

Shepherds

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Reading: John 10

- Often, when you aren't personally involved with something, it can seem nicer than it is
- We develop idealistic views of something based on childhood experiences or Hollywood versions of reality
- Being a Lifeguard, for example, seems like a sexy, glamorous job until you sit sandy and wet in the hot sun for eight hours bored out of your skull worried that someone is going to die on your watch
- I'm afraid that I have been making this same mistake with Shepherds
- So many Bible characters were Shepherds or spoke of Shepherds in a positive way that I always thought that it was a great thing
- I have this romanticized view of David sitting out in a lush green pasture playing his harp and writing poems while the sheep peacefully graze nearby
- Then a certain verse caught my attention...
- Genesis 46:31-34
 - 31) Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me.
 - 32) And the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock, and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.'
 - 33) When Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?'
 - 34) you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, **for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.**"
- Every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians!

- That helps to explain the odd verse that appears three chapters earlier when Joseph hosted a Dinner with his Brothers and some Egyptian nobles

- Genesis 43:32

32) They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because **the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.**

- At first it seems that the Egyptians despised the Hebrews in general (and that may be the case), but we clearly learn a few chapters later that every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians
- Historians suggest that the sense of abomination possibly stems from the malodorous woolen garments worn by the Hebrews
- It is also suggested that it is perhaps a combination of distaste and hatred from the civilized city-dwelling intellectual Egyptians stemming from an association of shepherds with barbaric nomadic peoples
- Egyptians weren't unique in this feeling as it has prevailed in many cultures over the years
- In the readings this week, Jeremiah has an interesting remark
- Jeremiah 43:12

12) I shall kindle a fire in the temples of the gods of Egypt, and he shall burn them and carry them away captive. And he shall clean the land of Egypt **as a shepherd cleans his cloak of vermin**, and he shall go away from there in peace.

- I would contend that if our hills were dotted with Sheep and you ran into Shepherds in your daily life, you might have a little different opinion of them
- By current day accounts it tends to be a little bit of an odd individual who chooses a nomadic, wandering life all alone in the wilderness with nothing but animals to talk to
- The lack of showering and clothes washing combined with the close proximation to animals and dung would definitely produce some unfriendly odors

- Not only would we probably choose not to be Shepherds ourselves, I imagine we would find it hard to even want to hang out with Shepherds, nonetheless, be friends with one!
- I'm betting that Shepherds would be an abomination to Californians as well!
- Yet what about Jesus?
- What about the verses we read this morning?
- John 10:11-15
 - 11) **I am the good shepherd.** The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
 - 12) He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.
 - 13) He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.
 - 14) **I am the good shepherd.** I know my own and my own know me,
 - 15) just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.
- All of a sudden, these verses take on new meaning to me!
- I lose the Sunday School Felt Board version of cozy, friendly Jesus out in the field with his staff watching out for all of us poor little lambs
- Instead I see a man who chooses a lifestyle that isn't glamorous or pleasant
- A man who makes a significant personal sacrifice in order to try to protect and serve these cantankerous, smelly, unruly animals
- A man who is willing to walk away from Society and all of the niceties of the personal connections that you make with people in order to dedicate his life to the unsavory job of being a Shepherd
- "Shepherd" is the figure of speech which is often used to describe our Lord Jesus
- He is the **Good Shepherd**
- In John 10 Jesus spells out what it means for him to be our Shepherd

- I'd like to talk about seven things that Jesus does for us

1) Jesus received you as his own as a gift from God

- John 10:29

29) My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

- How do you know if you are one of Christ's Sheep?

- Maybe the answer is in what he says earlier

- John 10:26

26) ...you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.

- It would follow then that believing is a distinguishing mark of the sheep given to the Son by the Father

- Christ's sheep hear his voice, they believe his Word, and they follow him

- So, if you believe and follow Jesus Christ, you are one of Christ's sheep

- You have been given to Jesus by God

2) Jesus knows you

- John 10:14-15

14) I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

15) just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

- To me, this is one of the more reassuring points

- Jesus knows you completely!

