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Our Shepherd, Our Example

John 10:16-18

Intro: In our previous study, we looked at the significance of the declaration of Jesus that He is the Good Shepherd. This is the 4th “I am” statement recorded by John and is probably the most loved because it brings so much comfort to believers as it reveals the great depth of love and compassion that Jesus feels for His own sheep and the great lengths He was willing to go to for His sheep to have the opportunity to enter into His glorious fold.

We were not able to look at the last 3 verses of the passage (16-18). These verses contain some eye-opening and spirit encouraging truths that could not be quickly glossed over. But, before we get into these truths, I would like to flesh out a little more the imagery of Jesus as our Shepherd. Not only does this word picture teach us quite a lot about the Lord Jesus Christ but it also teaches believers what we are to be like since we are to be made like Him.

The Bible elaborates on this idea of Jesus as the Shepherd of His people in an interesting way. The NT refers to Jesus in His role as the Shepherd 3 times but in each occurrence, “shepherd” is preceded by a different adjective. The first time is right here in [John 10:11](#) – the good shepherd. Here, the emphasis is on the voluntary and vicarious death of the Shepherd for His sheep. The next occurrence is in [Heb 13:20-21](#), Jesus is called that great Shepherd. Here, the emphasis is on the resurrection of Jesus and His ability to work through His sheep and accomplish His purposes in His sheep. The 3rd occurrence is in [1 Peter 5:4](#) which speaks of Jesus as the Chief Shepherd. Peter stresses 1 particular aspect of the 2nd Coming of Jesus: rewarding those who have served Him as undershepherds.

These 3 passages highlight the focal points of Jesus’ ministry. As the Good Shepherd, He dies for the sheep. As the Great Shepherd, He rises from the dead so He might serve the sheep. As the Chief Shepherd, Jesus returns to reward those who’ve been faithful in their assigned responsibilities as undershepherds. It’s this last aspect that we need to consider today because when Jesus describes Himself as the Shepherd, not only is He revealing many important aspects of what He is to us, He’s also revealing

what we should be to others. You might not realize this but we're all shepherds – if we are believers in Jesus Christ! To one extent or another, every believer has been given the responsibility of oversight for other people. You may not be a pastor or Sunday school teacher but there are still people looking to you as a Christian for spiritual guidance and leadership. Do we exercise our responsibility as Jesus did – in the home, on the job, out in the community? Do we model Christ's self-sacrificing and sympathy for others? Are we faithful in this capacity? Whether we do or not, whether we are or not; we can still improve our service to the Lord and those He has brought into our lives by reflecting on the characteristics of the Good Shepherd.

1) He's faithful. The good Shepherd is faithful in His responsibilities not just when the skies are sunny and the countryside is peaceful but also when times are tough and when danger threatens. This truth is seen in the contrast between Jesus and the hireling in [vs12](#). Unlike the hireling, the good Shepherd doesn't run off when He sees the wolf coming. The hireling does the job mainly for what he can get out of it, not out of a real sense of responsibility for the sheep. So the question becomes - in my capacity as an undershepherd, am I a hireling towards those for whom God has made me responsible? Am I Faithful or faithless? Do I stick with the work or give up when it gets too tough?

The Bible talks quite a bit about faithfulness. 2 of the Gospels record Jesus' parable about the stewards who proved they were faithful by the way they took care of their master's goods. Paul reminds us in [1 Cor 4:2](#) that it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. The book of Hebrews dedicates an entire chapter (11) to many of God's people from the OT who were faithful to the Lord. None of them were perfect, few of them were successful but all of them were faithful and their faithfulness made a difference in the lives of all those around them and continue to do so for all those who read about them. There are multiple individuals in the NT that are pointed out specifically for their faithfulness. This particular characteristic is of primary importance in Scripture. No matter what good characteristics you may possess, they all will prove of little value to the work of Christ if we don't possess this primary and essential characteristic. Let's ask the Lord to build in us the character that proves faithful.

