

No parents wants their daughter to come home and say “I met this great guy, he’s the one.” And when you ask what he does for a living, she says, “he’s a shepherd.” Imagine a man, little smelly, dingy, unkept, unbathed, you’ve picture a shepherd in the ancient world, not very desirable. Remember David, shepherd boy, writer of Psalm 23, youngest of Jesse’s sons. The prophet Samuel sent by God, goes to Bethlehem to anoint a king; Jesse brings out his 7 strong young sons, **no its not one of these**. Jesse says “oh I’ve one more, not really that important, weakest, youngest out tending sheep.”

What makes our Gospel remarkable, Jesus uses one of His I AM illustrations, I AM, the name of God, to call Himself: shepherd. What prophets foretold. Jesus did not come to be viewed, I am the good philosopher, the good coach, the good warrior. No, picture of our Lord -shepherd, to live among sheep.

Earliest Christian art, oldest depictions of Jesus, like *this*, the statue out there, Jesus a shepherd carrying sheep. Amazing Biblical image, powerful, but not in ways you often think. Oh sure, you think cute, cuddly sheep, lambs, seemly innocent, gentle- unless you’ve been around them. It’s not a compliment Jesus is paying you when He refers to you as sheep. Sheep aren’t smart, unable to take care of themselves, weak, need constant attention, often dirty; stubborn, timid, feeble, easily frightened, no homing instinct, easily get lost, defenseless against predators, about as a pathetic helpless animal there is. A reality of your life. This is you. (I hope you’ve already figured that out.) You’re a mess, desperate, hopeless, wandering, fresh-meat, dead, without a Shepherd.

Beware dear sheep; there’s much danger. Jesus speaks of robbers, thieves, different voices. According to Jesus, what’s the most dangerous thing in all the world? Have you thought about that? What’s the most dangerous thing He says you face? What’s your greatest danger? False teaching. Different voices. Says, **Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.** False teaching to destroy the soul. Satan using false teachers. They may even speak of Jesus, but it’s the most dangerous thing you face. Seems harmless, not so bad, even appears godly; tells you doctrine, certain teachings, Sacraments don’t matter -which is to say certain words of your Lord are worthless.

False teachers, tell sheep what they want to hear. Voices sound reasonable. Beware of following any voice that does not preach Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins, any voice that does not stand in His stead, preach His unchanging truth, with His authority. Only a fool thinks “I don’t want to be religious, just spiritual” or claim “Jesus did not come to establish religion but relationships.” Jesus establishes a religion, the Church in Genesis, fulfilled in Him.

The voices of this world, even your voice inside your head leads you to wander. We rationalize it, don’t think it’s too harmful, to fill our minds with sinful pleasures and entertain ourselves to death, to fill our lives with so many voices that drown-

out His voice, too busy for the things of God. "But it's all under control." "I can control my behavior. It's not too bad." Repent.

It demands the life of God, for what you think is something little, that you've "under control." The Shepherd **lays down his life** for you: **To have life and have it abundantly.** Abundantly -not a life filled with things from Amazon and Sams, not even your accomplishments. **But to have life and have it abundantly** is His life that He fills in you.

I am the Good Shepherd I know my own, my own know me. I call them by name, they follow me. What it means to be Christian -live by the voice of your Savior. We take this insult of being sheep as our greatest compliment. He cares for you individually by name, **I know My sheep** to bind up your wounds, heal you.

Consider how He cares for you daily. Sheep don't go through life on their own; they live with a flock. To go it alone, leave the flock, wander from the Shepherd, listen to other voices, is deadly. You grossly underestimate the danger around you. To be Christian- you're in a flock. His voice resounds from His shepherds, He placed here to feed, care for you in His stead. Why you call him pastor, Latin for shepherd. One of the greatest points of compassion and consternation for people when our Lord sees sheep without a shepherd. Here to Shepherd you. He sends shepherds, after His own heart as Ezekiel writes, with His authority.

The picture of the good shepherd. So profoundly comforting. Psalm 23 so well known, a treasure you have. It's amazing you all come into church every Sunday with all sorts of different things going on. All of us, different issues, problems. The angry, the hurting, the wounded, the lost, confused, despairing, lonely, the desperate, the longing to endure, the mourning, whatever comes upon you -all our issues, all addressed, answered, see your life in Psalm 23.

The Lord **your shepherd**, here His voice made you sheep, you follow His voice, provides what truly matters, **you are not in want.** He **makes you to lie down**, rest safely here in hostile world, in these **green pastures**, leads you here flowing with living baptismal **still waters.** **Restores your soul** with Word, Sacraments, leads you, **in His path**, giving **His righteousness**, you bear **His name** from the font. In spite of this world **this valley of the shadow of death.** He lives. You will never die. There's more evil, more terror, more accidents, more disease in front of you. Enemies work 365.24.7 to destroy you and all your relationships. You are but sheep. But your Shepherd with you. **Fear no evil**, nothing can truly harm you; leads you, **comforts you with rod and staff** with His shepherds, to tend to you, serve you in His stead. And here, (there) **He prepares a table before you**, before **the presence** of the world, surround by **enemies** of His sheep, you drink from **His chalice that overflows** with His forgiveness and life. What promise He gives you to live life. **Surely goodness and mercy will follow you, all the days**, every moment **and you dwell in the House of the Lord** here, now and **forever.** Psalm 23, all happens here. Come this day and eat the food of Sheep.