

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

The Characteristics of the Good Shepherd's Sheep

John 10:22-30

1 The message today is called the characteristics of the Good Shepherd's sheep. To see some of these characteristics, let's examine John, Chapter 10, verses 22 through 30. **2** Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." **3** Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

If Lord Jesus is the Good Shepherd, then you are His sheep. But sheep are rather dumb animals who have

to be cared for constantly for the very simple basics of life. When you discover what sheep are you can better understand your relationship to your Good Shepherd. ⁴

So, what are the characteristics of the Good Shepherd's sheep? ⁵

I. They Recognize the Shepherd's Voice - v27

They recognize the shepherd's voice. Notice verse 27 here, **My sheep listen to my voice . . .** ⁶ A shepherd will call his sheep out of the fold. ⁷

A "fold" is a corral made out of boards, rocks or thorn bushes. The sheep can recognize their own shepherd's call and come to him when he calls. ⁸ When this happens, they separate themselves from the rest of the flocks in the corral.

I took soldiers on monthly religious retreats when we were stationed in Germany. A friend owned a 500-year-old house he had restored in the southern town of Balingen. I would take our soldiers there. One Sunday afternoon, after our worship, we had a picnic on top of one of the local mountains. As we were eating, we saw some sheep emerge from the trees. In a few minutes there were about one hundred of them in the clearing along with their shepherds, a dog and a donkey. Strapped to the donkey's back was a corral neatly folded in a pack. We watched as the shepherds unstrapped, unfolded and set up the corral. The sheep seemed to know exactly what to do as their shepherds "talked" and motioned to them to go into the fold. Some of the stragglers were "encouraged" by the dog nipping at their heels. All of us were impressed about how smooth that operation took place. 9

Your good shepherd calls you today. Hebrews, Chapter 1, verses 1 and 2 says, **In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times**

and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ¹⁰

God has spoken to you through the Lord Jesus, but you must listen and respond to what He has said. ¹¹

Romans, Chapter 10, verse 17, **Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.** ¹² John, Chapter 18, verse 37, “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” Only those who are of the truth will hear the shepherd’s voice. To everyone else, it is foolishness. ¹³ Revelation, Chapter 3, verse 20, **Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To respond you must open the door of your heart so the Lord can come in.**

Notice how some people in the Bible responded to God's voice. ¹⁵ God spoke to Adam, but he hid himself. ¹ But when God spoke to Isaiah, the prophet said, **Here am I, send me!** ² ¹⁶ When God spoke to Ananias he tried to talk the Lord out of the mission. But he finally went, preached and baptized Saul. ³ ¹⁷

When you respond to the call of God in your life, you become separated from this world by your shepherd. First Peter, Chapter 2, verse 9, **But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.** ¹⁸ The word "holy" here means to be separated apart. ⁴

¹ Genesis 3:8 - Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

² Isaiah 6:8.

³ Acts 9:10-18.

⁴ ἅγιος.

You are separated from this world. ¹⁹ But to be separated you must be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow the Lord; ⁵ ²⁰ forsake your loyalty to the world; ⁶ ²¹ continue in the Lord's word ⁷ ²² and begin bearing spiritual fruit. ⁸

The second characteristic of the Good Shepherd's sheep is that . . . ²³

II. They Follow Where the Shepherd Leads -

v27-28

They follow where the shepherd leads. Notice verses 27 and 28 here, . . . **I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life . . .** So the question becomes, ²⁴ where does a shepherd lead? ²⁵

⁵ Matthew 16:24 - If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

⁶ Luke 14:26 & 33 - If anyone comes to me and does not hate . . . yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple . . . In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

⁷ John 8:31 - If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

⁸ John 15:8 - This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

He leads his sheep to physical necessities. Psalm, Chapter 23, verse 2, **He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters . . . And, ²⁶ he guides his sheep down the right paths. In verse 3, . . . **he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ²⁷****

So where does your Good Shepherd lead you? ²⁸ He leads you to physical necessities. Lord Jesus told His disciples that since the Heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, He would certainly take good care of them. You are worth more than a bird or a lily! ⁹ Then the Lord said, ²⁹ **So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to**

⁹ Matthew 6:26-29.

you as well. ¹⁰ 30

Not only that, but He will guide you along the right path. Psalm, Chapter 48, verse 14 states, **For this God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.**

The third characteristic of the Good Shepherd's sheep is that . . . 31

III. They Stay in the Shepherd's Care - v28

They stay in the shepherd's care. Verse 28 here says . . . **and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.** 32

A shepherd in Bible times protected his sheep. Psalm, Chapter 23, verse 4, **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, they comfort**

¹⁰ Matthew 6:31-33.

me. 33

You know, your good shepherd will protect you ³⁴ from physical harm. ³⁵ The Israelites were trapped in front of the Red Sea with the Egyptian military charging down the mountain behind them. Moses lifted his staff and the waters of the sea miraculously parted before him. Israel crossed the sea on dry land and the Egyptians were drowned when the waters cascaded down upon them! ¹¹

Not long ago I read of a woman surrounded by a gang of men about to rape her. She screamed out for the Lord's help and the assailants fled! The Lord protects His own! ³⁶

Your good shepherd will also protect you from spiritual harm. Did you see any of the scary movies the week of Halloween? Did they scare you? You know you have no need to be afraid of ghosts and demons.

¹¹ Exodus 14:5-31.

The Lord had a way of dealing with them!

You don't need to be concerned about losing your salvation because you feel you are not good enough. The truth is none of us are good enough! Only Jesus is. He paid the price for that salvation on the cross! ³⁷ Notice Romans, Chapter 8, verses 38 and 39, **For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. ³⁸**

Your Lord is a wonderful Good Shepherd for you. He loves you; He cares for you; He protects you and He cherishes you. In response to His mercy and love, take the responsibility to become the best possible sheep you can be!

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