down His life could save His sheep? Jesus knew that if He, as the good shepherd, willingly laid His life down as God's sacrificial lamb that His sheep would not die in their sins (Isaiah 53:4-6). This is what Jesus was thinking when He laid down His life.

Could any other human shepherd through their death have accomplished this for us? No! Why? Even if there were someone who cared enough to lay down their life for us their offering would have been rejected.

Why? It would have been rejected because their offering would have been flawed. Only Christ our good shepherd, or in other words God's spotless and intrinsically good sacrificial lamb, could have satisfied the debt of our sin.

So is Christ, based on John 10:11, in a class all by Himself when it comes to shepherding? Absolutely! There is no shepherd in the past, present or future who could be compared to Christ either in respect to their person or their work.

There is no one superior to him as prophet, priest or king be He himself is our New Covenant and the New Covenants is superior to all other Covenants.

Though Christ, based on John 10:11 is in a class by Himself when compared to other shepherds, He chose not to compare Himself to other shepherds, but to hirelings in

John 10:12-13.

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, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

Jesus compares Himself to hirelings in order to set off His love and care for His sheep in very distinct terms.

Who are the hirelings? The hirelings are people who have no personal vested interest in the sheep. As long as they get paid they could care less about the sheep that is why they flee when things get difficult.

Praise God that this was not true of Christ. When things got difficult for Him on the cross He chose not to flee. He chose to remain on the cross as God's sacrificial lamb until every sin that had ever been committed or ever will be committed by any person from the beginning to the end of time was paid for.

Certainly if Christ did not abandon us when He went to His cross and suffered all the things that He suffered, then certainly He is not going to abandon us now as He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. And that is exactly the point of Romans 5:9-10, "Much more then, having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him, (10) For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

Christ is the good shepherd. This meant that not only did Christ as God have an intrinsic goodness that set Him apart from other shepherds, but the expression of that intrinsic goodness also set Him apart from other shepherds.

What was the first expression of that intrinsic goodness? Christ, God's only begotten Son according to His Father's will laid down His life. Why was Christ so willing to do this? He loves His sheep with an eternal, an infinite love.

If Christ loves His sheep in this way? If Christ loves His church in this way? Then how

should we love the sheep? Wouldn't it seem only reasonable that we would strive to love one another in the very same way that Christ loved us?

And isn't this what the scriptures teach? 1 John 4:11, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

The next characteristic of the good shepherd? Not only does He lay down His life for the sheep, the good shepherd knows His sheep (John 10:14-15). It has already been emphasized for us in John 10:3-4 that Christ calls His sheep by name, and that those sheep called individually by name will invariably respond to His call.

**3 To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.**

If you consider yourself a true disciple of Christ then on the basis of these verses you know that your positive response to the gospel of Christ in the past and your positive response to the teachings of Christ in the present can only be explained by the nature of your relationship with Christ. In other words, your positive response to the gospel in the past and your positive response to the teachings of Christ in the present can and should in the context of this passage be explained by the fact that Christ is your shepherd and you are His sheep.

We are now going to once again revisit the personal nature of our relationship with Christ in John 10:14-15, but this time we will take it a step further.

Let us begin by looking at John 10:14. What does it say? It says, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me." Here we have what would appear to be a repetition of what we learned earlier about Christ's relationship with His sheep and the sheep's relationship with Christ in John 10:3-4. But rather than using the same imagery He had used earlier in the chapter, He now describes that relationship in terms of Him knowing His sheep and His sheep knowing Him. Clearly John 10:14 is

summarizing for us what was described earlier in the chapter in respect to the special relationship that Christ's sheep enjoy with Him and vice-a-versa. But even though this is true, it is not the whole truth.

Let us read John 10:15. "Even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father." The reason why we can say He is now expanding on what He said earlier is because Jesus compared what He said earlier with His own relationship with His Father. Obviously He has expanded on what He said earlier about His relationship with the sheep and His sheep's relationship with Him and in doing this He is taking our relationship with Him and His relationship with us to a whole new level.

The word "know" in biblical times was not simply used to communicate awareness, but it could also be used to communicate a special loving intimacy. I believe that this is how we should understand the use of the word here in this verse.

In other words, though the imagery that He chose earlier in the chapter to describe His relationship with His sheep and His sheep's relationship with Him was good, that particular imagery could never capture the depth of the relationship that He now speaks about when He said, "Even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father."

If this is true then let me ask you this question. If Christ does, in fact, from His viewpoint, look upon our relationship with Him in the same way as He looks upon His relationship with His Father, in terms of a special loving intimacy, then how committed would you think He would be to us? And how committed would we be to Him? The answer, I believe, would have to be we would be extremely committed.

What can we point to in order to illustrate the depth of His commitment to us? We can point to His willingness to die for us. Let us once again read John 10:15, but this time we will complete it. "Even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."

Why did Jesus die for us? He died for us because He feels the same loving intimacy with us as He feels toward His Father. But now let us turn this around.



What can we point to in order to illustrate the depth of our commitment to Him? We should be able to point to our willingness to live for Him?

14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

We may not be as successful as we would like in living for Him, but the bottom line is that our commitment to Him as His sheep will be mature enough, perfect enough, by His grace that listening and responding to His voice will not be the exception, but the rule as we look to Christ and rest in the promise that the Spirit of Christ is effectually and continuously transforming us within.