

Daniel Waldschmidt - John 10:11-18 – 4/17/2016

Christ is the Shepherd. We are the sheep. We use that metaphor a lot, don't we? How many Christian songs are built off of this metaphor of Shepherd and sheep? "I just want to be a sheep, ba ba ba ba." "I am Jesus' little lamb. Ever glad at heart I am." Of course everybody's favorite Psalm is Psalm 23. "The LORD is my Shepherd." We get a lot of mileage out of this metaphor. Today I want us to think about three things from this metaphor: Jesus is your Good Shepherd who 1. Lays down his life for you. 2. Who knows you. 3. Who protects you.

Jesus lays down his life for you. **"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).** I don't know much about sheep but I'm told that sheep wander off. They go astray. The Bible says that we all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each one of us has turned to our own way. And why do we go astray? Because we think that we know better than God. We always think that we know better than God. We went astray and we met the wolves: sin and Satan and death. But then our Good Shepherd came and stepped between us and the wolves and he died in our place.

Remember the Disney movie Beauty and the Beast? Bell has a horse named Philip. And Philip is going through the forest and he gets off the trail and gets lost and snowing out and then he meets the wolves and the wolves come after poor Philip but then the Beast shows up and rescues Bell and Philip. But of course the wolves start to bite the Beast and the Beast gets wounded in the process.

That's what Jesus did for us. We foolishly wandered away from God's path. We wandered to where the wolves are. But Jesus came and found us and rescued us and he died in the process.

The fact that he laid down his life for you shows how much he cares about you. **"The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away." (John 10:11)** For the hired hand, it's just a job. He doesn't actually care about the sheep so when the wolf comes, he runs away. But Jesus steps between the wolf and the sheep. Your whole life long, you'll never realize just how much Jesus loves you. He laid down his life for you. That's the first thing.

The second thing is that he knows you. **"I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me."** The word pastor means shepherd. Pastor is just the Latin word for Shepherd. A lot of what a pastor does is listen. He just listens people talk. And the more he listens to person talk the more he gets to know that person: Their fears, their hopes, their interests, their joys, their frustrations. Jesus is the Good Pastor. He listens.

"I know my sheep and my sheep know me." In the Bible the word "know" is not just an intellectual knowing. The word "know" means that you have a relationship. We use the word that way in English sometimes. We might say of someone we have heard of but have never met: "I know of him but I don't know him." Jesus says, **"I know my sheep and my sheep know me."** Jesus says that he wants a close relationship with you. And that close relationship is expressed when he talks to you in his word and when you talk to him in prayer.

Jesus is your Pastor. Talk to him. Tell him your hopes and your fears. Tell him what's bothering your conscience. Let him talk to you in his word. Spend some time reading the Gospel of John so that you can know your Good Shepherd. I heard a pastor say once that when he sits at his kitchen table in the morning and reads his Bible he pulls out the other chair a little ways from the table and imagines Jesus

sitting there. And of course he's not imagining because Jesus really is there. Jesus wants a relationship with you. He says, **"I know my sheep and my sheep know me."**

The third thing from this passage today is that our Good Shepherd protects us. He says, **"The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again."** (John 16-18)

The analogy I used earlier was that we are sheep who go astray and we meet a wolf but then Jesus steps between us and the wolf and Jesus dies instead of us. That analogy breaks down at one point doesn't it? If the wolf kills the shepherd, then that's not actually a good thing for the sheep. Now the sheep are completely without a protector. If the wolf kills the shepherd, then he just going to go and kill the sheep.

Hmmm... If the Good Shepherd died, then who is going to protect the sheep? Well, it's Good Shepherd Sunday and the Good Shepherd Sunday is always the 4th Sunday after...Easter. The Shepherd died but then came back to life again. **"I have authority to lay my life down and authority to take it up again."** (John 11:18) You have a Shepherd who is literally invincible. Nothing can conquer him. Not even death. In the next chapter of John, John 11, Jesus says, **"I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me will live even though they die. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die."** (John 11:25)

We do get a lot of mileage out this metaphor. Jesus is the Shepherd. We are the sheep. And rightfully so. It's one of the most important metaphors in the Bible. You are Jesus' little lamb. He loves you every day the same and even calls you by your name. Amen.