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## Following Jesus as My Good Shepherd in the Hard Times of Life!



Part 9 (010916AM)

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This past Tuesday morning will always be a moment of remembrance. The call alerting us to check the news, the burning tower, the plane, the crash and fireball, and then the collapse. With tears running down our faces we remembered such great loss of human life. To read all of our thoughts on those events see: [http://new.discoverthebook.org/message\\_detail.asp?fileid=453055379](http://new.discoverthebook.org/message_detail.asp?fileid=453055379)

But now what about the present? How do we deal with pain and anxious hearts? May I give you the best place to start?

For the past three thousand years one portion of God's Word has been an oasis.

For millions of God's people six verses of the Bible have -

- calmed children in storms,
- strengthened fearful ones in times of anxiety, and
- surrounded dying ones in death beds around the world.

For the past twenty centuries no part of the Scriptures is read more frequently at sick beds, hospital calls, funerals, gravesides, and death scenes than these words.

We even heard them from our President on that fateful day of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2002.

Then again at the Prayer Service at the National Cathedral on Friday.

What are those words? We know them as the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.

This morning we need to stop and hear our Good Shepherd. We need Him to restore our souls by leading our hearts and minds to stilled waters. We need Him to lay our spirits down - in quiet green pastures. When we do that we always find that Jesus is all we need.

In fact, our whole study of the seven great I Ams in the Gospel of John is a Powerful Declaration that Jesus is all I need to make it through this life and into LIFE ABUNDANT and ETERNAL awaiting us above.

Remember we are looking at John's 4<sup>th</sup> noted name on Christ's 7 part calling card. I AM ALL YOU NEED is how He introduced Himself seven times.

We are looking at the 4<sup>th</sup> of His Seven I AM statements this morning. Each one is a way that He says to us, I AM all you need. Trace them with me again

**I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE** (6:35, 41, 48, 51) - Jesus is all I need to feed my STARVING SOUL; apart from Him is only unsatisfied hunger.

- Jesus alone feeds our soul and satisfies our hungers, all else is emptiness, hopelessness and empty mirages.
- *Jesus said I am your food that satisfies; I am the Bread you need. I have settled the longings of your soul, I can satisfy all the hungers of your life. What do you really hunger for?*
- Believers are **hu**NGERING FOR JESUS AS MY BREAD OF LIFE.

**I AM THE LIGHT OF WORLD** (8:12) - Jesus is all I need to LIGHT my DARKENED SOUL; apart from Him is only impenetrable darkness.

- Jesus said I am the Light, I have settled the darkness of fear, the darkness of death, the darkness of dying, it is all settled by Me!
- Believers are **WALKING WITH JESUS WHO LIGHTS MY PATH OF LIFE.**

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Part: 1	Jesus: I AM the Light to Trust

**I AM THE DOOR OF life to my SHEEP** (10:7,9) - Jesus is all I need to enter into God's Family, apart from Him is only hopeless exclusion.

- Jesus said I am the Door of Life, all your security and access needs are settled, by Me! We can't wander out without stumbling over Him and no predator could slip in without stirring Him. So Jesus says I keep you safe from harm and secure from wandering away from my salvation!
- *Believers are* **ENTERING THROUGH JESUS WHO IS MY DOOR TO LIFE.**

**I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD** (10:11, 14) - Jesus is all I need to make it through life and get to my heavenly HOME, apart from Him is only aimless wandering.

- Jesus said I am the Good Shepherd who died; I have settled the issue of the unknown.
- I am your companion through life and death.
- Jesus gives us the perfect example of how to live and how to die!
- *Believers are* **FOLLOWING THE GOOD SHEPHERD WHO IS THE SAVIOR OF MY LIFE.**

### 1<sup>st</sup> Jesus introduces himself as the good shepherd

When the Jesus introduces Himself the 4<sup>th</sup> time in the Gospel by John He says I am your Good Shepherd. David confidently declared that in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm when he said, "The Lord is my Shepherd". That was amazing and wonderful. But the next line of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is the overwhelming one. "I shall not want". In the context it was as Christ's sheep that David would not want. That is the miracle! Sheep in their natural and normal state are about the most helpless and weak of all creatures all through their lives!

But[1] why does God call us His sheep? Maybe because **sheep are such wonderful animals**: sheep provide wool for fine and warm clothing; sheep provide mutton the most easily digested of all meat; sheep provide milk that helps with childhood diseases; sheep provide lanolin which has hundreds of useful applications; and sheep provide the soft sheepskin blankets that comfort the sick and elderly.

