

I Am The Good Shepherd

John 10:11-21

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In John 10:11, Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Here in this verse, Jesus gives to us the fourth "I Am" statement in John's gospel. I don't know if you're keeping record or following that, but this is the fourth time Jesus used this word *ego eimi*, I Am, and this time it's the "good shepherd." No doubt, this is one of the most well known and most loved of the seven "I Am's" of Christ. If you interviewed people on which of the I Am's are your favorite, no doubt, this one would be on the top of the list along with, "I Am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." My favorite, indeed, is this one: the Lord is the Good Shepherd. We understand what it means that shepherding us, He is the Savior of our soul, He leads and guides us. We've studied Psalm 23, and we know that when the Lord is our Shepherd, we have everything that we need.

Why at this point in John's gospel, in John 10 especially, does Jesus make the claim to be the "good shepherd?" Remember in John 9 Jesus healed the man that was blind on the Sabbath day, and it upset the Jews, the religious leaders, the Pharisees, and the scribes. It brought Him into direct conflict by the fact that He healed on the Sabbath day. This blind man was kicked out of the synagogue, and Jesus went to him and revealed Himself to this blind man. Then, Jesus began a series of contrasts between Himself and the religious leaders of the Jews, the Pharisees. When He opens John 10:1, He calls them thieves and robbers. He said they were climbing up the other way, they were thieves and robbers. "I am the true shepherd. I am the door, you must enter through Me," and now, "I am the good shepherd."

You might be a little confused thinking, Well, how can He be the door and also be the good shepherd? I explained last week that in the sheepfold there was actually no door there. The shepherd would lie in the door, so Jesus said, "I am the shepherd," and "I am the door." He would lie across the door and protect the sheep. The scene moves from the morning, "I am the true shepherd," to midday, "I am the door," to evening time when he would bring the sheep out of the wilderness and into the fold; so it's morning, noon, and evening when He protects us. Jesus now is contrasting Himself with the thieves and the robbers that we saw back in John 9. To contrast Himself with the Pharisees, Jesus says (verse 11), "I am the good shepherd."

I'm going to unpack the whole text for you, but let me give you a little preliminary things I want to say. The word "good" in verse 11 means intrinsically good. It's used in a sense of Jesus is God because only God is good. Remember when the rich young ruler said, "Good Master, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said, "Why are you calling Me good? There's none good, save One, that is God." This means completely, morally, intrinsically good. Only God is perfectly and completely and totally holy. I haven't mentioned a lot but whenever you think of the holiness of God, the holiness of God has a negative and a positive connotation. It means that in God there is no evil at all. Now, that can't be said about you and me, right?

You're thinking, Speak for yourself, preacher boy. The Bible says, "The heart is deceitful...and desperately wicked: who can know it?" We've all sinned. We've all fallen short of the glory of God. No one is righteous, no not one. There's only One who is perfectly holy, so the negative is total absence of anything evil. Any idea that God is evil is blasphemous.

The positive side means all that is righteous and good and lovely and beautiful is of God. That's what this word "good" actually means. There's no evil, and the word means intrinsically good, morally good. It would be translated in some cases beautiful (I love that) and lovely and attractive. It's almost as though Jesus said, "I am the beautiful, lovely, attractive, holy, perfectly righteous Shepherd." All of that is contained in this idea of "good;" and, by the way, the word "good" is connected to the word God. God is good, perfectly good. Now, we have elements of goodness in us, only because of what God has done in us and He does through us, but we're not perfectly righteous. The word "good" means intrinsically and completely good, lovely, or attractive.

The second thing I want you to note is that He is the (circle the word "the") "good shepherd." He doesn't say, "I am a good shepherd." He doesn't say, "I am one of many good shepherds," or "all these ascended masters and all these gurus and all these holy men," and "I'm just one of many." A lot of people like to put Jesus on par with other religious leaders. You can't do that. Jesus is to have preeminence. He's unique. He's like no one else. There's a significance in the fact that He is "the good shepherd," it speaks of His uniqueness and the fact that He is to have paramount place and position in our lives. There are no other "good shepherd" like Him. Jesus is unique.

