

Last week we started looking at the *I am* statements of Christ. These statements are significant lessons that Jesus gave, and He made these descriptive statements to inform people who He was: *I am*. He clearly used this term to identify himself as God. Last week we looked at *I am the Light of the world*, for Jesus directs our path through the darkness of this world, and this morning we focus on the *I am the Good Shepherd* statement found in John's gospel chapter 10.

Jesus said: *I am the good shepherd*. By this statement, Jesus not only made a great claim about Himself, but He also gave an example for His disciples to follow. A disciple is someone that not only knows the truth, but follows it no matter the cost. Part of our mission here in Carnwadric or any church, is to be in the business of forming members into disciples! *'You are truly my disciples if you keep obeying my teachings, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.* (John 8:31) So the starting point for us today is to accept that we are Jesus' disciples with all that this entails. And we'll look at Jesus' claim about himself, and learn how to apply it to our own life, if we are truly to be His disciples.

Why did Jesus say He was The Good shepherd? What makes Jesus different from all other shepherds? He was referring to His goodness. He didn't say; I'm a shepherd or I'm **a** good shepherd. Jesus said: I'm **the** good shepherd. There is only one like him! Many people claim to be good but are they really good? Can we really claim to be good in the Godly sense of the word? After all, we're a fallen people because of Adam and Eve, and we're all subject to sin. Psalm 53 teaches that *there is none that are good, not one*, and Matthew 19 tells us *that only God is good*. So how can Jesus call himself good? Because He is God incarnate, He is good because He's God! Only God is able to demonstrate true goodness. So Jesus is the good shepherd, because He is inherently good.

The second reason Jesus is the good shepherd is because of His commitment. He lays down his life for the sheep! Jesus was committed to fulfil His father's will, and the greatest proof of His commitment was His willingness to lay down His life for you and I. Some might be willing to give their life in substitution for a loved one, but how many would sacrifice all they have to save one who is ungrateful and constantly disobedient?

Philippians 2 says: Jesus, while being in the form of God emptied himself, taking the form of a servant and he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death on the cross. Jesus gave up all He had in heaven to come and save us! And through sacrifice, He open the doors of heaven to all who would believe in Him. Only God could be committed to such a cause! Only God would be able to do that! And that's what Jesus did. He laid down his life for us that we might be saved for eternity. Jesus is the good shepherd because of His commitment to save His sheep.

Third, Jesus' courage: He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep, and flees and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is only a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. Some people are willing to do daft and dangerous things especially for money. We see Formula One drivers risking their life for the opportunity to win the big prize, which is money which can't be taken into eternity! How many people would be willing to suffer a painful, agonizing death for an ungrateful stranger? Let's be honest, none! Yet not only was Jesus willing to risk this, He actually did it! He died in our place because He is concerned for those who are lost! Many of Jesus disciples said they would be willing to die for Him.

But after his arrest how many did? None; they all ran for cover. The disciples denied Jesus, they abandoned their calling to Him. They returned to what was comfortable, even though it was not profitable! So Jesus went to war against enemy in the form of satan and death by himself.

And after His victory He returned for those who gave up on Him. He promised in Hebrews 5: *I will never leave you nor forsake you.* His only concern was for us and our salvation.

The fourth reason Jesus is the good shepherd is because of His Knowledge: I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. Were like sheep who think we can do what we like. We say we love Jesus but hate those Jesus loves. We say we follow Jesus but go places Jesus would never go. We might fool people but we never fool God because He knows us. We need to stop our falseness and be transparent and allow God a chance to change and mould us into His likeness. He says that not only does He know us, but we also know Him. But what do we really know about Jesus?

You can ask me almost anything about Mike wife and I'll give a pretty accurate answer. But what do I know about Jesus? We can read the Bible and say we know Jesus, but knowing about Jesus is not the same as knowing Him intimately, and understanding His ways. I am an Osmonds fan and I know all about Donny Osmond but I can't claim to know him personally. We can have complete knowledge about Jesus but still not know Him personally. If we've been thinking we know Jesus, when in fact we know about Him, then let's change this by asking Jesus to forgive us and enter our lives and have a relationship with us. Jesus is the good shepherd because He knows us, and He longs for us to know Him.

Jesus is the good shepherd because of His devotion and openness: I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. This is an important point Jesus is making: *I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.* Jesus doesn't believe in cliques. He doesn't care how we look, or what language we speak! Jesus opened heaven to all and He loves all! Verse 16: *They too will listen to my voice and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.*

What does this mean? Is Jesus really suggesting that heaven may contain people who are not like us? Is Jesus saying that among His flock are people of different races, people who believe in different interpretations of scripture than us, people who believe in different denominations than us? I think we'll be surprised by who we'll meet in heaven!

In the Christian church there has to be openness! We must make our church and faith inclusive. Anyone can come and hear and follow Christ, but we should not be the reason someone rejects Christ or the church, we're not to cause anyone to stumble. In Christ's church there is to be oneness and we should work at unity and not division. We should work at building one another up, not tearing each other down. We have One God, One Saviour, One Holy Spirit; offered for all! Offered for unity!

Sixth and last: *Jesus is the good shepherd because of His authority. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from me, but I lay it down on my own initiative. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my father.* When it comes to mandates of authority, Jesus' credentials are impeccable, He gets His authority from His Father God: *All authority had been given to Him in Heaven and on earth.* A shepherd will have authority over their flock, but the earthly shepherd never shares that authority with the sheep, that would be absurd. But here's an amazing truth: Jesus shares His God given authority with us. As Christians we often miss the power and authority we have received by Jesus. We stumble around in weakness, while He stands ready to empower us in our life. Today Christ's power can get a hold of us and change us!

Challenge: So what are we to do with all we've learned about the Good Shepherd? What do we need to do to be like Jesus? What do we need to do to become true disciples?

Ephesians. 2:10: For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. We'll never equal the commitment of Jesus but we can commit ourselves to Him and through His Holy Spirit, God will work in and through us. Psalm 37: Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will bring forth your righteousness as the light.

We may lack courageous in the face of adversity, but if we allow Jesus to really come into our lives, there's nothing He can't do through us! *Philippians. 4:13 - I can do all things through Christ whom strengthen me.* We'll never attain the wisdom of Jesus, but if we embrace Jesus we'll receive all the knowledge and wisdom necessary. *Colossians 2:3 - Jesus says; In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* We may not possess the devotion to unity as Jesus, but when we are open to loving others, we'll be given the desire. *Colossians 3:14 - Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.*

We have not been made kings or rulers to have authority over people, but we've been empower from on high by Christ. *Matthew 28 - Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and I will be with you always, even to the end of the age.*

Jesus is the good shepherd, and we have seen why. And if you thought His flock were a group of meek lambs, then think again. We are powerful disciples with Christ given authority to build His Kingdom here on earth. Are we up for the task? **Amen.**

(1825 words)