

I AM the Good Shepherd  
John 10:11-21  
Sunday August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Today we heard Jesus make the 4<sup>th</sup> of his 7 “I AM” statements in the Gospel of John. We are listening to these I AM statements of Jesus to better understand who Jesus is from his very own words. We are doing this, because when we understand who God is as revealed in Jesus Christ; we understand who we are, and who God means for us to be for we are made in the image of God.



Now in terms of review the first I am statement was “I AM the Bread of Life.” Jesus here was stating he was the source of life, the source of all creation. We, being made in Jesus Christ’s, image bring Christ’s presence into the world. We can remember and celebrate Christ’s presence every time we break bread in prayer and we bring that presence to others.



The 2<sup>nd</sup> I AM statement was “I AM the Light of the World”. Here Jesus was stating that he brought God’s light to the world to show us our sin and our salvation in him. We bring that Light to the world in word and in deed.



The 3<sup>rd</sup> I AM statement was “I AM the Gate”. Here Christ states that he is the Gateway to God and Salvation. He, in essence, as he lays down his life as the Gate to the sheep pen and we go in and out; we find our peace and our salvation in him. We, having been made in his image, are the gates for others to find God. We through our words and actions open a relationship to Jesus and salvation.

I hope you catch the evangelical drift of all these statements. Whatever Jesus Christ gives us we are to share with others: Bread, Light, Gates. And today we come to know Jesus as “**THE Good Shepherd.**”

Verse 11 reads, “**I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.**” This statement flows naturally from the previous verses where Jesus states he is “**The Gate**”. As the gate he would be lying down across the sheep pen door and at first it seems Jesus is just heightening this understanding. But you soon discover that what Jesus is talking about is not simply lying down on the ground as a gate. He is speaking about his own death on behalf of the sheep.

In John Chapter 10 Jesus uses two illustrations “**I am the Gate**” and “**I am the good shepherd**” to make the point that he is the way to salvation and not just “the way” to salvation, but **salvation itself!**

We must enter through Jesus Christ to be saved. We must be saved by the Good Shepherd to be saved. None other will do!

In our minds, even though most of us have never met a shepherd; we have this image of a caring compassionate person, who will take care of us, whose rod and staff will protect us from wolves that would devour us. Jesus knew that image was in the minds of his hearers who knew the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and knew Israel was referred to as God’s sheep.



Jesus contrasts that image with the image of a character that doesn’t care, a hired hand.

“**The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the sheep and they are scattered.**”

Jesus in this passage begins to let his hearers know he's no ordinary shepherd. He's ready to defend his sheep to the death. In one sense that's not that unusual, because many people are willing to die in defense of their property. But Jesus sheep are not just property. He knows each one by name and has a relationship with each one.

But the death of a Palestinian shepherd would be a disaster for the sheep for without a protector all the sheep would soon be mutton.

So to the hearers then and to the hearers today who really think about it, something just doesn't add up. When Jesus says he'll die for the sheep he means he intends to die for them, not simply die in a battle defending them.

In our verses today, Jesus refers to his death on behalf of his sheep 4 times. And in fact, his death, is not just on behalf of the sheep, but instead of the sheep. Jesus is saying more than "I would die for my sheep." He's saying, "I will die for my sheep."

It's a fact of life that sheep herders raise sheep for 2 things wool and meat, and to get the meat the sheep must die. Though, as I said last week, most sheep in Israel weren't raised for their meat but their wool, which is why the shepherds would name them, and in naming them claim them.

They had a relationship with them much like we have with our pets. As Jesus said in verse 14, "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,..." Jesus has named us and claimed us.

The Good Shepherd dies instead of his sheep. Jesus had to say this 4 times in a few sentences to get his point across and some of his hearers response was as we read, "He's mad, he's possessed by a demon."

Jesus stretched his hearers understanding of what a Good Shepherd was beyond any limits they knew. Not only being ready to die in defense of property, but in the place of the property. Property, you

and I, whom he intimately knows and loves for as verses 15 says, “**and I lay down my life for the sheep.**”

As our Isaiah passage says, “**We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.**” As Jesus’ death was prophesied by Isaiah, he prophesied his death in our stead. Jesus was declaring that of his own free and conscious will he was going to die instead of us. He was both shepherd and the lamb.



Jesus took the penalty for our sin on his shoulders and paid the price that we should have to pay. Jesus Christ on the cross deliberately laid down his life so that he could take it up again. Jesus Christ deliberately chose death to relieve us of the penalty of our sin. Our sin caused the death of the only man who ever lived who never deserved to die.

Jesus’ death was not the fault of some zealous Jews or complicit Romans, they were only the instruments of his death. His death was the result of our sin and the sin of countless others through the ages, whom God knows and wants to live.

Jesus knew and deliberately took on death on a cross to save all from his flock. **Jesus Christ is our salvation!**

**He is the bread of life.**

**He is the Light of the World!**

**He is the Gate!**

**He is the Good Shepherd!**

**He is the way, the truth and the life!** Besides him there is no other.

There are those who say human beings are basically good, so we are all getting into heaven. If so, why did Jesus have to die? If we are basically good, why do parents not have to teach their children how to be bad? We are naturally greedy, selfish, and self-centered. We naturally will lie or steal.

We must be taught to be good. We are finally only made good by the power of the Holy Spirit when we give our lives to God in Christ.

