

## **Jesus is the Good Shepherd**

Jesus Is: Part 2 “Jesus is the Good Shepherd”

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – January 24, 2021

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday After Epiphany

**Readings:** John 10:1-16

**Reflection:** Psalm 23

**Greeting:** For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**Prayer:** O Lord God, your chosen dwelling is the heart of the lowly. We give you thanks that you revealed yourself in the holy child Jesus, thereby sanctifying all childhood in him. Make us humble in faith and love, that we may know the joy of the gospel hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. This we ask in the name of the One, who, wearing our mortal flesh, grew in wisdom and in favor with God and all people, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 23

*A psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing. He lets me rest in grassy meadows; he leads me to restful waters; he keeps me alive. He guides me in proper paths for the sake of his good name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no danger because you are with me. Your rod and your staff— they protect me. You set a table for me right in front of my enemies. You bathe my head in oil; my cup is so full it spills over! Yes, goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the Lord’s house as long as I live.*

*(Psalm 23 CEB+)*

We read the words of Psalm 23 and hear of God’s comfort and goodness. That God is there for us wherever we are. That God walks with us through the darkness. Do you feel that God helps you to not be afraid? Do you seek comfort in God’s presence? How do you see the Lord as your shepherd? How can we invite others into the comfort found by being part of the flock? How can we share all that God has done for us? How can we share in the many ways in which we are blessed?

**Prayer:** Oh Lord, help us as we remember all that has been done for us. Let us recall all the ways that you help us and are there for us. Especially in this time, help us to recognize all the ways that your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, is in our lives. Help us to see all the ways that he is with us. Let us turn to him as the shepherd that leads us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **Sermon:**

Our scripture reading for today comes from the Common English Bible. Our reading is from John chapter 10, verses 1 through 16.

*I assure you that whoever doesn't enter into the sheep pen through the gate but climbs over the wall is a thief and an outlaw. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The guard at the gate opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. Whenever he has gathered all of his sheep, he goes before them and they follow him, because they know his voice. They won't follow a stranger but will run away because they don't know the stranger's voice." Those who heard Jesus use this analogy didn't understand what he was saying. So Jesus spoke again, "I assure you that I am the gate of the sheep. All who came before me were thieves and outlaws, but the sheep didn't listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief enters only to steal, kill, and destroy. I came so that they could have life—indeed, so that they could live life to the fullest. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. When the hired hand sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away. That's because he isn't the shepherd; the sheep aren't really his. So the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them. He's only a hired hand and the sheep don't matter to him. "I am the good shepherd. I know my own sheep and they know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. I give up my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that don't belong to this sheep pen. I must lead them too. They will listen to my voice and there will be one flock, with one shepherd.*  
(John 10:1-16 CEB+)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

This week in our Jesus Is series, we look at Jesus as the Good Shepherd. We have a very well-known reading today, but I want to look at how we view Christ as the Good Shepherd. It's an interesting thing because I think we often end up viewing a shepherd in a very mild way. Just as somebody who leads sheep to where they need to go. And though leading them to where they need to be is a big part of it, it is not the only part of it. I think that understanding the idea of a shepherd really helps for us to have a better understanding of what Christ is trying to say when he says he's the Good Shepherd. And the other part of this is, I'm going to view this through that initial light of Jesus as friend. Because it makes a difference in how we read this, I think. And the reason it makes a difference is because we could look at a shepherd as somebody just doing a job or we could look at the shepherd as the friend who genuinely cares. It's understanding that genuine care that helps us to fully understand that role of shepherd. And the reason for that is because there's a contrast in today's scripture between the hired hand and the shepherd who cares. The hired hand is just there to get paid but not to actually care.

