

The Good Shepherd

Psalm 23 – Lesson 3
Week of April 5th, 2020

The most important piece of knowledge any person could ever have is the knowledge of God. Repeatedly, the Apostle Paul prays for the people in his churches to grow in their knowledge of God.

- And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the **knowledge of his will** in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, (Colossians 1:9)
- I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the **knowledge of him**, (Ephesians 1:16-17)
- And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with **knowledge and all discernment** (Philippians 1:9-11)
- For this reason I bow my knees before the Father...[that you may] **know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge**, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14, 19)

As we have looked at Psalm 23, we have sought to grow in our knowledge of God as our Shepherd, and in John 10 Jesus tells us that He is the Good Shepherd.

READ: John 10:11

The reference to the “good shepherd” who lays down his life for the sheep calls to mind young David, who literally risked his life for his sheep (READ: 1 Sam. 17:34–37).

ASK: How did Jesus lay His life down for His sheep?

READ: John 10:12-13

ASK: How would you describe the “hired hands” mentioned in this passage? What are some of the “hired hands” in our lives today? The things that promise to take care of us, but always fall short.

The big difference between Jesus as the Good Shepherd and the hired hand is that the hired hand selfishly runs away, while the Good Shepherd selflessly lays down His life. Five times in verses 11-18 Jesus says that He lays down His life for the sheep (vv. 11, 15, 17, 18 [twice]). In this passage we see three things that the sacrifice of Jesus provides for us as our Good Shepherd.

3 Things about the Sacrificial Shepherd

1. Jesus' sacrifice makes you intimate with Him

READ: John 10:14-15

- Jesus says He knows His own, and His own know Him; and he knows us the same way the Father knows Him.

ASK: What does it mean that Jesus knows us, and we know Him? How can we grow in greater knowledge of Jesus? How does our knowledge of Jesus help us grow in intimacy with Him?

2. Jesus' sacrifice guarantees successful evangelism

READ: John 10:16

- The other sheep that are not of this fold are future Gentile believers, which includes us. Jesus says that one of the results of Him laying down His life is that He “**must** bring them also, and they **will** listen to my voice”. Jesus is guaranteeing the advancement of the gospel. Because Jesus laid down His life He guaranteed the salvation of sinners.

ASK: How does this guarantee encourage you as you pray for lost loved ones? How does this guarantee embolden you as you seek to share your faith?

3. Jesus' sacrifice shows His authority

READ: John 10:17-18

- Jesus voluntarily gave up his life on the cross. John 19:30m says that Jesus proclaimed “It is finished” and then “gave up His spirit”. As God, Jesus was in complete control. His life was not taken from Him, He gave it up. Neither Judas' betrayal, Pilate's trial, or the soldiers' actions had any real control over Jesus. He is the one who freely lays down His life for the sheep. Not only that, but He has full authority to pick His life back up again. This shows us that the divine nature of Christ was active in his resurrection: he was able to “take up” his life again.

ASK: How does Jesus' authority over all things change the way you live each day?

As you seek to grow in the knowledge of God, meditate on John 10:11-18. Ask Jesus to give you deeper knowledge and understanding concerning Him as your Good Shepherd. As you grow in your knowledge of God as your Good Shepherd you will be empowered and encouraged to trust Him and walk in faith in greater ways. Ezekiel 34:15 says, “I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD.” Trust God as your Shepherd. He will always care for His sheep.