- There may be times when you are a mystery to yourself...

- But you are never a mystery to Christ!
- In Psalm 103:14 we read, *“He knows our frame, he remembers that we are dust.”*
- Just like God, Jesus knows your temperament and your moods
- He knows what lifts you up, and he knows what gets you down
- There is nothing you could ever tell Jesus about yourself that he does not already know
- So, as a Shepherd, because he knows you completely, he is able to lead you effectively
- The good shepherd knows what you need, and he is able to give you what you need at precisely the time that you need it

3) Jesus gave himself for you

- John 10:11 & 15

11) I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

15) ...and I lay down my life for the sheep.

- Think about that for a moment... The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his Sheep
- Think about what that means... Everything Jesus endured during the Crucifixion was for you
- When he gave himself into the hands of the arresting party in the Garden of Gethsemane, it was for you
- When he was scourged and beaten, it was for you
- And when he was condemned to death, it was for you
- When he hung on the cross in agony, it was for you
- This was not imposed on him
- He gave himself willingly

- Look what he says in Verse 18

- John 10:18

18) No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

- This is what Jesus has done for you

4) **Jesus called you**

- John 10:16

16) And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So, there will be one flock, one shepherd.

- How does he bring us to himself and make us his sheep?
- Look at Verse 3 where it says, *“he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”*
- The sheep who are called by name in John 10:3 are the same sheep who enter in by the door in Verse 9
- And Jesus says, “I am the door.”
- Look at Verse 9
- John 10:9

9) I am the door. If anyone enters by me, **he will be saved** and will go in and out and find pasture.

- You come through the door when you believe and are baptized in the Lord Jesus Christ
- Remember that feeling when you got Baptized? Remember feeling called?
- Somehow Jesus called you

- He didn't stand back and wait to see if you would come to him
- Like the shepherd who went out to find the lost sheep, he laid you on his shoulders and brought you back home

5) **Jesus owns you**

- John 10:14 & 27

- 14) I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me
- 27) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

- It sounds like an uncomfortable phrase: **Jesus Owns You**

- But, look at those verses!

- That really is what he is talking about

- What a marvelous thing to be owned by the Son of God!

- The contrast here is with the hired hand

- Look what it says about him

- John 10:12

- 12) He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

- The hired hand "does not own the sheep"

- The hired hand has no real investment in the flock

- The hired hand only shepherds the flock because he is paid to do so

- The hired hand has to calculate whether it is worth the effort and risk of doing this job for what he gets paid

- There is a point when the hired hand may say, “It’s just not worth it.”
- There are limits to his commitment
- It’s not like that with the Good Shepherd
- Jesus does not care for you because of what he can get out of you
- That would be the spirit of the hired hand
- Jesus cares for you because you are his
- There will never be a time when he will say, “You’re not worth it.”
- Jesus made you his own, at the cost of his life and, having made you his own, he will never leave you; he will never forsake you

6) Jesus gives you eternal life

- John 10:28

28) I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

- Jesus does not say, “I will give them eternal life at some time in the future.”
- Jesus says, “I give them eternal life!”
- If Jesus is your shepherd, this precious gift of eternal life is already yours
- And notice the word give
- In other words, you did not earn this priceless gift
- Eternal life is freely given by the shepherd and freely received by his sheep, simply because he is the shepherd and we are the sheep

7) Jesus guards you and will keep you forever

- John 10:28-29

- 28) I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.
- 29) My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

- What reason do you have for confidence when all the pressures of life rise up against you?
- You are in Christ's hand and no one can snatch you away!

- I've learned that being a Shepherd really isn't that great of a job...
- But it really is a great and wonderful thing that Jesus is our Shepherd
- David said, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want"
- With Jesus as our Shepherd we don't need to worry about anything