2) He works hard. Nothing worthwhile is accomplished without hard work

but it appears that few believers today realize this truth. Our standard should be that of the good Shepherd who works hard for His sheep. When we look at Ps 23 in a previous study, we saw that the one who has the Lord as their shepherd does not lack any good thing. They do not lack in rest, guidance safety, provision or a heavenly home. Why do the sheep not lack these things? Because the Shepherd provides them and He does so through much diligence and a lot of hard work.

The sheep don't lack in rest because the Shepherd seeks out green pastures for them to lie down in. They don't lack guidance because he leads them beside the still waters and he leads them in paths of righteousness. They don't lack safety because the Shepherd defends them against natural disasters and predators. They don't lack provision because the Shepherd finds all they need and spreads it before them. They don't lack a heavenly home because the Shepherd has gone to prepare it for them. All these are provided through the hard work of the Shepherd.

It's the same today: the needs of God's people are provide by the hard work of those the Lord has appointed as undershepherds – whether in the home, the work place or the church. If a congregation is not being spiritually fed, it's because the pastor is not working hard enough to provide it. It's a lot easier to just let the worship team get the people hyped up and then just coast through the rest of the service with platitudes and poems. If a family lacks love and security; it's because the parents are not working hard to provide these things in the home. Are we diligent? Do we work hard for the Lord? Only a diligent servant is of use to the Lord.

3) He's patient. We need to be patient with the sheep. How long did it take each of us to come to the Lord? How long did it take to acquire some maturity? Some of us are still working at that. If the Lord is patient with us in our ignorance and stubbornness, then we can afford to be patient with others struggling in the same way. Sheep are sheep and they need to be dealt with patiently. Sheep are also different: some go too fast while others go too slow. We must be patient with all of them. Thus, we need to learn this from the Chief Shepherd.

4) He's a good example. That's the context of the passage where Peter refers to Jesus as the Chief Shepherd ([1 Peter 5:1-4](#)). Are we examples of mature Christian understanding, faithful in trials, always modeling the fruit of

the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control? We should be.

5) He's self-sacrificing. He gives His life for the sheep. Jesus did this literally but we are to do this no less than He. Not die for them but live for them; to give of our time to help the sheep. To sacrifice things we'd rather do or rather have to serve and give to others. Basically, we must put others ahead of ourselves. Our primary desire must be for their spiritual well-being and comfort. It's a comfort and joy to me to see the people of this fellowship go out of their way on a regular basis to clean the church, carry people to church, help each other, serve one another in the church. The truth is, this is way to having a full life and a joyful existence in the Lord. It takes self-sacrifice for a parent to raise children properly, for a pastor to guide and teach his people effectively, for a Sunday school teacher to help their pupils; for any worthwhile thing to be accomplished. But it is rewarding. It is a source of great joy.

6) He's moved by love. Jesus cares for His sheep because He loves them! This should be our primary motivation for caring for one another. Where do we learn about this kind of love? From Jesus! First we must learn to love Him, only then will we be able to properly love those He has entrusted into our care ([John 21:15-17](#)). Jesus knew that once Peter came to love Him as he should, he would then love others also and would care for them.

Every good and necessary lesson we need to learn as Christians we can learn from Jesus. Is the Lord Jesus Christ your shepherd? Then you must not only follow Him, you must also follow His example.

16- This is another amazingly encouraging verse. As Jesus is laying out this parable or word picture, He looks beyond the immediate circle of His followers to other sheep. It's not too difficult to figure out who Jesus is talking about. He says these other sheep are not of this fold and that fold was Judaism. Jesus taught that He had come to call those who were His own sheep out of Judaism. The man born blind was one example; the disciples were others. Now He's teaching that there are other sheep in other folds that must be called – the fold of the Greeks, Romans, barbarians, etc. In each of these folds, Jesus has sheep who are His own, who've been given to Him by the Father, for whom He was about to die, and whom He would call. These are now to form that one great flock, the church, of which

he is the one true Shepherd. Jesus says some wonderful things about these sheep!

