



Another of the “I AM Plus” Sayings of Jesus: “I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD”

Good morning! Hope you are beginning a great day today.

Last week we looked at the I AM Plus sayings of Jesus hoping to better know the Jesus- Who-Is. This week another wonderful I AM Plus -- “I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD.”

I didn’t grow up around sheep and shepherds. Saying that Jesus is the Good Shepherd is a very nice word-picture but it doesn’t connect with my limited life experience.

Years ago I was preparing to teach about this so I questioned two people who know sheep, “Tell me what I need to know about sheep so I can teach about Jesus the Good Shepherd.”

The first was the professor of animal genetics at a major university. He replied, “Sheep are born looking for a place to die. They are helpless – they are defenseless against predators.”

The second was a shepherdess on a mountain farm in Arkansas. She told me this story:

We had a sheep wander away from the flock and down into a swampy wooded area. We hunted for the lost sheep for three days without success. Before ending the search, I had the thought to revisit an area I’d been through more than once.

And there I found her! She had tried to jump over a fallen tree and got stuck on the tree trunk with all four hoofs off the ground. And there she perched without struggling and without making a sound as we passed near her several times.

“What you need to know about sheep,” she concluded, “is they are not just helpless---they are stupid!”

In the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments talk about God’s People as the sheep of his pasture. But wait.... is calling us sheep the same as calling us helpless and stupid? That is not very complementary, wouldn’t you say?

Adam and Eve’s original sin was believing the Lie they could find a better life without their Creator. They were stupid to think so and immediately became vulnerable to the demonic.

I wish I could say this was true about Adam and Eve only. But sadly, we have all, at some time and in some way, believed and acted on the same Lie. Haven’t we?

Jesus looked at the people of Israel were suffering under their own sin and rebellion (as well as the neglect of their corrupt religious leaders):

Matthew 9:36- *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

This was not a new situation. Some 600 years earlier God spoke to Ezekiel identifying Himself as the Shepherd of his People Israel. They sinned, were scattered and had been ravaged by their enemies. But God promised that one day he would rescue and shepherd them again:

Ezekiel 34:30-31 *“Then they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them and that they, the Israelites, are my people, declares the Sovereign Lord. ‘You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Sovereign Lord.’”*

In fulfillment of God's promise, Jesus would identify himself as the Good Shepherd not just for Israel but for each of us who are God's 'sheep' under the New Covenant:

John 10:2 *"The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."*

Then Jesus spoke the wonderful I AM Plus statement:

John 10:14-15 *"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father —and I lay down my life for the sheep."*

Jesus did as he said---he went to the cross to lay down his life for us---God's People.

Today Jesus cares for us by his Holy Spirit. So by experience we can agree with King David:

Psalms 23 *The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he renews my soul. He guides me along paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through valley of the shadow of Death I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup [purse] overflows. Surely your goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Is this the Jesus you know? Is he the shepherd of your soul? Is he the one who gives you life, now and forever?

Jesus will be your Shepherd---if you need him to be and you want him to be.

Blessings to you-

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