

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

JOHN 10:10-18

Open your bible up to John ch. 10. We're in a series called I Am-Knowing The Real Jesus, and we're looking at the seven "I AM" statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John. If you wanted to get to know someone, you might start with a question like, "Tell me about yourself." And they might say, "I'm married, I'm a Father, I'm a grandfather. I'm a pastor. And I'm a fishermen."

I am certain things. And knowing those things about me helps you know who I am and how to relate to me. But without knowing who someone is from a reliable source, you might be prone to make certain assumptions about that person.

Like the store manager at a Philadelphia Starbucks did in April 2018 when 2 black men, Donte and Rashon, came into her store and didn't order right away. When one asked to use the bathroom he was told it was for paying customers only, so they sat at a table.

What the manager didn't know when she called 911 to have the 2 men removed as trespassers, is that Donte and Rashon are real estate agents. They were at Starbucks, meeting a friend and potential business partner for a meeting to hopefully finalize a huge deal they'd been working on for months.

But when the police showed up, they were arrested, removed and held for 8 hours. The Police dept, the city of Philly and the CEO of Starbucks have all apologized, acknowledging their wrongdoing and are making amends. But what happened? Assumptions were made about who these men were, their character, intentions, worth. Not based on truth, but stemming from personal perceptions, opinions, maybe even experiences. They were treated in a way inconsistent with the reality of who they are.

This happens to Jesus all the time. We do this to Jesus all the time. Based on our experiences, logic, perceptions, desires and influences, we form opinions about who Jesus is and then we treat him that way. We relate to Jesus in a way that's inconsistent with the reality of who He really is. Which has a huge impact on our lives, both now and the life to come. The 2 men arrested at Starbucks said, "we just hope the incident (being treated based on bias and assumptions) will lead to change." So do I.

Change is exactly what happens when we learn who Jesus really is, when we turn from our preconceived ideas, perceptions and biases, and we receive and accept Jesus for who He says He is. Paul describes how this works in 2 Cor 3:18 (slide 3). This is how real change happens. We're transformed when we behold, see, in the presence of the glory of the Lord.

But there's no glory in the Jesus of our assumptions and opinions. There's only transformative glory in the reality of who Jesus really is. And when we desire to see Him clearly, we come into relationship with the real Jesus, everything about us and our lives will be changed. Including how we look at other people and judge them with bias and prejudices.

In scripture, Jesus tells us who He really is. So far we've seen Jesus declare-I AM the bread of life, the light of the world and the door of the sheep. And today, I Am The Good Shepherd. But the first thing we learn about Jesus in all these I Am statements is that He's declaring Himself to be God. Every time He says, I Am, He's saying, I'm God, I'm from God, the Son of God come to dwell with man in the flesh. And He really puts the exclamation point on this in John 8, in a debate w/the Pharisees. See, the Jews, they saw themselves as descendants of God's chosen man, their father in the Faith, Abraham. They thought that because they were Abrahams offspring (Jewish) they were automatically Gods people.

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But in John 8:58, Jesus ends the debate when He tells them (slide 4), “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” At that point they picked up stones to throw at Him. Cause Jesus was saying, you look to Abraham, but I created Abraham, I called Abraham, and I Am He who Abraham was promised.

And so each of these statements carries that weight, that Jesus is God. And then goes on to define different aspects of who Jesus is and what that means to us. That the God of creation would dwell with sinful man and, for those who believe and repent, would come into relationship with us and receive us as His own. This helps us understand who He is and how He interacts with us. So let’s dive into what it means that He’s the Good Shepherd. Let’s read John 10:10-18 (slide 5-9).

There’s some overlap with what we covered last week in vs. 1-10. This theme of danger of the thieves, robbers, wolves continues into our passage. Obviously, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. That leaves us to be the sheep. We’re the sheep in the story. Yay. So let’s talk about sheep so we can understand who we are.

