

The Good Shepherd

John 10; Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34

If you belong to God, you are safe because He is strong.

When we think of sheep...

- Not the brightest animals on the farm

We think of “shepherds” in romantic terms – kind, gentle, a bit soft

- It takes a strong person to care for them because sheep get themselves into trouble and can’t get out on their own

Throughout the Bible God revealed Himself as the shepherd of His people.

- Ps 23. The Lord is my shepherd
- Gen 48:15. Jacob: God has been my shepherd all my life to this day
- Ps 100:3. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture
- Prophets: Is 40:11. Like a shepherd he tends his flock; he gathers up the lambs with his arm; he carries them close to his heart; he leads the ewes along.

Caring for, loving His sheep is part of that image

- Strength is the dominant theme. Safety, security, provision that flows from the shepherd’s strength and loving commitment to his sheep.
- Gen 49:24 (NET). Joseph’s bow will remain steady, and his hands will be skillful; because of the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.

As we continue our study of God our Father, I want us to keep in mind our heavenly Father is the perfect Father. He is a personal God; He loves us; He has adopted us into His family, and we are safe in His family because He is strong.

- This image of our Father as the Good Shepherd drives home the point
- Our heavenly Father is strong, and we are safe because He is strong

READ John 10:1-6

1. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep

- “Calls them by name”
 - Enclosure with multiple flocks; each shepherd has distinct call
 - Pass under his rod – he would count them as they entered and exited
- John 10:14-15
 - Our relationship to Jesus is analogous to His relationship with Father
- A good shepherd’s life is wrapped up in his sheep
 - Sheep represent all of his wealth
 - We are God’s sheep; we are what God treasures
 - God created everything; He created everything that we value
 - What He values is not gold, silver, jewels, stocks, bonds
 - Dt 26:18; 4:20; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 2:9

- Shepherd's reputation is wrapped up in the sheep – Ps 23:3
 - Not brilliant, teachable animals
 - Sheep follow one another into trouble; susceptible to disease, poison
 - constantly under threat without natural defense mechanisms.
 - Wolves, coyotes, lions, thieves, disease, poison plants
 - Reputation of the shepherd is on the line
- God has always placed men and women over His people to care for them. Some have been good, some not so good
 - Moses 40 years in desert as a shepherd
 - Joshua – Num 27:15-18
 - David – Ezek 34:23-24
- Contrast - John 10:1, 8, 10
 - Spiritual leaders in Jesus' day. Same problems in previous eras
 - Hired hands – John 10:12-13
 - Ezek 34:1-6; Ezek 34:11-12
- If you belong to God, you are safe because the Good Shepherd is strong
- How can you know that you belong to Him?
 - Respond to His call. Western shepherds drive sheep with dogs. Eastern shepherds call their sheep.
 - Accept His sacrifice – John 10:11, 15
 - You come under His eternal protection

2. The Good Shepherd guards His sheep – Psalm 23:1-4

- Pictures of rod and staff
- Rod sounds scary; sounds like discipline
 - Rod
 - Staff. Crook used to separate sheep from danger; pull sheep out of thorn bush, out of a ravine
 - Used for discipline, but always for good of the sheep
 - Primarily for protection
 - Image of strength. Moses' rod
- Rescues from danger – Ezek 34:25-31
 - Risks his life – David fighting bear. 1 Sam 17:34-35
- Leads and guides – John 10:4-5; Ps 78:52-53
 - Ps 23:3 – He guides me in paths of righteousness
 - Wisdom = skillful living; life like walking down a path
 - This is the way; walk in it
 - He leads me away from threats and toward abundant life
- Preserves – John 10:27-30; Romans 8:39
 - Grandpa's hands. Felt like sandpaper. Grabs me, and I wasn't going anywhere.
 - In Christ, in God. Colossians 3:3
 - Leon Morris. "...our continuance in eternal life depends not on our feeble hold on Christ, but on his firm grip on us." (p. 463)
- John 10:11. Entire Bible the Good Shepherd is God the Father
 - Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd...I and the Father are one"
 - Neuter, not masculine (i.e. one person) – one thing. One in essence, one in nature, one in purpose and action
 - I am God; I reveal the Father; this is what Father/God is like
 - John 10:1-21 is in between Feast of Tabernacles and Feast of Dedication
 - 2nd half of December; Tabernacles a month earlier
 - Dedication = Hanukah; Feast of Lights; Greek = renewal

- Last great deliverance. 167 BC Syrian ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the Temple, sacrificing a pig on the altar
 - Dec 164 BC Judas Maccabeus (“the Hammer”) drove out Syrians and rededicated the Temple. Jewish independence until 63 BC
 - 7 days priests would draw water from Pool of Siloam and pour it at the base of the altar
 - Candles would be lit in homes and in the Temple
- Josephus, *Antiquities* 12, 316-325. “And from that time to the present we observe this festival, which we call the festival of Lights, giving this name to it, I think, from the fact that the right to worship appeared to us at a time when we hardly dared hope for it.”
- Using images from feasts to show He is Messiah, Son of God, God
 - I am living water – 7:37-39
 - I am light – 8:12
 - I can set you free – 8:32, 36
 - I am God – 8:58
 - I can open blind eyes; I have authority over Sabbath
 - Readings near Dedication focused on guess what? Sheep and shepherds; Ezek 34
- 10:30 – I am the Good Shepherd; I and the Father are One
- **We misunderstand God as Father. Strong shepherd image illuminates.**
 - Let me illustrate – families whose children left home; engaged in sin; changed their names; cut off all contact. Do parents still love him? Still their child?
 - Some parents might disown. But would the best parents disown such a child? Emphatically, NO! They might be compelled to set boundaries and create expectations for the restoration of future intimacy, but the path back home would always remain open.
 - Ex – young woman, high school, exhorting her friends to walk with Jesus. “If you are a Christian and you are sitting on the fence, that fence belongs to Satan. You belong to Satan as long as you are on that fence.”
 - What? I don’t expect every high school-er to have perfect theology
 - She comes from a great family. She has a great father
 - She is ascribing to her heavenly Father a characteristic that she would never ascribe to her earthly father.
 - Heavenly Father is better than the best earthly father we can imagine.
 - He doesn’t want to cast His children out. He doesn’t have to. He doesn’t cast out His children
 - John 9. Instead of caring for man born blind, bad shepherds cast him out.
 - John 9:34-41; Jeremiah 31:35-37
 - But what if someone doesn’t want to stay in His family?
- **We misunderstand salvation**
 - Salvation not an item to be picked up and set aside; or lost and then found
 - Salvation changes your very identity and nature. You are no longer who you once were. Outside of God’s family, now a child of God. You belong to Him. You can’t remove yourself from God’s family
 - Several analogies given for salvation in the Bible
 - Economic: Redeemed
 - Social: Reconciled
 - Legal: Justified
 - Familial: Adopted
 - Biological: Regenerated
 - Each of these was transformations was done for you and to you by God
 - You don’t have the power to undo any of these
 - These transformations changed your identity

- John 10:28
 - “I give” = present tense. They have it now
 - “eternal life”; not temporary life
 - “never perish”; never, ever; double negative = emphatic
- God won’t cast you out – He is a perfect Father; the Good Shepherd
- You can’t cast yourself out
- You are safe because God is strong

Application

Imagine your life wrapped in the hands of Jesus, surrounded by the grip of the Father

With heads bowed...

- If you need to know the Shepherd
- If you need prayer to trust your heavenly Father

This truth is transforming