Jesus uses a few different analogies in this. That first we have those who enter the sheep pen by climbing over the wall. That you know they're a thief because they didn't come in

the way they're supposed to come in. They didn't arrive the way you would expect them to and they don't belong. The next is that Jesus is the gate. That it is through him that people are saved. And the last is as the shepherd himself. That if the shepherd hires somebody, they flee when there's trouble. But the shepherd cares for the flock and protects them. It's that idea of a shepherd that really drives home the point that Christ as our shepherd isn't just there to usher us from point A to point B. Our lives are not simply going from one place to the other to eat and then to sleep. If that was all there was, the shepherd wouldn't really have much of an important role. We'd just be following somebody around so that we know where we need to be. But when we think of Christ as the Good Shepherd, we think of somebody willing to lay down his life to protect the flock, somebody that is willing to defend them at all costs. And this is the part of the shepherd, that really drives the point home. A shepherd isn't some mild-mannered person just hanging around going "look at these sheep." If we remember David, and the entire reason that David was able to defeat Goliath was his training as a shepherd, because David had stood up to wild animals. He had put his life on the line to make sure that those in his care would be alright. Because it wasn't just a matter of leading them from point A to point B. It was guiding them, caring for them, tending to their problems, defending them from those that would do them harm. And that's the shepherd that we get in the way that we think about Christ in our lives. That, yes, Christ is there to be our guide to help us make sure we stay on the right path to make sure that we are doing the right thing. That he's the one that is there to care for us. That he is there so that we may follow him. We know his voice and we know that he cares. And we follow him because of his great love for us, as we discussed when we talked about Christ as a friend. That Christ's love for us is that of somebody who truly cares about and hopes that they will care about him in the same way.

As a shepherd, it means that he needs us to trust him. Because, as the flock we may not always know where we're going. We may not know where we are supposed to be. We may not recognize danger. But when we follow Christ, Christ points us in the way we're supposed to go. Christ leads us as a community of believers and guides us in safety to where we need to be. And that's important because it means that we trust in him. We trust in his judgment, we trust in his grace, we trust in his love, we trust in his protection. That others may try to convince us that they are the shepherd. But when trouble comes, we're left standing alone. But not with Christ. Because as the Good Shepherd, when things threaten us, Christ is there to strengthen us and there to protect us. And that's something that we have to be able to trust it. Because, in this life, there will be people that will try to prey on us. People that will try to lead us astray. People that will try to teach us things that we know aren't true. People that will tell us all sorts of lies, wanting us to follow them because they've got just what it is we want. But all they're interested in is knowing that somebody is following them. All they're interested in is what they can get out of the situation. And there are always people like that. People who want nothing more than followers. People who will do whatever they want, and believe whatever they want, because it makes them feel more powerful, and it makes them feel in charge. But you can tell that they don't care the same way that Christ does. When the trial comes, when things get difficult, they

disappear. There'll be excuses. They'll be reasons that things didn't work out. There will be lies, lies upon lies. Because the only thing they were ever interested in was to be followed around. Christ, however, is willing to put his life on the line to save his flock. We see that in Christ's willingness to lay down his life for his friends, for the flock. That he does it of his own free will, because of his love. Because he takes true responsibility for caring for those that are in his care, for loving those that follow him.

In this way Christ demonstrates the way that we are supposed to lead. Because Christ demonstrates for us the compassionate leadership that we must show in our own lives. And it's a great example of a loving, caring protector. That when those who would do us harm show up, Christ is there to give us strength and give us protection and to teach us how to care for and protect others. And it is that role of the Good Shepherd that I often think of when I think about the way that we are called to lead others to Christ. Because there are no shortcuts. There are no words that we can say that will just magically pop people into the pen and not have to ever worry about it again. That if we are going to be like the shepherd, then we bring people in through the gate, through true faith, and that we guide them there by love, because we followed Christ to get there. That people do not follow simply out of fear. People do not follow simply out of habit. But people follow because they know the one they're following guides with love and care and compassion and mercy, and is willing to do whatever it takes to protect those that they love.

For me, the role of Christ as the Good Shepherd is one that reminds me that no matter how bad things get, I can turn to Christ to find my way back. That if I go astray, Christ isn't just going to abandon me, but he is going to seek me out, to find me, and to bring me back into the fold. That if troubles assail me, I am not left on my own, struggling with whatever problems I may face. Because Christ is there to guide and lead and help to fight off whatever problems may attack me. Because he is there in love and care. Because he's not just there because he's required to be but is there because he wants to be. And that is the example that he has set for us about how to care for each other and how to follow in love. That we know when people are trying to help us, because they will do so out of love. We know when people are there to truly protect us because they will do so no matter what the cost is. Christ was willing to lay down his life so that we would understand the love that he had for us. The love that he still has for us. That he would lay down his life and pick it up again so that we could understand that he is the true shepherd. The one who would guide us and lead us all into a better tomorrow. The one that truly can conquer all the things that would come to defeat us including sin and death. The wolves that would come in the night to end us for good, yet Christ the Good Shepherd can protect us from even those dangers. Because the Good Shepherd never stops looking out for the flock.

