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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

**“THE GOOD SHEPHERD”**

**John 10:11-15**

I do not like to think of myself as a sheep.

Evidently, I am not alone in this. Consider what others have said ...

☑ Lucian: **“The city was filled to overflowing with persons who had neither brains nor individuality, who ...had only their outward shape to distinguish them from sheep.”**

☑ Hunter Thompson: **“All sheep will be fleeced, all fools will be punished severely...”**

☑ Henri La Fontaine: **“People,” “as... sheep”, “will be... sent to the slaughterhouse or to the meadow as it pleases the shepherds.”**

☑ Skip Coryell: **“There is no heroism in sheep. They stand on the hill and go ‘Baa,’ as they are being slaughtered.”**

☑ Elizabeth Kenny: **“It’s better to be a lion for a day than a sheep all your life.”**

☑ Dustin Diamond: **“I’m a shepherd, not a sheep, and I’ve always prided myself on being a leader.”**

Me, a sheep!? I am not stupid! I possess a modicum of intelligence.

{Jer 9:23; Is 5:21} Still, I sometimes overestimate my cleverness. Like the time I opted for an oral final in an upper level history class because I thought it would be a nice change of pace. **“This is what the LORD says: Let not the wise boast of their wisdom.” “Woe to those**

**who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.”**

Me, a sheep!? I am no conformist! I hold my own convictions, and I am wary of following the herd.

{Pr 29:25, NLT; Col 3:23, TNIV/NLT} Conversely, I do care about what others think. Like when I have spoken and acted less from a commitment to truth and love, and more from a desire to fit in. But **“fearing people is a dangerous trap.” “Whatever you do” do it “as though... for the Lord rather than for people.”**

Me, a sheep!? I am not helpless! I can plan meals, buy groceries, cook, and feed myself.

{Is 55:2; Ps 34:8} Nevertheless, on a deeper level I am prone to mistake junk for real food. Like the times I try to fill up on things that do not satisfy my heart and nourish my soul. **“Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?” “Taste and see that the LORD is good.”**

? I do not like to think of myself as a sheep. But if I look like one, sound like one, and smell like one, I just might be one. What about you?

Granted, that isn’t *all* I am. I am not *only* a sheep. Yet failing to acknowledge this side of me is of no benefit; it inhibits me from repenting and making positive changes.

In addition, to deny my ovine nature (my “sheep-hood”, if you will) is to deny my need for a shepherd. When this happens I will either try to be my own shepherd or, if I am not strong enough for that, I will indiscriminately follow the nearest leader to whatever end.

? Simply put, sheep will have a shepherd. The question is who will it be? To whom will we surrender?

■ Please turn with me to John chapter 10. In verse 11 the Lord declares, **“I am the good shepherd.”**

■ And again in verse 14: **“I am the good shepherd.”**

There are three New Testament Greek adjectives that are commonly translated **“good”**: χρηστος [chrēstós], αγαθος [agathós], and καλος [kalós].

📖 Χρηστος means **“kind” or “benevolent”**.

📖 Αγαθος means **“morally excellent”**.

📖 Καλος is the one used here. It has the sense of **“morally excellent” and “beautiful”** (in character) *and* **“competent.”** When Messiah announces **“I am the καλος shepherd”** he is saying ‘I am the shepherd who is upright, appealing, and capable.’

{Ezek 34:2-3, TNIV/NLT} Not every shepherd is morally excellent. **“Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves.... You drink the milk, wear the wool, and butcher the best animals, but you let your flocks starve.”**

A shepherd is called to tend the flock for the good of the animals. But some leaders exploit their sheep instead of caring for them.

This is most obvious when they are in it for fame or fortune, but it also takes subtler forms. I know pastors who have a desperate need to be needed, and pastors who crave honor, and pastors who see their current position as a stepping stone to bigger and better things. They

approach ministry as a means to the end of taking care of themselves.

Not Jesus! He is **“the good shepherd.”**

{Php 2:6-7} Though he is **“in very nature God,”**

**[he] did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;**

**rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.**

{Mt 20:28; Jn 10:10} The self-emptying act of taking on flesh set the tone for Messiah’s whole earthly life. He **“did not come to be served, but to serve.”** He consistently gave time, attention, care and mercy to others. He reached out to his enemies, rubbed shoulders with outcasts, sought out the lowly, healed the sick, touched lepers, and washed his disciples’ feet. No one took his life from him, he laid it down of his own accord so that we **“may have life, and have it to the full.”**

? Christ Jesus is absolutely morally excellent. Are we allowing him to shepherd us?

{Ezek 34:4} Not every shepherd has a beautiful character. This is God’s verdict: **“You have not strengthened the weak... healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.”**

A shepherd is called to boldly repel predators, and to deal gently with the sheep. But some leaders are severe or even predatory toward their flock.

{Mt 20:25} Too many officers, educators, politicians, and clergy **“lord it over”** their people. They take perverse pleasure in throwing around their weight. They are impatient, rude, demanding, and sometimes sadistic. Consider that sexual improprieties between pastors and parishioners are not genuine “affairs”; they are abusive relationships.

Not Jesus! He is **“the good shepherd.”**

{Jn 8:11} What did the Savior do for the woman caught in adultery? He saved her from execution, then told her, **“Go now and leave your life of sin.”**

{Jn 20:26-27} What did the Savior do for Thomas who demanded to see physical evidence before he would believe Jesus was alive? He graciously showed Thomas the nail marks and the hole in his side.

{Jn 21:15-19} What did the Savior do for Simon Peter after he denied knowing Jesus three times? He gave him three opportunities to confess his love, and restored him to leadership.

Isaiah 40:10-11 describes him to a “T”:

**He tends his flock like a shepherd:  
he gathers the lambs in his arms  
and carries them close to his heart;  
he gently leads those that have young.”**

? Christ Jesus is absolutely beautiful. Are we allowing him to shepherd us?

{Jer 10:21; Is 56:10-11} Not every shepherd is competent. **“The shepherds are senseless and do not inquire of the LORD; so they do not prosper.”**

They **“are blind, they all lack knowledge.... They are shepherds who lack understanding.”**

A shepherd is called to know the sheep and help meet their needs. But some leaders are ignorant and ill-equipped for service.

Many pastors who have great expertise are too disconnected to discern their flock’s gifts and needs, joys and griefs, hopes and fears. When you move every five years there is no time to get acquainted. When you are afraid of being known you keep everyone at arm’s length.

Others are connected but have no expertise. They lack spiritual gifts or training. In the worst case scenario they make no effort to grow because they are blind to their limitations. To borrow a phrase from my wife, they have **“risen to their level of incompetence.”**

Not Jesus! He is **“the good shepherd.”**

■ In verses 14-15 he states, **“I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.”** To him a sheep is not just a number; he **“calls [them] by name”** (verse 3).

● Not only does he know us, he is super-competent. In **verse 9** he promises, **“whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.”**

Psalm 23 {12:1-4} affirms his perfect competence:

**The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.**

**He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside the still waters,  
he restores my soul.**

**He guides me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.**

**Even 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 [the shepherd's tools],  
they comfort me... and so on.**

‣ Christ Jesus is absolutely competent. Are we allowing him to shepherd us?

I do not like to think of myself as a sheep. That does not change the fact that I am one.

Once you acknowledge this, you realize your need for a shepherd who will lead you to nourishment, who will keep you from getting lost, who will help you to rest, who will seek you out when you get lost, and who will guard you against sin, death, and the devil.

‣ The question is, who is my shepherd? To whom am I surrendering day by day, moment by moment, again and again?

Let it be Jesus! He is **“the good shepherd.”**