Or it may be, however, because **sheep are the most helpless animals** known in the world of zoology. They always lose their way. In the amazing aggregation of entertainment and instruction that modern man calls the circus, we have seen almost every known animal perform, but we have never seen a trained sheep. A dog or cat, all the farm animals, and everything that can be caught in traps, may be taught to perform for the amusement of man with the apparent exception of the sheep.

Perhaps the Lord God, considering the utter helplessness of the human family, just shook His head and said, "We will call them sheep."

1. **Sheep are UTTERLY HELPLESS** and cannot find their way without a guide....
2. **Sheep are among the most tender of creatures**, always suffering hurt and pain.
3. **Sheep are extremely vulnerable** they can't tell the difference between poisonous and non-poisonous plants so they are easily sickened by improper eating habits.
4. **Sheep are among the dirtiest animals** associated with man. The natural tendency of wool in its raw and wild state is to pick up any defilement with which it comes into contact.
5. **Sheep are often mindless** they will all begin to follow one restless lamb even if it is away from the flock and shepherd. When one aged ewe sinks in tiredness to rest and chew often they all sink to the ground and follow suit for no reason than that they are followers of almost anything.
6. Of all the creatures in the world, **the sheep has the greatest need of cleansing**. So God looked at pitiable humanity, foul and unclean, bearing the marks of their passage through centuries of sin, and said, "We will call them sheep."
7. **Sheep are one of the few animals totally incapable of self-cleansing**. The dirtier a sheep gets, the more helpless it becomes. In this respect it seems to be below the hog. Many times we have seen a pig rubbing its person against the lower railing of the fence, scratching off the caked mud - but a sheep, never. So God looked at poor faulty humanity and said, "If We don't clean them, they'll never be cleansed. We will call them Our sheep."

So that is why Jesus introduces Himself the Good Shepherd -

### 2<sup>nd</sup> The good shepherd makes his sheep content

The two strands of this Psalm are: "The Lord is my Shepherd" and the fitting response to this wonderful relationship "I shall not want". Contented sheep are the mark of a skilled shepherd. Contented believers are the testimony of a satisfying Good Shepherd. One friend in ministry once wrote these words describing his elderly grandmother. Think of her and then think of your own life and love for our Good and satisfying Shepherd.

A lasting memory for me is of my grandmother serenely sitting in the family rocking chair, peering through dime store glasses at the large print of a big Bible on her lap. She was old, diabetic, widowed, and poor. Her little house consisted of a kitchen, living room, bedroom, and bath. Her church was across the street. She walked two blocks to cash her meager welfare check and pay her utilities. Her groceries were delivered to the back door. Her kitchen stove burned wood. Her oil heat needed constant regulating. The uncarpeted floor was always drafty. The roof leaked. The lawn was in need of care. She had buried parents, husband, two of her twelve

children, and even some of her grandchildren. All of her living children had long since left town – many of them hundreds of miles away. But I never heard her complain. She was content. Whenever I'd ask if I could get her anything, the answer was always the same: "I have everything I need." In this greedy grasping world of ours, that sort of contentment is rare. That kind of contentment is irresistible attractive to the people of the world who think that wealth consists of the abundance of things, rather than the absence of wants[2].

Sheep are always branded by their owners. In modern times it is most often by cutting marks into their ears. Other methods are also used, maybe the burn of a branding iron, marks dyed on the skin, or a notch cut in an ear. The sheep were always recognized by their brand. As God's sheep we also are known by our brand. Contentment, that supernatural strength to live with little and be satisfied, is the mark of Christ's sheep! I shall not want simple means I have everything I need!

So Jesus is the Good Shepherd, He satisfies us and –

### 3<sup>rd</sup> The good shepherd knows his sheep

Ancient and modern shepherds use one syllable words for come, water, and so on. That is all sheep can understand. If you count the words of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm in all the various translations you get different numbers. I have 117 in my NKJV. So the 50 Hebrew words come out to 110-122 English words. Isn't it interesting that the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is 85 % one syllable words? He our Shepherd wants us to understand!

