



The Good Shepherd

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Among the many names attributed to Jesus, one is “The Good Shepherd.” Why did God inspire this name or title for Jesus to be preserved? In our modern 21st century, a very small part of the world’s population knows anything at all about “shepherding.” But in the time of Jesus, in that part of the world, flocks of sheep were very commonly seen, so everyone was familiar with what it took to be a shepherd. They also knew that being a “shepherd” was basically a lowly, tedious, lonely and often dangerous job. At the same time, it was an important job, because people’s flocks often constituted a sizable percentage of their family’s wealth.

So it is in this overall context that we read the words of Jesus where He describes Himself as “the Good Shepherd.” But what does that mean? What can set a shepherd apart that makes him “good?” We might even ask, what does a BAD shepherd look like? Well thankfully, we don’t have to try to figure that out, because Jesus Himself gives us the answer.

In John chapter 10, Jesus tells those listening that He is the “good shepherd” because he willingly lays down his life for his sheep. You can’t be any more dedicated than that! We recall in the Old Testament account that King David was a shepherd as a young man. And in his own words, he said he fought off vicious predators to take care of his sheep. That’s part of the reason he is called “a man after God’s own heart.” Naturally, Jesus wasn’t talking about sheep, but people. Just as he told his disciples they were to be “fishers of men,” he also uses the analogy of a shepherd in describing how he wants them to fulfill their calling of serving God’s “flocks” in their charge.

Many years ago, Mr. Joseph Tkach, Sr., wrote to the ministry that we are to be “shepherds” in serving God’s flock, not “sheriffs!” In this regard, our ultimate role model is “the Good Shepherd.” This is a position above all of service, and in effect, we lay down our lives to assure the welfare of our precious flocks.

Larry

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