We may not always recognize the other members of the flock. But we know that if we follow Christ, we are members of the same flock. We may not always believe the same things. But we do always follow the same shepherd. We may not always agree about how we should

gather and how we should form and exactly what those details are. But we do agree that the one who guides us and leads us is Jesus Christ our Savior, who died to set us free from sin and death. And we know that in him we have the perfect caretaker to emulate. That when we are put in a role of leadership, that we do not do so simply for power. We do not do so simply so that we know others are following us so that we can boss them around. But we do it so that we may care and love for others that they may know the compassion that we have been shown.

So, when we say Jesus is the Good Shepherd, we say it not because he leads us around and we blindly follow. We say it because he is the one that will guide us to safety. The one that will defeat whatever enemies come in our way, whatever problems may arise, he will protect us. That he is the one willing to lay down his life that we may truly live. That he guides us and leads us and protects us and shelters us because he loves us. That God has shown us this wonderful love. And so, as we think about the Good Shepherd let us always remember all that it entails. And let us strive to lead and to follow by that example. That our lives may be enriched, that we may walk securely without fear. Because we know the one that watches over us, loves us, and is always there with a gentle hand. That we may always walk in safety. And that we may always find peace in him. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** Almighty and all-loving God, through your Son Jesus Christ you have reconciled the world to yourself. Help us now to be reconciled with one another, that again we might dwell in the warmth of your love. Inspire us with your Holy Spirit to put aside the cloak of pride and put on Christ, that we might forgive and be forgiven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

**Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Prayer List**

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Eric Veach	Cathy Devall
Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer	Henry Catey
Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Cindy Cisney	Patti Corder & Crew
Nancy Hoke	Don Wells	Tricia Adkins	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen
Don Stewart	Anne Winkler Heinrichs		Michael & Makenzie Reynolds
Ronnie Winstead	John Millsap	Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons
Trinity Powers	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family
Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Family of Lois Woolever	Mary White
Nick Nichols	Leo Smith	Bonnie Hite	Greg Williams
Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte
Kim Hennes	Residents of the Greenup Nursing Center		Dr. Scott McMurray

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### **An Update from Pastor Cameron**

We have moved into Phase 4 again in Illinois' plan to battle the Coronavirus. As such, we are able to resume in person worship again this next Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup>. If you would like to continue to receive the weekly service by mail, please let me know. As such, I will give a quick reminder of our safety precautions at this time.

When we gather in person, we need to be masked and have 6ft distance between households. Masks are required. We will not be resuming singing at this point. If you feel that you are at high risk, you are encouraged to continue to worship online via our weekly video, audio, or printout. I thank you all for your tremendous patience at this time. I will be continuing to post online video and the full service at this time.

I am also strongly suggesting that if you are able to get the vaccine, that you do so. The end of this pandemic is in sight, but we must remain strong and remain vigilant. Things could get worse again before it is over, so we need to do all we can to do no harm as we do good for the sake of our love for God.

If there are any questions, feel free to contact me. If I don't pick up, leave a message. I'm likely trying to handle school at home or just the everyday busy life of a single parent.

I will also be in contact with yearly paperwork that is going to need to be done. This includes a financial audit that hopefully has been sent to the responsible parties by the district. I will need a copy of that material.

As a special note for those of you who knew Liz Pitcher and her family, Carla has informed us that her brother-in-law Scott McMurray is currently battling cancer. If you would like to send cards of support, they can be sent to:

Dr. Scott McMurray  
1606 Dover Drive  
Waukesha WI 53186

If there are any other updates for support to share here, just let me know and I will get them added to our weekly update. Thank you all, and God bless.