What does Jesus mean by, "I am the good shepherd," or the good one? Let me give you four reasons from the text itself, from the lips of Jesus, that He is "the good shepherd?" The list could be longer—I'm always saying that—but I'm going to stick to the text. I'm going to give you four reasons Jesus is "the good shepherd." They're not complex. They're simple, but not simplistic. They're profound. Here's the first reason, if you're taking notes, Jesus is "the good shepherd" because He dies for the sheep. He gives His life for the sheep. Let's go back to verses 11-13, Jesus dies for the sheep. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd," here it is, "giveth his life for the sheep. 12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."

There's so much packed in these verses that I've got to be careful I don't get bogged down. I want you to take note that four times Jesus predicted His coming death. Make note of it. In verse 11, He mentions the fact, "giveth his life for the sheep," and then look at verse 15 (we'll get there in a minute), "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." Now look at verse 17 with me, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again," a reference to laying down His life in death on the cross. In verse 18, He actually alludes to it twice, He says, "No man taketh it from me," that is, His life, "but I lay it down of myself," that's His death, "I have power to," again, "lay it

down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

In this whole passage, as I said, there are four (some say five) times that Jesus alludes to His death. Here He is, “I’m the good shepherd, the good one,” and what’s the first thing He focuses on? “...the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” In the Old Testament, it was the sheep that died for the people, and the priest would offer up the lamb. Now, we find that Jesus becomes the Lamb of God who dies on the cross for our sins so a shepherd dying for his sheep. The important insight that we get from this text on the death of Christ is amazing.

I want you to note three aspects about Jesus’ death for the sheep. First, He died voluntarily. Look at it in verse 11. The word is “giveth.” He “giveth his life for the sheep.” Now, if you have the liberty to underline in your Bible, take that liberty and underline the word “giveth,” or circle it or put a little circle around it, highlight it, put over in the margin, “Wow! This is cool!” That’s what I do in my Bible. I put, “Wow! Super hot! This is awesome!” Draw little arrows over to it, just the word “giveth.” You say, “What’s so exciting about the word “giveth?” This is what’s called the doctrine of the voluntary (write down the word “voluntary”) death of Jesus on the cross.

We must never think of Jesus’ death as being an accident or being something that wasn’t planned or preordained or designed by God from the foundation of the world and beyond and in eternity past. I believe in eternity past. I believe before God ever created the heavens, the earth, and put Adam and Eve on the earth, God knew that His Son would come someday to die for the sins of the world. Nothing takes God by surprise. He died voluntarily, verse 17 as I already pointed out, “I lay down my life,” that not only mentions His death, but, “I lay down my life,” that’s a statement of the voluntary death of Jesus Christ. Again in verse 18, “I lay it down of myself.” Jesus said, “No man taketh it from me...I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” This was all part of God’s redemptive plan.

In Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost when Peter was preaching to the Jews that were listening and the Spirit of God was convicting them of their sin, he said, “You, by your wicked hands, have taken the Son of God and crucified and slain Him, and that he was preordained before the foundations of the world. You by the predeterminate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” that’s the exact expression that Peter used, “...by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have,” taken Jesus Christ, “crucified and slain,” Him.

I don’t know if you were around years ago when there was what was called the Moonies cult. It was led by a man named Sun Myung Moon. He’s this guy from Korea who came to America and claimed to be Jesus. He claimed to be a second Jesus. His teaching was that Jesus wasn’t supposed to die. He was supposed to marry a bunch of women and start a new super race, so he came to finish what Jesus failed in. He had all of his wives, and he was going to start a super race. That is clearly not what’s taught in the Bible. Jesus came intentionally, purposely, willingly.

It also indicates that when it says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten

Son,” that Jesus came voluntarily. He didn’t come reluctantly. Jesus wasn’t coerced or pressed. It is true in Gethsemane, when He faced the cross, He said, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Again, there He surrendered voluntarily and willingly to the death on the cross. Jesus was actually born to die. Now, I’ve known it for many years, but the other day when I was meditating on this it struck me that Jesus died about (we’re pretty confident) 33 years of age. Given my age right now, I’m thinking, Wow! That was very very very young, thirty-three years of age. Think of when He was born in Bethlehem. The Bible tells us in John’s gospel, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” That phrase, “the Word became flesh” literally would be rendered, “He pitched His tent among us.” He came in a body like ours, without sin—a human body with a human nature, and even a human spirit. He was every bit human but no sin. The only thing that differed from us is that He had no sin and He was God and man. His body was prepared so that He could do one thing, that is, to die. The primary purpose for which Jesus Christ came into the world was not to give us teachings or philosophy but to give His life as the substitute, and we see that in just a moment, upon the cross.