Remember also that :

The Sermon on the Mount[3] has 2545 words in English (and 2,002 words in Greek) and it is also 85% composed of one syllable words. That is for a sheep in God's pasture. He wants us to know Him, follow Him, and trust Him. We are not to be spiritual giraffes always needs to find some tree top to feed us, we are sheep and the grass we feed on is right under our noses. God put all His cookies on the bottom shelf as Harry Ironsides the great Brethren Bible teacher of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century always used to say!

So in keeping with this profound simplicity, the Lord's Prayer is 79% monosyllabic, and our beloved I Corinthians[4] 13 is 80% monosyllabic.

This points us to a growing relationship with our Shepherd. The longer we know Him the more we talk TO Him instead of only ABOUT HIM! Notice the Psalm starts with multiple references to the Lord in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person: He makes, He leads. But then in the middle it shifts closer and more personally to "You are with me", and "You prepare". There is a growth in intimacy and access, which goes from knowledge to worship! Instead of talking about the Lord, the Psalmist talks to the Lord.

So Jesus as the Good Shepherd satisfies us, knows us, and - 4<sup>th</sup> The good shepherd provides for the needs of his sheep

All sheep must have four needs met to survive. They must be:

1. **Free from fear** of predators like wolves, cougars, dogs, snakes, and bears or they will neither eat nor rest.
2. **Free from friction** with the other members of the flock or they disturb, agitate and trouble all of the other sheep as they try to eat and rest.
3. **Free from hunger** or they are so restless that they wander, lead others astray or just wear themselves out and become easy prey for predators and dangers.
4. **Free from the constant pests** of flies (black, bot, warble, deer, nasal), gnats, ticks, flukes, wounds, poisonous weeds.

If sheep are not checked they develop infections in their wounds. If they are not guided they drink fouled water and develop liver flukes that slowly kill them.

If they are not oiled in the summer with special oils they are distracted to sickness and even death by the nasal flies that lay eggs in the soft tissue of their noses. The eggs hatch into larvae which burrow up into their sinuses and cause them to rub their head on rocks, rub their noses until they raw, or even get infected to the point of blindness and even death.

Ancient and modern shepherds have made oil with sulfur and spices that repels the flies, prevents the eggs from being laid, and calms the sheep in the summer "fly season". Without protection the sheep are irritable, fearful, and restless. They run from the flies, tossing their heads for hours, rubbing their heads, hiding in bushes and just acting panicked. This leads to lack of nourishment, abandonment of care for the young, and general weakness. The application of oil is astounding, the flock grows quiet, the sheep return to eating.

So in our lives the anointing of the Holy Spirit is the moment-by-moment appropriation of God's power over the pests that irritate and nag us in life. Only the oil of the Holy Spirit can free us from frustrations and irritations. Only the Holy Spirit can quiet us and bring us to contentment.

At salvation we received all of the Holy Spirit. But to possess Him and to be controlled by Him are two vastly different conditions. Shepherds can carry gallons of nasal fly oil but until it is applied there is no relief.

It's the application that matters.

To be safe from all wounds, pests, diseases, and dangers they learned to trustingly pass under the rod of their shepherd as he moves the rod and his hands over their fur to check and clean and protect them. Sounds like the prayers of David in [Psalm 139: 23-24](#) *Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.* NKJV

To us that means awareness of the presence of God's Spirit, daily application of His power, His Word, His control. To us that means asking for the Holy Spirit's control, filling, and leading – **and then living under His guidance! It means bowing my infected head for His daily inspection and cleansing.** It means submitting my rebellious will for a periodic dip to purge the sin.

It means being filled by God's Spirit moment by moment.

- Only God's Spirit can calm the irritations of life.
- Only God's Spirit can bring peace to my world.
- Only God's Spirit can restore me to regular feeding and growth.
- Not just in summertime do we need anointing, we need Him DAILY!

So Jesus is the Good Shepherd, He knows us, He satisfies us, He provides for us and -

#### 5<sup>th</sup> The good shepherd makes sure his sheep are lacking nothing

The theme of Christ's Good Shepherding is that He frees us from all want. If the Lord is my Shepherd I shall not be in want.

1. **When I follow Jesus as my Good Shepherd** I shall not lack rest for I lie down in green pastures.
2. **When I follow Jesus as my Good Shepherd** I shall not lack life for he restores my soul.
3. **When I follow Jesus as my Good Shepherd** I shall not lack guidance for he guides me in the paths.
4. **When I follow Jesus as my Good Shepherd** I shall not lack safety for you walk me through the valley. Note that the fearfulness of the dark valley causes a change from 3<sup>rd</sup> person "he" to 2<sup>nd</sup> person "you". What has changed? The weak and needy sheep need the close presence of the shepherd. So we especially experience Christ's presence in those valleys!
5. **When I follow Jesus as my Good Shepherd** I shall not lack provisions because you prepare a table before me.
6. **When I follow Jesus as my Good Shepherd** I shall not lack heavenly home for I will dwell in his house forever.

