



Sermon, Sunday July 26, 2023 “Sheep and Shepherd”

SCRIPTURE: John 7-21 ⁷ So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care 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. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.” ¹⁹ Again the Jews were divided because of these words. ²⁰ Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and is out of his mind. Why listen to him?” ²¹ Others were saying, “These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

Introduction: “I am the good shepherd” (Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός)

Today is the 8th Sunday after Pentecost. The Bible likens the relationship between the saints and God to that of a **“sheep and a shepherd.”** But why does the Bible represent us as sheep? It is because of the characteristics of animals called sheep. There is a famous book called **“A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23”** by W. PHILLIP KELLER (1920-1997) that describes the characteristics of sheep well. Have you ever read this book?

W. PHILLIP KELLER wrote this book based on eight years of sheep herding experience. In this book, he specifically points out what Psalm 23 says one by one with the shepherd's experience and perspective. Also, in this book, he talks about the relationship between 'sheep and shepherd' as follows:

First, sheep are helpless animals that cannot protect themselves. Second, because sheep do not take good care of themselves, they require careful management by the shepherd. Third, the shepherd's help is essential for the sheep to grow up healthily. Fourth, the flock cannot prosper unless the shepherd who takes care of the sheep is wise and diligent.

In today's text, the phrase “I am the good shepherd” (Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός) appears. This phrase is repeated in verses 11 and 14. Today, we hope that we will experience the essence of Christian faith by reflecting on what the confession of faith as “the good shepherd” means.

Body: Sheep and Shepherd

The religious tradition of ancient Israel had a view of God as a Shepherd. Because the Israelites lived as nomads, the relationship between the Israelites and God was explained through the relationship between the sheep and the shepherd. Psalm 23, which we are familiar with, is one of many examples of this religious



tradition being reflected. Based on this tradition, the writer of John's Gospel today confesses that Jesus is the 'good shepherd' that the Old Testament says.

However, because the Bible compares our existence to sheep, we should not misunderstand that humans must live passively without judgment. The expression **“sheep and shepherd”** in today's text emphasizes total trust in God, who is the Shepherd of our lives. This means that those who live by absolutely relying on Jesus, who is life, will enjoy joy, rest, liberation, and peace.

Today, the writer of John's Gospel shows two reasons why Jesus is the Good Shepherd. **Today's text 10:11 says, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”**

As this verse says, the good shepherd is willing to lay down his very life when the sheep he cares for are attacked by wolves or other wild animals. This happened often in ancient Israel. However, not all shepherds risked their lives to protect their sheep. Among the shepherds, those hired for money did not risk their own lives to rescue the sheep from wild animals such as wolves when the sheep are in danger.

The word **‘the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep’** in verse 11 of today's text refers to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In fact, we know that Jesus died on the cross for us. However, the problem is that the death of Jesus does not come to us as a reality.

That is, many people today think that his death has nothing to do with our lives. Many people in the world think that they have worked hard to get a good job and have earned money to provide a home and life. In a world where this kind of thinking prevails, it is difficult to accept the death of a young Jew in Israel 2,000 years ago as meaningful.

Nevertheless, the Bible consistently and forcefully asserts that Jesus is the Son of God. **That's why Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:6, "The God who said, let light shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."** Apostle Paul's confession means that he experienced God's divine love and the power of life through Jesus.

If we have ever truly loved someone, we experience the power of love through that person. Apostle Paul, Jesus' disciples, and early Christians experienced God's divine love through Jesus.

For Jesus' death on the cross to be meaningful to us, we must have this kind of experience. And these experiences will make us realize that Jesus, as our good shepherd, lays down his life for the sheep, which is not irrelevant to us, but is directly related to us.

The writer of today's text shows another basis that Jesus is the good shepherd. **Today's text John 10:14-15 says, “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.”**

‘To know’ in this verse is a translation of the Greek “Ginosko (γινώσκω)”. Ginosko has several meanings. It can simply mean knowing who a person is or knowledge of the world, but in special cases it includes sexual relations. Furthermore, this word has the meaning of knowing the other person very deeply.

This verse tells us that Jesus knew the heart of his disciples as a shepherd knows each sheep deeply. Also, this verse means that we can know that we are 'sheep' only through Jesus. However, what we must not miss in the above passage is that it is important to know who the shepherd of the sheep is. For the sheep to trust the shepherd absolutely, they must know who the shepherd is.

Knowing who the Shepherd of the sheep is means focusing on our relationship with Jesus. As deeply as we know Jesus, we will experience God's reign and power. Our life is a process of discovering who our shepherd is. Those who are happy with such a process of knowing can see the path of life that God has presented through Jesus. This is what it means to experience Jesus as the Good Shepherd. I hope it will be for everyone who looks forward to and longs for such an experience.



In today's text, the writer of the Gospel of John expressed Jesus Christ as “the good shepherd” (ho poimen ho kalos).

To say that Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd means that He gives us life. **John 10:10 says: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”** However, this verse is not easily experienced in our lives. If we look at our daily lives, the lives of non-believers and Christians do not seem very different. In general, both Christians and non-Christians struggle with similar things and rejoice over similar things. Furthermore, there are times when people who believe in Jesus live a worse life than non-believers. However, we are all imperfect people, so please don't be too discouraged by this.

Clearly, if we do not enjoy the life of Jesus Christ abundantly, it will be because we live for worldly success or exalt ourselves rather than work for an intimate relationship with Jesus, the essence of life. The Bible clearly states that these two paths cannot go together. When we try to walk these two paths together, we do not know about Jesus, the '**Good Shepherd**'.

Conclusion: Jesus the Good Shepherd

Now let's summarize today's message. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

The owner of life is God, not us. This means that the owner of everything we own is God. Therefore, neither exalting ourselves nor living for worldly success can bring us peace and rest.

It may take a long time before we truly admit this, but please don't give up. Also, do not forget that only Jesus Christ is the good shepherd who gives us life abundantly. The hope of our lives is in Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Today, the writer of the Gospel of John clearly tells us this through the relationship between “**the sheep and the shepherd.**” I pray that we can all respond with “Amen” to today's message.