I got a bit ahead of myself, but that’s my next point. He not only died voluntarily for the sheep, but He died vicariously. Notice verse 11, He died “...for the sheep.” You want to circle the word “for” there. He died for the sheep. The word “for” actually indicates the self-substitution of God. I love that expression. You don’t really hear it very often. It’s the self-substitution of God, that God actually gave Himself as the substitution for our sins. If you want to understand the cross, the cross of Jesus Christ, you need to understand what’s known as the substitutionary death of Christ that Jesus died in our place, the heart of the cross. You have to understand redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation, but the heart of the cross is the word “substitution.” Jesus actually substituted Himself for us.

Remember in Genesis 22 when God told Abraham to take his son, his only son Isaac, and offer him upon a mountain that He would show him and the whole episode there where they got the wood, the fire, and the knife and went up on the mountain and Isaac said, “Father, here’s the wood and the fire and the knife, but where’s the sacrifice?” Abraham looks at his son and says, “God will provide Himself a sacrifice.” I’ve always marveled at that statement that Abraham made because it could be understood in two ways, and they’re both biblical. One way is that God provides the sacrifice, and that is true, God gave His Son; but another way that it can be interpreted and I think it’s true, is that God Himself becomes the sacrifice, God will provide Himself as the sacrifice. What a marvelous truth that is!

Abraham puts Isaac on the altar, lifts the knife up, he was going to plunge it into his son, and God stops him. Over in the bushes, there’s a ram caught and God told Abraham to take the ram and put it in place of Isaac, “Take Isaac off the altar and put the ram on the altar.” What a picture that is of the substitutionary death, that is, we were on the altar, we’ve sinned—the wages of sin is death—we should have died, but we’re taken off the cross, off the altar so to speak, and Jesus substitutes Himself. Even though Abraham did not have to offer his son, God in heaven did not spare His own Son but gave Him for us, so the death of Jesus Christ was substitutionary.

Write down Romans 5:6-8 where Paul says this, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died," here's the word, "for the ungodly." It means that He took our place. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth," or displayed or demonstrated, "his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners," here it is, "Christ died for us." That's Romans 5:8, "Christ died for us." How that should thrill your hearts tonight! The Good Shepherd gave Himself voluntarily, gave Himself vicariously to die on the cross for my sin. I owed a debt I could not pay, He paid a debt He did not owe.

There's a third aspect to His death (we're not done yet), that is, He died lovingly. He died voluntarily, He died vicariously, and He died lovingly. Look at verses 12-13. It's inferred in these verses. "But he that is an hireling," now, what's a hireling? A hireling is simply and basically a guy that was hired to watch sheep. He didn't own the sheep. They weren't his sheep. He was basically a laborer. The shepherd would actually...it was just a person that was paid to watch my sheep. (I was going to say he was like a babysitter, but I don't know if that would have been the greatest illustration, anyway I said it.) Somebody would watch your kids, "Those aren't my kids, but I'm getting paid, and if the house starts to flood, I'm running for my life and the kids are on their own."

The hireling is just somebody who is paid to watch the sheep. He's not really the owner of the sheep. The hireling here represents the Pharisees of John 9, but "not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming," now, he's not getting paid enough to deal with wolves. That's not in his contract. He, "leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep." He sees the wolf coming and goes, "They're not paying me enough right now to die for these stupid sheep. This is above my pay grade. I'm outta here!" and SWOOSH! he takes off. The wolf comes in and devours the flock. In verse 13, He points out the two reasons he runs, "The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." Why does this guy run for his life, head for the hills? Because he's just a hireling and doesn't really love the sheep. He doesn't care for the sheep. Jesus is contrasting Himself with the Pharisees, with the scribes, and with the religious leaders of the Jews. Jesus is not a hireling. Jesus is "the good shepherd" who "giveth his life for the sheep," voluntarily, vicariously, and lovingly.