And there are those who say there are many paths to God. That it doesn't matter who you worship, or what you believe, just so long as you worship something and believe. I strongly disagree.

Because if it's correct that the practice of any religion will grant you salvation than Jesus' detractors that day were correct. He was mad, or demon possessed, or just wrong, but he certainly wasn't the salvation of the world as he claimed.

Our faith has always taught that if anyone is saved it is because of, and by Jesus Christ. Who knows, some who are in other religions my respond to the light of God that has been given them for Acts 2 says **"the Spirit has been poured out on all flesh."**

But any and all who are saved will be saved by Christ and his death in their stead on the cross. We aren't saved by any works of any religion. We are saved by doing the only work Jesus said would save us and that is to believe in him.

Now as to those who say their church, their theology and doctrines about Jesus Christ are the only correct ones that grant access to eternal life I quote Jesus' own words, **"I have other sheep that are not of this sheep fold. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."**

You and I often hear from people and groups who claim to have an exclusive hold on or understanding of Jesus that grants them exclusive entrance into the Kingdom of God. When Jesus spoke of knowing him it wasn't the knowing of "knowledge" he was after it was the knowing of relationship. We have all met self-righteous people who look down on a person or church for some fault and pull away as if they know better than the One who died for that person or flock. Here's a poem that speaks to that.

I was shocked, confused, bewildered  
As I entered Heaven's door,  
Not by the beauty of it all,  
Nor the lights or its decor.

But it was the folks in Heaven  
Who made me sputter and gasp--  
The Garden Club Gossips, the thieves  
The liars and the trash.

There stood the kid from seventh grade  
Who swiped my lunch money twice.  
Next to him was my old neighbor  
Who never said anything nice.

Bob, who I always thought  
Was rotting away in hell,  
Was sitting pretty on cloud nine,  
Looking incredibly well.

I nudged Jesus, 'What's the deal?  
I would love to hear Your take.  
How'd all these sinners get up here?  
God must've made a mistake.

'And why is everyone so quiet,  
So somber - give me a clue.'  
'Hush, child,' He said,  
'they're all in shock.  
No one thought they'd be seeing you.'



The truth is that no one Christian Church, or group, or person, no one set of doctrines holds an exclusive lock on Jesus Christ and

salvation to the exclusion of others. This is partly why Jesus used 7 different “I Am” statements to explain himself.

One of the hallmarks of Methodism is that we recognize true Christian belief in other denominations. When people join our church, we recognize their previous confession of Christian faith and baptism. We believe there is the Universal Church of Jesus Christ which contains people of faith from many denominations and churches.

For **it is not our correct beliefs that save us, but our personal relationship with Jesus Christ.** A relationship with God through Christ, that is ours personally, not our church, or family, but ours personally.

We live that faith out in community, in a local church or fellowship; which is why so many pictures show Jesus holding a lamb surrounded by a flock. We come to Christ individually and live out that commitment in community.



Being made in the image of the Good Shepherd our purpose is to shepherd others to Christ. You and I are called to be the voice of God calling others into his flock. We can do this with the confidence of the children of God who go out into the world under the protection of the Good Shepherd who will be with us always.

We go as ones who participate in a great mystery; who call people who have already been called by God. We meet People of Peace who as we speak to them they have their spirit awakened by the Holy Spirit that is within you and them. It is the Spirit that leads them to respond to God.

As I speak today members of this congregation are on their way to worship at the Community Presbyterian Church in San Manuel. In April I preached on this same scripture and called that message “The Good Shepherd and the Sheep Dogs”.

We as a congregation took that message seriously and the call of God to go into the world as shepherds. On the back of the bulletin that day and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last page today are the steps to go through to become lay ministers in the church. Dr. Bill and Jim Bleess are on this journey and have been joined by Peggy Hoeft who I will present her certificate today. They have risen to the challenge.

I want to challenge you to be so bold as to also be someone's shepherd. Again, and again I will say this from the front we look like sheep



and from the back we look like shepherds.



There is someone in your world that you and only you can reach for Christ. Remember we come into a relationship with Christ that saves through a relationship with another person.

Who is that person you know you need to tell about your faith? Who is that person you need to invite to worship or a Bible study or some sort of mission or ministry project? Literally if it is not you, it will be nobody for them. Whose' shepherd, are you?

And yes, it can be uncomfortable and awkward to speak to a friend, or relative, or acquaintance, or neighbor about faith. But, you can do it take the risk!

As a youth pastor every year I gave 2 of what I called my "Sex Talks". I spoke with the kids about all the anatomy and physiology and emotion of sex along with pictures, diagrams and Biblical teachings.

That wasn't the awkward part. The awkward part was that year after year for about 10 years at least one or the other of my children

were in the audience. You thought the sex talk with your kids was awkward, try talking about the Christian perspective on sex with 40 of their best friends present. But my kids survived and thrived. Must have listened, I have 2 Grandchildren.

Anyway, again I challenge you to take the risk. Who are you a shepherd to? Let's take about a minute of silent prayer as you ask God who you need to talk to. Who do you need to invite in?

If you think you aren't very good about explaining things about the Christian faith invite your person to worship or joining us online. Next week it's about Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life. You will never know success for the Kingdom unless you try. What is God saying to you now? And what are you going to do?

Let us pray in silence.



Greg Olson