Here’s some characteristics of sheep. Sheep are helpless, weak, stupid, slow, easily confused, prone to panic and directionless. Not the brightest or strongest. Top heavy with weak legs, if they fall over they flail around trying to get up but usually can’t and without help would die on their back. They can’t protect themselves and yet they’re constantly wondering off. That’s us.

The question is, how do you actually see yourself? We don’t like this, do we? And we push back against the idea that we’re sheep. But it’s only when we see ourselves the way Jesus sees us (which is who we really are), It’s only when we see ourselves as sheep that we’ll actually be able to experience the life and freedom that the Good Shepherd leads us into.

We say we want freedom and life but we don’t want to be sheep. And that holds us back. What keeps us from walking in freedom and life is that we don’t see ourselves as a sheep, and we don’t to. We don’t recognize our brokenness and need. We don’t want to be weak and helpless. Therefore we act like we’re not. And we lose sight of the reality of our condition, which leads to losing sight of the Good Shepherd.

Literally, as I was writing this at Starbuck, I looked up and saw this shirt (slide 10). “*It’s better to be stronger than you think you need to be, instead of weaker than you thought you were.*” This is the message of the world. Be strong, don’t admit weakness. But the reality of our experience says something different.

How many go off to college like, “I can’t wait to get there and have everyone recognize me as the king of coolness on campus!” No, you show up as a freshmen, scared to death, just hoping to find your classes the first day, let alone survive the 1st semester. Getting married, or having kids? How many start out like, “I’ve got this all figured out so bring it on!” Said by no sane person ever. You’re never ready.

We’re highly dependent, helpless creatures. And it’s in light of this reality about us that Jesus shows up, comes to us, and says, I know you, I know who you really are, and you need me. Come follow me. I’m the Good Shepherd.

So, let’s spend a few minutes talking about what makes the Shepherd good. Do you know Him as Good? What’s good about Jesus? There’s a lot we could say, but here are some things we see from this passage. 1st, He’s good because He calls us by name. Look at vs. 3 (slide 11).

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Now, again, we don't know much about shepherding in the middle-east at that time, but it's helpful to know in order to understand what's really being said. So there would be a sheep pen every so often, and multiple shepherds would bring their sheep into the pen at night. So they'd be all mixed in.

But in the morning when it was time to lead them out, the shepherd would call out, and His sheep knew His voice. They recognized their shepherds voice from the other shepherds, and would come and follow Him. And some shepherds even named their sheep and would call to them individually. Their was a bond created between Shepherd and sheep. That's what this is describing.

That the God of the universe cares to be intimately acquainted with His sheep, that He knows the reality of your life and who you are to your core. And He loves you still and calls you by name. And not any name. Not the name that's constantly trying to identify you-from people or through voices, comparison, circumstances (disappointment, regret, failure or independent, superman). Not that name. He calls you by a name that He's given you and He invites you come and follow Him.

He's good because He calls us by name. And because He leads us out. Look at 3 and into 4 (slide 12). We're more familiar with cowboys herding cattle than leading sheep, so we picture driving, pushing, whipping animals to get them where you want them to be. But with sheep, the shepherd would go first, and continue to call and beckon the sheep to follow.

That means the shepherd goes first, He's out in front. He's going to face danger first, see whats around the corner first, He doesn't call the sheep to go anywhere He hasn't been first. He's in front leading the way. And for those who are following Christ, this is your reality. He's leading you, guiding you, taking you to green pastures, protecting you and providing for you all you need when you need it.

And then, look at vs. 10-13 (slide 13-14). Last week we talked about protection. Jesus is good, because He's not passive, self-protective, He engages the danger, puts Himself in front of the threat. Jesus draws a distinction here between a hired hand and the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His own life for His sheep. (We'll talk more about that in a minute).

There were very real threats to the sheep. Wolves and bear, are no small threat. And it was the job of a good shepherd to protect His sheep from every threat. But the hired hand is out. "Life threatening situation vs. \$8.50 an hour. I'm gone." But not Jesus, it's never just a job. He cares about the sheep, He's invested in the sheep, He's committed to the sheep and He goes after the threat. (Rosemary spider).