It's not a part of the text, but I will make an application in that the imagery of the shepherd is carried over in the Bible for pastors. The word "pastor" is shepherd, that's what the word means. It actually has the idea to feed, primarily to feed. They fed, led, protected, but the primary meaning behind "pastor" or shepherd is to feed. Now, the reason I mention that is because a true pastor will give his life for the sheep. The true pastor who is under the Good Shepherd and understands that he has been entrusted with God's flock, answerable to the Good Shepherd, he will actually give his life in service, in ministry, in sacrifice, in devotion to God's people. You know, as Christians, our lives are not our own, they belong to God. Every one of us is on that same basis; but if God calls you to do pastoral ministry, then you need to be willing to give your life for the sheep. You need to be willing to give in sacrifice for those sheep. A lot of men run from the ministry. They run from difficulties, hardships, and from false

teachers. They don't stand and fight for the faith once and for all delivering to the saints because they don't care for the sheep. They're just getting paid. That's why the Bible says that a pastor should not be doing his work for money only, "for filthy lucre" sake. There has to be a higher calling in obedience to God. I just thought I would throw that in. I won't charge you any extra for that.

Jesus certainly is a pattern for pastors, undershepherds, of One who is not a hireling but loves the sheep and gives His life for them. Write down 1 John 3:16 where the apostle John says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us," so you have all those elements that are mentioned, "the love of God," is seen or demonstrated, "he laid down his life," and did it, "for us," in our place. All of those elements of His death for the sheep are seen in that one verse, 1 John 3:16. I think of the hymn Charles Wesley wrote, Amazing love! how can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me? You know, we ought to all pray that we never get beyond the cross, that we never get beyond the wonder and the amazement...Oh, the wonder of it all to think that God loves me and that God would give His Son to die for me!

Let me give you the second reason Jesus is, "the good shepherd," that is, Jesus knows His sheep. Notice verses 14-15, "I am the good shepherd," again, "I am the shepherd, the good one," and here it is, "and know my sheep," circle the word "know," "and am known of mine. 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." The emphasis in the first section, verses 11-13, is that He dies for the sheep; now the focus is that He knows the sheep. Why is Jesus "the good shepherd?" Because He knows us. Now, because He's God, He is omniscient. But the word doesn't mean just an understanding in His mind, it has the idea of to know intimately. It's the Greek word, *ginosko*, which means to know intimately and experientially. Do you know that you can know about someone? From time to time someone will say, "Do you know so-and-so?" "Well, I know who they are. I know about them, but I don't know them. I've never met them, and I don't have a friendship with them." I don't know them intimately. It's also the word in the book of Genesis where it says that Adam knew his wife. It speaks of an intimacy in a husband and wife relationship. When Jesus says, "I know them," it means that He is intimate with them, that He knows them completely and intimately, and that He has a relationship with us. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount when He said, "Depart from Me. I never knew you," the idea, "I never had this intimate relationship with you. I never knew you intimately."

Let me mention three ways He knows us. He knows our name, verse 3, which is a marvelous truth. Secondly, He knows my nature. Each of us are different. You know, we're all sheep in His flock, but we're all unique. He knows all of our idiosyncrasies. He knows our personalities and accepts us the way we are, but He's changing us into His image and His likeness. I think about the disciples that Jesus picked. What a motley crew they were. How different they were, the personalities that they had. I think of Peter, how he differed from Thomas the doubting apostle. I think of Matthew who worked for the Roman government who was a tax collector and Simon the Zealot. How did they get along at dinnertime? He hated the Roman government, and they put them together, "By the way, Simon, I want you to sit next to Matthew at dinner so you guys can learn to get along." We have all our different types and personalities, but He

knows you so don't beat yourself up saying, "Well, I'm not like that," or "I'm not like that." One of the problems we have in the church is we all want to be like somebody else not accepting the way God has made us, unique in how He fashioned us. He knows my name, and He knows my nature.

Thirdly, He knows my needs. This is my favorite—He knows my needs. If ever there was a needy creature, it was a sheep. Helpless, right? and no natural defenses. Sheep don't have claws. Sheep don't have fangs. Sheep don't have the ability to fight and take care of themselves. They are very very helpless. They're also very wayward. You can put a sheep in a beautiful pasture with a nice fence, and he'll find a little bit of a crack to get through that fence. He'll get through that fence and start eating weeds, dumb sheep. He'll fall off a cliff somewhere, "Oh, good riddance, sheep," that's what the hireling says. The Bible says the shepherd goes into the hills and finds the one lost sheep and brings it back rejoicing. We're so much like sheep in that we are helpless, wayward, we wander off God's path, and we need His help. You know, Jesus said in Matthew 6:8, "...for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." As His sheep, we know that He needs to watch over us, guide, and protect us.

