

SERMON FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – April 25, 2021-Our Redeemer, Iowa City

John 10:11-18 “Jesus, our Good Shepherd, is Unique!”

Dear fellow Redeemed,

Are you good at what you do? To have someone say so is a compliment, one we like to hear. We strive for good workmanship in whatever we do. Quality is the goal; shoddiness is something to avoid.

Many people are good at their work, but how many are so good that no one else could do their work as well? Such people are truly exceptional, so exceptional that when we hear their names, we automatically know what they have done—individuals like Martin Luther, Michelangelo, Johann Sebastian Bach, Henry Ford, or Mother Teresa. The list could go on and on of people who did more than “good work”—whose work was exceptional. Nevertheless, even these exceptional workers did not do all that could be done. There is always someone who can carry on the work in any area a little further.

There is One, however, who needs no successor, no one to complete His work. He is the Good Shepherd, Jesus. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus is truly unique, in a class by Himself, one of a kind! This morning we shall see what it is that makes Him unique.

I. He is the Shepherd Who Sacrifices Himself.

Others have also been shepherds and still are today. The prophets and other leaders shepherded God’s people before Jesus came, and the apostles, pastors and teachers, and others have been doing so ever since. Many have been leading and guiding God’s people but not in the way Jesus did. One aspect of Jesus’ shepherding put Him in a class by himself. Jesus is unique, because He is the Good Shepherd **who laid down His life for the sheep.**

Many have given their lives for others. History and legend record many heroic sacrifices. Some are particularly noble and inspiring. Some acts of personal sacrifice are widely known;

some are known only to few; and some are known to no one but God. Some personal sacrifices have benefited many, some only one.

- Texans will always “remember the Alamo,” where a relatively small band of volunteers held off a far superior Mexican army at the cost of their own lives, buying time for the fellow Texans in a struggle for their independence.
- History records that many among the passengers of the Titanic stayed on the sinking ship so women and children might have the available places in the life-boats.
- And who can forget the bravery and sacrifice of so many firemen and policemen when the twin towers were toppled by terrorists.
- And we think also of the men and women in our armed forces who give and have given their lives in sacrifice for us

Such sacrifices deservedly draw forth our admiration. But no sacrifice approaches that of the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep. No other sacrifice costs as much as His, for He is the divine Lord of the universe, who suffered and died. No other sacrifice accomplished as much as that of the Good Shepherd.

- We may extend a life for perhaps seven or eight decades at the most;
- He saved lives for an eternity.
- He died so that millions, even billions, of precious human souls may live forever in the glories of heaven.
- The Good Shepherd laid down His own wonderfully precious life for the sheep and redeemed them for a glorious eternity.

2. He is the Good Shepherd Who Knows His Sheep

Jesus is unique because He is the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep and is known by them. You know, there is some truth to the assertion that no other person really knows our inner selves. No matter how close we are to another, no matter how long we have lived in the same house, no matter that we share almost all of the same experiences—to some degree there will always be some part of us that no one will ever really know. Only in a limited sense can we say to someone, “I know just how you feel.” Some experiences are so private and personal that no one can share them with us. We may accompany another person only so far and no farther.

But Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows us. He knows us in and out, through and through. He knows us better than we know ourselves. The desperate prayer “Lord, tell me what’s going on inside of me!” is not a foolish prayer. He knows even when we don’t. And He can share every

Jesus came among us for a clear purpose. **“The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost”** (Luke 19:10). This marvelous fact distinguishes the Gospel from all other sources of hope and faith. Others may exhort us to seek after God; the Gospel tells us that God has come down to seek after us and graciously to invite us into His kingdom.

- Jesus is the Good Shepherd who is not content in knowing that the 99 are safely in the fold; He goes out to seek the one lost lamb, and when He has found that little lost one, He lovingly gathers it in His arms and carries it home rejoicing.
- The enthusiastic and new Christian may exclaim, “I found God!” but no Christian has ever really found God; rather, God has found every one of us after seeking us. It is the Good Shepherd who says, **“I have called you by name; you are mine!”**

It is true, of course, that the Lord uses His servants in the seeking. About to ascend into heaven and to resume His place at the right hand of God, Jesus commissioned His church to go and proclaim the Gospel, assuring them that as they went, He would be with them.

- Wherever the Gospel is proclaimed, the Lord accompanies this gracious message with power as through it He searches and seeks for the lost and brings them into the fold where there is one flock and one Shepherd.
- As we share the Gospel with family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, schoolmates, and—through our church—with people all over the world, the Lord accompanies us, seeking the lost and gathering them into His fold. He is the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost and brings them in.

Are you good at what you do? No matter how good, there is always someone as good or better; someone who can carry on your work. There is only One though, who can truly be called The Good Shepherd!

- May we truly cherish our calling as His sheep!
- Having been redeemed by His precious blood and brought into His fold, may we desire daily
 - to be guided by our Good Shepherd,
 - to be carried by Him through all trials and temptations,
 - and may we desire daily to be brought by faith one day into His eternal presence in heaven.
 - May God grant this for Jesus' sake. **Amen.**

experience that we have. He can feel our every feeling. Whatever step we take, He has stepped there before us; whatever path, He has walked it; whatever dark room, He has entered it.

He can hold onto our hand when others must let go. Listen to how the writer of the letter of Hebrews puts it: (2:18) **For because He himself has suffered and has been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted.** And again: (4:15) **For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, knows us, and we know Him. We know Him because He has revealed Himself to us in the Holy Scriptures.

- He has drawn back the mystery of His being, revealing to us the three distinct Persons in the Godhead of the Holy Trinity.
- He has made Himself known to us in the person of His Son, in whom the divine is united with the human. We would never have discovered such mysteries of the eternal God had He not revealed them to us.
- But He has revealed Himself, and we know Him. And He has made Himself known to us in His dealings with us. We know His grace, His love, His care, and His mercy firsthand as He has led and fed us through life.
- He is the Good Shepherd; He knows us and we know Him.

3. He is the Good Shepherd Who Seeks Lost Sheep

Another aspect of His unique shepherding is the fact that He is the Good Shepherd **who seeks out the sheep not yet in the fold.** There are many wonderful things to be said about God, but perhaps the most marvelous is that the Lord has visited His people. He has come down from His exalted throne in heaven to seek and to save us.

Sometimes we express admiration for a highly placed person who associates with ordinary people. We approve when a president of the United States pauses to join flood victims in filling sandbags, even though we know this is only a gesture. We are glad when a great person still has “the common touch.” Jesus, the Almighty God, descended from heaven and took on the form of a servant.