

John 10:11-18

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. ¹²A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don’t belong to him and he isn’t their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. ¹³The hired hand runs away because he’s working only for the money and doesn’t really care about the sheep.

¹⁴“I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, ¹⁵just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

¹⁷“The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. ¹⁸No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.”

Background

“I am the Good Shepherd” is one of seven “I AM” statements in John’s Gospel, revealing Jesus’ divine identity. In John 10, Jesus draws on the 1st-century image of a shepherd who constantly guides, protects, and puts his life on the line for the flock. Through it all, the shepherd remains committed to the sheep. What a beautiful illustration of Jesus.

Teaching Points

1. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus willingly gave His life for us on the cross. His death was voluntary. In verse 18, Jesus claimed the power to raise Himself from the dead. Only God could have this power, and Jesus demonstrated it when He rose again. Jesus was fully God and fully Man before His death, and He remains fully God and fully Man today.

2. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep.

Jesus knows His sheep. This “knowing” is personal and compassionate. He understands each sheep’s unique needs and watches over them individually.

The “hired hand” in verses 12-13 works only for pay and abandons the sheep when danger comes. This represents those in ministry who lack true care, treating it as a job rather than a calling. When trouble arises, they flee. The “wolf” (v12) represents Satan, who seeks to scatter and harm the flock. In contrast, Jesus never abandons His sheep. He knows them intimately, just as He knows the Father, demonstrating His divine love and care.

3. The Good Shepherd leads only one flock of sheep.

Jesus was addressing a Jewish audience. In this metaphor, the sheepfold represents Israel, and the true sheep are those whom Jesus calls out to follow Him into the pastures of Christianity. The “other sheep” (v16) are the Gentiles who would come to know and follow the Good Shepherd.

Jesus’ ultimate purpose is unity: *“There will be one flock and one shepherd”* (v16). This points to the Church, the body of Christ. Ephesians 2:13-14 confirms this truth, showing that God’s purpose is to create one unified flock, with people from every nation and language, under one Shepherd.

Application

1. Are you a shepherd or a hired hand?

Every believer is called to care for others in the flock under the Good Shepherd, and help them find spiritual nourishment.

The key question is: **Are you a shepherd or a hired hand?** A hired hand isn’t a thief or false shepherd, but they care more about the job than the sheep. They’re in it for the pay, not the calling, and often prioritize their own interests over the flock. When challenges arise, they leave the church, avoid tough ministry, or give up.

A true shepherd, however, remains committed. Believers are called to care like Christ, faithfully and sacrificially.