Jesus dies for the sheep. Secondly, Jesus knows the sheep, and here's the third reason He's "the good shepherd," verse 16, Jesus gathers His sheep, or you might add, Jesus gathers and unites His sheep. He says, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold," there's the key, "and one shepherd." Notice He uses this term "other sheep." I believe this "other sheep" is a reference to (and you really want to get this) Gentiles. The reason I say you really want to get it is because this is one of the most frequently used passages out of context, misinterpreted by the cults. Let me put the one that's on the top of the list, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints commonly known as the Mormons. Mormonism is not Christianity. Do you know what the Mormons do? They turn to this verse and say they are the "other sheep" that need to be added to the fold.

There are other cults and stuff that seek to try to identify themselves as these "other sheep," but clearly in the context of John 9 and 10, Jesus is talking about in contrast to the fold which is Judaism, of which the blind man in chapter 9 was kicked out of and of which the Pharisees and the scribes were the thieves and the robbers, that Jesus was going to include other sheep who are not of that fold and bring them in and create one fold. Now, the "one fold" there in verse 16 is the church. The other fold is Judaism, the "one fold" is the church, and He's going to take the Gentiles and bring them in creating one flock or "one fold." You need to understand the doctrine of the church, that the church is made up of both Jews and Gentiles, but in their standing before God they are one. In the church there are no second-class Christians or no second-class citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Amen? We're all equally standing before Christ.

Write down an important text, Ephesians 4:4-6. If you can turn there quickly in your Bible, I want you to look at it. It's one of the great verses on the oneness of the body of Christ. The focus of Ephesians is actually the body of Christ of which Christ is the head. The focus of

Colossians is Christ the head not the body. Ephesians focuses on the body, Colossians focuses on the head. Notice Ephesians 4:4-6. He says, "There is one body," if you stop right there, how many bodies are there? This is a metaphor. The church is likened unto a body. There's one body. There's not a Jewish body and a Gentile body, there's not a body for this race or creed, and there's not a different body for this group. We're all one. Then, notice, there's "one Spirit," so there's one body and one Spirit. What Spirit is that? The Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit that's in you is the same Holy Spirit that's in me even as we are called into one hope of our calling. In verse 4 you have one body, one Spirit, one hope, that is, the hope of heaven. Notice verse 5, "One Lord," that's Jesus Christ, "one faith," that's faith in Jesus Christ, and "one baptism," that's baptism of the Spirit into Christ. I believe the moment you are saved, you are placed into the fold.

I would guess that the majority of us here tonight are Gentiles. I'm not a Jew, I'm a Gentile, but I'm the "other sheep." I thank God for this verse. This is me in the verse. There is me in the Bible, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold," that He would bring them into the fold and would create one body, one church. Again, in context, it's interesting that the blind man had been kicked out of Judaism but taken into the fold, the church, the flock of God.

In Acts 2, the church was born when the Holy Spirit came from heaven and baptized us into one body and united us to Christ our head. Notice the progression, and this is just a reference, Acts 8, when Philip went to Samaria. Now, Samaritans were half Jew, half Gentile. I haven't quite got there yet. It starts with the 120 in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, the church is all Jewish folks. Then, they go to Samaria and add some Samaritans. In Acts 10, Peter goes to Joppa to the home of a Roman centurion by the name of Cornelius. If you've been to Israel, you know a beautiful little town of Joppa. What's hard for me when I'm in Joppa is I want to look at the waves and check the surf and see how good the waves are, you know, it's such a beautiful place. It's like, "Aww, that'd be the perfect place to surf right now." It was there that God opened the doors for Gentiles to come into the church.