First, He says He has them: they're already His! Note: He doesn't say I will have them or I hope to have them. Jesus says they are His and He has them. This truth reflects a similar concept in the words the Lord spoke to the Apostle Paul in [Acts 18](#). Paul had just arrived in Corinth after an unsuccessful preaching mission in Athens. It didn't look like things were going to be much better in Corinth; in fact, it looked like it would be worse. But it was right here in Corinth, at one of the low points in his ministry; that the Lord appeared to him at night in a vision and spoke these same words of encouragement ([Acts 18:9-10](#)). Many people! Even though Paul hadn't seen them yet, it still must have been a great comfort to hear this and how bold he must have been as he determined to set out to find these sheep that belonged to the flock of the Great Shepherd!

This should also be a comfort to God's people who love the lost and desire to witness to them of Christ's love. Now, some may say, "If Christ already has His sheep, what's the use in witnessing to them?" But the logical response is, "What's the use of witnessing if He doesn't have them?" The sheer fact that the sheep are already His should make us bold in serving Him. If they were the devil's sheep, why bother? The devil's stronger than we are. But, they're not Satan's sheep; they're Christ's. The Father gave them to Him and He died to pay the full price of their redemption. Thus, we can be bold in searching them out. If they're Christ's, we can go to the very borders of hell to call them back to Him! If that truth doesn't get your juices flowing, just consider this next truth

Not only do these other sheep belong to Jesus, but He says He must bring them into the fold! It's encouraging enough to know that He has sheep out there. That's great! But when He also tells us that He must bring those sheep in – that should really light a fire under all of us.

There are several times in the Gospels where Jesus says He must do something. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up" ([John 3:14](#)). This speaks of the necessity of **His death**. Then, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" ([Luke 2:49](#)). This referred to **His entire life**. Also, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down for today I must stay at your house." ([Luke 19:5](#)). Here He

needed to call an individual. But, in our text (16), the principle is applied to the calling of God's people throughout the world.

Most of us don't like the idea of necessity. We don't like to be told, "You must!" Kings certainly don't like necessity. Yet, here's the King of kings, above all kings, who still glories in the fact that He must bring these people.

Here's the good part: when Jesus says must, things happen! When I say it, things may happen but not necessarily. But, when Jesus says must, difficulties vanish, mountains are torn down, life comes out of death, hell is vanquished, men believe. Do you want to have a part in that conquest? Do you feel compelled to go out into the highways and byways and draw God's people in to the wedding feast? Jesus said it must happen so, it's going to happen!

Of course, He also tells us how it's going to happen. Those who are to believe will come to Him by hearing his voice, by hearing the Gospel. There's no other way that lost individuals can be brought to Jesus but through the gospel. We should be alert to any means by which the gospel can be conveyed to people but we must never confuse our methods with the Gospel itself, thinking that somehow it's the methods that save people and not the gospel. The lost are only won by proclaiming the cross. It's by the foolishness of preaching that God saves some. Proclaim the gospel, speak the word of the cross and some will believe – the Bible guarantees it. Plus, the history of the church serves to confirm the truth and the wisdom of what Jesus is teaching us here.

Second, Jesus says there will be one flock. How will all these different sheep be able to exist and survive in close company with all these other sheep? This unity doesn't come from the sheep all being forced into one organization. It comes from the fact that they have all heard Jesus' voice and have left other folds (lesser loyalties) to follow Him.

The reality of the one flock stems from the reality that we have only one True Shepherd. Jesus is both the source and the basis of our unity in the church. The unity and the safety of God's people depend on their proximity to Jesus. We are unified because we all hear, answer to and obey one Shepherd. We are unified to one another by our loyalty to Jesus Christ. This is the only possible unity for men on earth.

Nothing we ever do will abolish distinctions between nations. There will always be nations. Nothing (so far as I can see) will ever abolish denominations. But in spite of these things—in spite of race, nations, and denominations—there can be a real and visible unity for those who acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Shepherd. We're all equally sinners. . . . We're all equally helpless. . . . We've all come to one and the same Savior. . . . We have the same salvation. . . . We have the same Holy Spirit. . . . We have the same Father. . . . We even have the same trials. . . . And, we're all marching and going together to the same eternal home. It's the knowledge of these truths and of the love of Jesus Christ for us that will draw us closer to one another. 😊