So Jesus the Good Shepherd knows us, He satisfies us, He provides for us so we lack nothing. But how can He do so much?

#### 6<sup>th</sup> Our Good Shepherd Jesus is the great I Am

1. **Jehovah-Raah** (The Lord the Shepherd – [Psalm 23:1](#)) *The Lord is my shepherd.* Jesus says I AM your SHEPHERD.
2. **Jehovah-Jireh** (The Lord will provide – [Genesis 22:13-14](#)) *I shall not want.* As the Good Shepherd Jesus says I AM your PROVIDER
3. **Jehovah-Shalom** (The Lord our peace – [Judges 6:24](#)) *He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.* As the Good Shepherd Jesus says I AM your PEACE
4. **Jehovah-Rapha** (The Lord will restore or heal – [Exodus 15:26](#)) *He restores my soul;* As the Good Shepherd Jesus says I AM your RESTORER
5. **Jehovah-Tsidkenu** (The Lord our righteousness – [Jeremiah 23:6](#)) *He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.* As the Good Shepherd Jesus says I AM your RIGHTEOUSNESS
6. **Jehovah-Nissi** (The Lord our banner – [Ex. 17:8-15](#)) *Yea, though I walk through the 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 runs over.* As the Good Shepherd Jesus says I AM your VICTORY.
7. **Jehovah-Shammah** (The Lord is present there – [Ezekiel 48:35](#)) *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.* As the Good Shepherd Jesus says I AM your Ever Present God.

Finally, is Jesus yours?

Jesus is all we need. He is our Good Shepherd[5], so we need no longer fear the outcome of our battle with evil. Christ has conquered! We have conquered! And we will conquer!

1. lesson one: **come to Christ for salvation.** If you are empty, call out to Christ. Do not let yourself go through another day without coming to him. Be born again, receive life, be filled, be delivered, and join the victory parade! If you are spiritually dead—without resurrection life—under sin—under guilt—empty, Christ invites you to come to him: Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. ([Isaiah 55:1, 2](#)) The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. ([Revelation 22:17](#))
2. lesson two: **look only to Christ for satisfaction.** Cultivate human relationships, but do not look for ultimate fulfillment in them because they will disappoint you. Energetically pursue your career, but do not imagine that you will find transcending fulfillment in it. In Christ we have everything. May our prayer be: I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. ([Philippians 3:10](#))
3. Lesson three: **be filled with Christ's spirit.** Our lives can be victorious. Jesus has been there before us: He has met the worst Satan can give and has been victorious. The most important factor in victorious Christian living is to be filled with the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit ([Romans 8:9](#)). Christ is the victor over temptation and sin. His very words to us are, "[T]ake heart! I have overcome the world" ([John 16:33](#)). When Martin Luther was asked how he overcame the Devil, he replied, "Well, when he comes knocking upon the door of my heart, and asks 'Who lives here?' the dear Lord Jesus goes to the door and says, 'Martin Luther used to live here, but he has moved out. Now I live here.'" When Christ fills our lives, Satan has no entrance.
4. lesson four: **stay filled with Christ's word.** The other factor in the victorious Christian Life is to be filled with God's Word. In response to each of the three temptations, Christ answered with Scripture. ([Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:16, and 6:13](#)). He knew the truth of, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against

you” (Psalm 119:11). Why is this so? God’s Word reveals God’s mind, and God’s mind cannot be subject to sin. Therefore, if we fill our hearts with his Word, sin and temptation cannot dominate.

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[1] Drawn from Don Baker, The Way of the Shepherd, p. 2 and Harry Rimmer, Science, p. 248.

[2] Don Baker, The Way of the Shepherd, p. 18-19.

[3] Chapter 5 is 84%, Chapter 6 is 84%, and Chapter 7 is 87% ; the average of all three chapters is 85%!

[4] Haddon Robinson, Biblical Preaching, p. 183.

[5] Adapted, paraphrased and quoted from Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Colossians and Philemon—The Supremacy of Christ*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

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