

I AM the Good Shepherd 5.7.17 #cccsermons

The I AM Claims of Christ Series

The "I AM" statements of Jesus help us to understand who He is.

- The phrase I AM was a pretty SACRED phrase in the life of a Jew because it was designated only for Yahweh. So when Jesus said in **John 8:58**, "Before Abraham was, I am", Jesus was not only claiming to be God Himself, but was just beginning a revelation to His followers that He is what everyone NEEDS.
- **John 10:11** (NIV) "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Sheep and shepherds were not only commonplace in Jesus' day, but they were ESSENTIAL to the Jewish life. Sheep were raised near the Temple for the single purpose of becoming a sacrifice. While, we might not know all about shepherds today, Jesus' listeners would have known all about them.

#1 Sheep are usually DIRTY.

#2 Sheep are usually DEFENSELESS and have no means to protect themselves.

#3 Sheep are usually DEPENDENT and require more attention than any animal.

- They are prone to wander, prone to follow the crowd, and never learn from their mistakes. They are easily frightened and confused and have been known to plunge off cliffs in their fear and confusion.

#4 Sheep are usually DUMB.

The worst part about sheep is that if they are left to themselves, they will DESTROY themselves.

After looking at those qualities, isn't it great that Jesus implied that we are sheep?

- It might not be a compliment, but it's the truth. We are in dire need of guidance. I believe Jesus likened Himself to a shepherd because just as a shepherd cares for and protects his flock, Jesus cares for us and tries to protect us because He knows if we are left to ourselves, we will be ATTACKED from the enemy.
- So Jesus makes the claim, "I AM the Good Shepherd".
- Today's passage of Scripture: **John 10:1-18**

Notice here that Jesus is talking to the Pharisees, an ultra-religious group, when He made this statement. (see **John 10:1**)

- In **John 6:35**, when Jesus claimed to be the Bread of Life, Jesus claimed to be greater than MOSES.
- In **John 8:58**, after declaring Himself to be the Light of the World, Jesus claimed to be greater than ABRAHAM.
- Now in **John 10:11**, Jesus is saying that He is greater than DAVID, the most well-known and revered shepherd.
- Jesus is saying that even though these were all great men, I'm not just any man, I'm God! Of course this sent the Pharisees into an uproar because they would consider this heresy and most importantly, because the Pharisees considered THEMSELVES to be the shepherds of Israel.

Characteristics of a shepherd:

#1 A shepherd ENTERS by the gate. (1-2, 9)

- Jesus was telling the Pharisees that He was the only way to heaven and it's not by doing good works or being religious or by being a good person.
- In **John 10:7**, Jesus says "I AM the gate for the sheep."

#2 A shepherd KNOWS his sheep. (3, 14-16)

- It was commonplace for shepherds to have every one of their sheep named and they were able to distinguish them from each other because of their peculiar traits, unique markings or bleats. And the sheep knew his voice, his touch, his compassion and his discipline. There was a relationship between the Shepherd and the sheep.
- "A person's name is to him or her the sweetest and most important sound in any language." Dale Carnegie
- To know someone's name usually means you have either spent time with that person or you have taken the EFFORT to remember them. Isn't it refreshing that you are not just another nameless face to Jesus? (see the Parable of the Lost Sheep in **Luke 15**)
- Jesus cares about you and me, and our lost friends, family members, people in the community who wander around aimlessly like sheep without a shepherd.
- He knows you, but you have to take the TIME to get to know Him.
- Do you take the time to know the Shepherd, to know His voice, His leading and His discipline?

#3 A shepherd LEADS the sheep. (4)

- What's the difference between a herder and shepherd? Instead of prodding sheep from the back and forcing them to move forward like a herder, the shepherd leads the sheep from the front.
- Jesus doesn't force us to follow Him, but LEADS us to places we need to be.
- Jesus wants us to follow him to green pasture and still fresh water, to experience abundant life on this earth, and eternal life in the life to come, but we must keep moving and following the good shepherd. (see **Psalms 23**)
- Conversely, **John 10:10** (NIV) says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."
- We can't rely on YESTERDAY to get us through today, we must listen for his voice today.
- The question is, if Jesus is leading, are we following?

#4 A shepherd SPEAKS to his sheep. (4)

- Even though sheep may not be the brightest animals, they still are amazing because they can recognize the voice of their master from among many voices.
- We need to spend time in prayer and in God's word because the more time we spend with God, the more we learn to hear God's voice, and recognize what He is saying and what He wants us to do.
- The question is, if Jesus is speaking, are we listening?

#5 A shepherd PROTECTS his sheep. (v. 11b, 17-18)

- Did you know that the Jewish law required an accounting of shepherds?
- **Exodus 22:13** (NIV) If a sheep was torn to pieces by a wild animal, he shall bring in the remains as evidence and he will not be required to pay for the torn animal.
- **Amos 3:12** (NIV) This is what the Lord says: "As a shepherd saves from the lion's mouth only two leg bones or a piece of an ear, so will the Israelites be saved..."
- And a good shepherd would give up his life for his sheep.

Ironically, Jesus is not only the Good Shepherd, but He is also the "LAMB of God."

- **1 Peter 1:18-19** (NIV) "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."
- In the Old Testament, animal sacrifices, especially lambs, were made to atone for man's sin. These sacrifices were to continue under the law as a means of atonement (or compensation for our sins). But they were never really sufficient because these sacrifices were only a picture or shadow of things to come. (see also **Hebrews 10:1-18**).
- Jesus, the Good Shepherd, died in our place – not as a martyr or because he was murdered – but because He willingly took our place as our SUBSTITUTE as the required payment for the penalty of our sins. (see **Romans 5:8**)

Because we are sheep, we need to be aware of our surroundings.

- Jesus uses this imagery to help us understand that we are all in DANGER if we choose not to enter or stay in his sheepfold.
- The Bible tells us to keep our guard up because we are all vulnerable to the enemy, Satan, who the Bible says prowls around like a lion, waiting for his chance to pounce and devour us (see **1 Peter 5:8**).
- There are two ways which we can find ourselves vulnerable to the enemy, not being in the flock or the fold, or not STAYING in the fold.
- **Isaiah 53:6** (NIV) We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
- Jesus knows us and wants to shepherd us, but we must follow!
- You cannot be your own SHEPHERD, so stop trying to lead yourself.