

The Good Shepherd

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11).

You can tell a lot about a person by their actions. Similarly, if you didn't know, for example, what a police officer was or what their work consisted of, going on a ride-along with them one afternoon would help clarify the nature of their work. In John 10 Jesus says that He is the good shepherd. But what does that mean? Our Savior helps us to understand what this means when He tells us what His actions are toward those under His care, His sheep.

First, Jesus states that He sacrifices Himself *for the sheep*. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11; cf. v. 14). Jesus is not a shepherd in name only. No, out of love for the Father's will and for His people, He literally lays down His life for us that we might be raised up from spiritual death into new life (3:16). Contrary to the intentions of the those who seek to steal, kill, and destroy the flock, Jesus comes that we might have life and have it abundantly (10:10). Furthermore, His sacrifice not only reconciles us to God the Father, but it becomes instructive to us in our relationships with others: “By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers*” (1 John 3:16).

Second, the Shepherd, by His grace and care, effectively leads us to our final destination. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 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. I and the Father are one” (John 10:27-30). The good shepherd is divinely determined to keep us from straying from Him and the flock in such a way that we are eternally lost. Leon Morris, in his commentary on John, said this concerning this passage, “It is one of the precious things about the Christian faith that our continuance in eternal life depends not on our feeble hold on Christ, but on His firm grip on us.” And oh what a grip He has on us! *The same One who holds the world together, who rules over human history according to His wise plan, who works all things for our good, He who will soon be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel, surely He is able to keep us safe in His hands.* The actions of the good shepherd leave us in no doubt about who He is and what He is like. What a Savior!