Jesus is saying, "there are some that, the moment the threat comes their gonna run. But not me." The reason is, yes, Jesus knows were helpless sheep, without Him we're doomed. But also, because He owns the sheep, we're His. And in His mercy and love, He put Himself out there for us. The hired hand doesn't care about the sheep, but in vs 11 Jesus says (slide 15).

Again in vs. 14-15 Jesus says (slide 16). He's a Good Shepherd. The hired hand doesn't own the sheep, doesn't care about the sheep, so he leaves the sheep. Jesus will Give His life for His sheep. This is the story of the bible, that the shepherd would become the sacrifice. The sacrifice for us, in place of...

You and I should have been the ones to die and instead the Good Shepherd laid down His life for us. You and I are the sheep that should have been killed, but the Good Shepherd became the Lamb of God,

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the sacrifice for our sin. In John 1 (slide 17), when John the Baptist sees Jesus coming he says, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

This is what Isaiah spoke of in Is. 53:6-7 (slide 18-19). The shepherd becomes the Lamb. Jesus became the sacrificial Lamb for us, in our place, on the cross, where he was nailed and raised up to die. And it was because of our sin that He died. He took our sin, our rebellion, our brokenness on Himself and paid the penalty for it all. He’s good because He lays down His life for His sheep, and He did it willingly.

Look at vs. 17-18 (slide 20). This isn’t a mistake. This isn’t happenstance. This isn’t a random act of kindness. This is and always has been the plan. Jesus is saying, “Nobody taking my life, I’m giving it up. I’m here for you. I’ve come to let the wolf take a bite out of my side, to sink his teeth as deep as He can. And I’m going to rip every last tooth out of His mouth. I will die, but I will take my life back up again, victoriously over my enemy.”

See, at the end of the day, today, Jesus is the victor, He’s not a victim. Because of sin, this is what had to be done to save the sheep. And because of His love and mercy, because He’s a Good Shepherd He was willing to go through with it. For us, for you. No matter who you are, where you’re coming from.

But I understand that the very nature of this message, of Jesus words, can evoke polarizing responses. That’s exactly what happened here in vs. 19-21 (slide 21). After healing the blind man in ch 9 and declaring Himself to be the door of the sheep and the Good Shepherd, half the people say He’s got a demon, the other half say no, He is who He says He is.

The call is to follow Him, The Good Shepherd. Listen to this quote by Ray Ortlund (slide 21-22):

“If Christianity were a philosophy, it wouldn’t have such a personal impact. If Christianity were just principles or a way of life or an ideal, we wouldn’t react so strongly. Mere concepts and lifestyle choices we can fit into our pre-arranged reality. But Christianity is the person of Christ Himself. And He is threatening. He is invasive. Because He comes to us, not as our lifestyle coach, He comes to us as our King, or Messiah.”

Who do you say Jesus is? How will you respond to the words of Jesus, to who He really is? Do you know Jesus this way, as The Good Shepherd? Will you trust Him as your Good Shepherd? We’re going to take a few minutes to respond, reflect on our hearts and the word we heard, to repent/turn where we haven’t trusted and followed Him.

If you’re not a Christian, I’d ask you to take this word seriously, and consider your need, as one created by God, as a sheep who’s wandered off your own way, who needs to be rescued. Would you call on name of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and trust Him and submit yourself to Him this morning.

Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd. [I] lay down [my] life for [my] sheep.” He did it all for us, and He calls us to do the same. So lets worship Him. We’re going to sing, we’re going to take communion together. We’re going to give together. (Give online, or baskets, not guests).

If you’re a Christian, after I pray I want to invite you to take communion with us. The bread and the cup (the body and blood of Christ), are on the table in the back. This is what the Good Shepherd gave for us,

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His life and His blood, to ransom us back and cleans us from our sin, guilt and shame. He did it all!
Let's remember and celebrate our Good Shepherd!

Let's pray.