God gave Peter a dream with this great big sheet, knit at four corners, let down from above with all these creepy animals on it that were unclean to Jewish people. He told Peter, "Get up and kill them and eat them." Peter said, "No, Lord. I've never eaten anything that's common or unclean," and God said, "Peter, what I've called clean, that call not unclean." The moment God said that, there was a knock at the door. Peter answered the door, and there were Gentiles that said, "Hey, an angel came to my master, Cornelius, and he said that we were to call for you. Come to Caesarea and preach the gospel to my master." Peter said, "Well, God showed me in a dream, I'm not to call anyone uncommon or unclean, so here we go." You talk about racism, the Jews hated the Gentiles. You're not supposed to eat in the same room with them. You're not talking coronavirus, you're talking cooties here. Peter didn't even wear a mask when he went into the home of Cornelius.

Peter walks into this room and the first thing he says (this is not a way to open your sermon), "God showed me that though you're not clean, not to call you unclean." "Thank you, Peter, we're so glad you're here." "God told me to come," he said, "You know how I'm not supposed to

be here. I could get cooties doing this, but God showed me that He wants to save you.” He starts telling them the gospel and about Jesus. Peter got so long, the Holy Spirit got kind of impatient and says, “Peter, you’re going too long,” and the Holy Spirit fell on this whole room full of Gentiles. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and started speaking in tongues and praising God. The Jews with Peter sat back and said, “Wow! Wow! Can’t believe it! God gave them the Holy Spirit just the same as He did us?” They were blown away. It was so hard for them to comprehend, but this is what Jesus is prophesying. This is what Jesus is predicting in verse 16 (go back with me to John 10). “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring...and there shall be one fold.”

When we come into the church today, it’s not Jewish and Gentile, it’s one family, the body of Christ. How marvelous that is! You say, “Well, what does this have to do by practical application for us tonight?” There’s a message for missions, the message is for missions, that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” and “Go ye into all the world.” Do you know what the book of Jonah’s about? Missions. “Jonah, go to Nineveh.” “No way, Jose! I’m not going to Nineveh. Those people are terrible. I want them to die and go to hell.” Finally, reluctantly, he went to Nineveh and preached to them, and God saved them. He was all bummed out because God saved them, “I knew this was going to happen. God’s good and God’s loving and God’s merciful and God’s kind, so now I preach and Gentiles got saved.” Even in the Old Testament is a picture of the mission heart of God.

Here’s our last point: Why is Jesus “the good shepherd?” Because He rose for the sheep. He rose again from the dead for the sheep, verses 17-18. Jesus said, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.” Notice, “take it again” is a reference to His resurrection. “No man taketh it from me,” it was voluntary, “but I lay it down of myself. I have power,” which is the right or the authority, “to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” Twice in verse 18 He mentions taking it again or being able to take it up Himself. Again, that’s a reference to the resurrection. “This commandment have I received of my Father.” I’ve always loved verse 18 where Jesus said, “No man taketh it,” My life, “from me,” so His death was voluntary, “but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again,” Jesus is not only talking about His voluntary death on the cross, but He’s talking about the victorious resurrection from the dead. Jesus died voluntarily, but He rose victoriously. I love that. Jesus died, and Jesus rose. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead means that my sins can be forgiven, we have His pardon, 1 Corinthians 15, “And if Christ be not raised...ye are yet in your sins.” The fact that Jesus rose from the dead, “the good shepherd,” I can have peace with God; and not only the peace of God, but I have peace with God. I’m not at war anymore. The great Saint Augustine said that we’re at war with God and that the soul is restless until it finds its rest in God.

Thirdly, we have the power of God, the Holy Spirit. He comes to fill us, empower us, and enable us. Fourthly, we have His pattern. Because Jesus rose, we will rise again from the dead. Fifthly, and lastly, we have His promise, John 14, where Jesus said, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be

also.”

In closing, just quickly, verses 19-21. “There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. 20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? 21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?” Do you know there’s no neutrality when it comes to Jesus Christ? There was a split right down the middle of the crowd, “This guy is demon possessed. Why are you listening to Him?” And the other group says, “Oh no, how can He have a demon? Can a demon-possessed man speak words like this?” and, “Can a demon-possessed man open the eyes of the blind?” The answer is no.

Jesus, “the good shepherd,” or Jesus the only true and Good Shepherd, the question is: Is He your Shepherd? The only way for Him to become your Shepherd is if you surrender to Him your life. If you turn from your sin and trust in and believe on Him as your Savior, He becomes the Shepherd of your soul. Let’s pray.