

“I Am the Good Shepherd”

John 10:11-18

John 10:11-18 - *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”*¹² *But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.*¹³ *The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.*¹⁴ *I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.*¹⁵ *As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.*¹⁶ *And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.*¹⁷ *“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.”*¹⁸ *No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”*

Background Notes

“I am the good shepherd.” This is another of the “I AM” claims of the Lord in the Gospel of John.

There are seven “I AM” statements in the Gospel of John. “I am the Bread” (John 6), “I am the Light of the world” (John 8 & 9), “I am the Door” (John 10), “I am the Good Shepherd” (John 10), “I am the Resurrection and the Life” (John 11), “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14), and “I am the Vine” (John 15).

This section of John 10 is a continuation of our Lord’s figurative discourse about the shepherd and the sheep. We have already seen that Jesus Christ is the **True Shepherd**. He’s not a false shepherd who steals the sheep or leads them astray. In this section of the discourse we see that Jesus Christ is the **Good Shepherd**, not a hireling who runs away when danger comes.

Remember the historical context of shepherds and sheep in John 10. Our Lord was not talking about a modern sheep ranch, with all the modern methods of feeding and caring for the sheep. No, He was picturing the 1st century shepherd in a Middle East country. Those shepherds would lead their flocks miles away from the home sheepfold to find good pasture.

Those shepherds would have to be with their flocks day in and day out. Dangers were always lurking - dangers from the terrain, dangers from the weather, dangers from wild animals, dangers from thieves. The shepherd might actually be injured or killed by a wolf or a mountain lion while defending his sheep. He might literally have to “lay down his life for his sheep.” That kind of shepherd was a **good** shepherd!

What a wonderful illustration of our Lord! The three truths about the Good Shepherd in verses 11-18 will be our doctrinal points for this Talk: the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep; the Good Shepherd knows His sheep; the Good Shepherd leads only one flock of sheep.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

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

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep” (v11). And, “As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep” (v15).

As the Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus gave His life for His sheep at the cross.

The emphasis here is on the **voluntary** nature of His death. The Lord was not forced to go to the cross. He willingly **laid his life down** – He voluntarily **gave His life** for us. *“... I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again...” (v17-18).* As the Good Shepherd, he voluntarily went to the Cross and laid His life down for the sheep.

Now notice this amazing statement: *“I lay down My life that I may take it again... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”* **The Lord said He had power in Himself to come back to life again!** Now if that isn't a clear statement claiming **deity**, I don't what is!

Power **in Himself** to raise Himself back to life again? Only God could do that! And, of course, the Lord didn't just make the statement - **He did it!** That's **deity!**

Notice further that He took up His *human* life again. As *man* He died, and as *man* He arose from the dead. He was fully God and fully Man before He died. He was fully God and fully Man after His resurrection. *“I have power to take my life again.”* He is fully God and fully Man today. We will see Jesus someday!

The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

2. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep.

“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own”(v14).

The main idea in “knowing” the sheep is **caring** for the sheep. Jesus Christ cares for His sheep! His sheep are valuable - they are precious! He knows each of His sheep individually, and He takes care of each one according to their individual needs.

The “hireling” doesn't care – it's just a job to him. But the Good Shepherd cares. Notice the contrast: *“a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf*

catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own”(v12-14). So the main idea in the Shepherd knowing the sheep is that He **cares** for them.

There's quite a contrast between the hireling and the Good Shepherd. In this figurative shepherd and sheep discourse, who is the "hireling" and who is the "wolf"? I think that there can be little doubt that the "wolf" is Satan, or satanic agents. Certainly Satan's strategy is to ensnare or scatter the sheep in any way he can, leaving them vulnerable to all kinds of problems and dangers.

Who is the "hireling"? The hireling is not a stranger, he's not a thief, and he's not a false shepherd. The hireling is a person who is paid to care for the sheep. Watching the sheep is just a job to him. He doesn't really care about the sheep. In fact, he cares more about himself more than the sheep! So the hireling represents anyone involved with the sheep that doesn't really care for the sheep.

Unfortunately, in the ministry today there are many "hirelings" who don't really care for the sheep! Running a church is just a job to them. When tough times come, or problems arise, they try to avoid the situation, or they delegate the tough jobs to others. They try to hide rather than facing serious and dangerous problems such as strife and division in the church, or church discipline, or heresy. Like the hireling in John 10, they "flee." Do you know anybody like that?

But the Good Shepherd knows and cares for His sheep. How well does He know us? Verse 15 seems to indicate that the special knowledge shared between the Father and the Son is now extended to the sheep. The Good Shepherd **knows all about** His sheep at all times – their personalities, their strengths and weaknesses, and their particular needs. He knows all about His sheep!

There's a lot more we could discuss here, particularly about the different translations of verse 15, but we have to move on to the third doctrinal point.

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

"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (v16).

Who are these "other sheep"? Are they people or "life forms" or "beings" on other planets? Remember the Lord was speaking to Jewish people. The "other sheep" are the Gentile believers whom the Lord anticipated would hear His voice and follow Him.

In this *figurative* discourse, we identified the sheepfold as Israel, and the true sheep were those in Israel that the Lord Jesus, the true Shepherd, led out to the pastures of Christianity. Now the Lord mentioned *"other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice..." (v16)*. So the "other sheep" are the Gentile believers, who were not part of the sheepfold of Israel, but would follow the Good Shepherd in the future. The "other sheep" are you and me!

Now notice the ultimate purpose of the Good Shepherd. *“Other sheep I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.”* One fold with several flocks? No! **One** fold and **one** flock! And that one flock is **the Church**, the body of Christ.

This same truth is taught in Ephesians 2:13-14: *“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation.”* Jew and Gentile gathered together in the Good Shepherd’s flock, and becoming **one!** **One** flock and **one** Shepherd!

That is God’s ultimate purpose – people of every nation and language included in the Lord’s one fold! **One flock and one shepherd!** The Good Shepherd leads only one flock of sheep.

Practical Application

Are you a shepherd or a hireling?

The Good Shepherd has a lot of shepherds under Him. In fact, besides being His sheep, **every** believer is a shepherd, to one degree or another.

That includes you, and that includes me. We have a responsibility to help the Good Shepherd’s flock to find pasture – nourishing food! How well are we doing?

Are you a shepherd - or a hireling? A hireling is not thief. He’s not a stranger. He’s not a false shepherd. But a hireling doesn’t really **care** about the sheep because the hireling, as the name implies, is hired. He cares for himself more than for the sheep. It’s just a job. He gets paid for the job, and sometimes he’s just in it for money. To the hireling, taking care of the sheep is more of a job than a calling or ministry.

Are you a shepherd or hireling? When danger comes, or problems arise, or the going gets tough - hirelings quit. They leave the church, or they avoid a difficult area of ministry, or they throw in the towel in the difficult Christian service project, or they go home from serving at a Christian camp because the sheep didn’t appreciate their efforts - or the job was too hard.

Some time ago a ministry that reaches out to high school kids ran out of funds. There was no money left to pay the full-time staff or carry on the ministry. Well, rather than complain, or quit, or desert the teens with whom they were ministering, the entire staff decided to get part-time jobs to meet their needs - and they kept the ministry in full operation! Now that’s an example of “good shepherding”!

We’re called to be good shepherds. So let’s ask the question once again: Are you a shepherd - or a hireling?