

Sermon Series: Jesus' Great 'I Am' Statements"—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—5/2/2004

Title: The Good Shepherd

Text: John 10: 14-18

Intro.: Ills.: Who's Your Shepherd?

Theme: Today's focus on Jesus the Good Shepherd is all about the credibility of his claim to lead us and our relinquishing control of our lives to trust and follow Him.

Good as opposed to bad?

- There are a lot of "**bad shepherds**" out there
 1. **Print and read Ezekiel 34: 1-6** – (analogy of the spiritual shepherds of Israel who "*fleeced the flock*")
 2. We are faced with "*wolves in sheep's clothing*" both in and outside of the church
 1. World philosophies deceiving us into the "**many shepherd**" notion ("*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*" Col. 2:8)
 2. Selfish church leaders who will tear up the flock for personal gain ("*I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them*". Acts 20:29-30)
- Jesus can claim to be "**THE GOOD Shepherd**" in every sense of the word
 3. He is **THE ONLY ONE** in your life who comes **to give** rather than **to take** from you
 1. He considers us his friend even before we consider him our friend "*I have called you friends.*" John 15:13,15
 - "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*" Jn10:10
 2. He is willing to give the ultimate sacrifice "*I lay down my life for the sheep*" vs. 15
 - **Ills.: the Ultimate Sacrifice**
 3. Is what you are committed to follow promising and fulfilling a claim equal to what Jesus can give you?
 4. He is **GOOD** in the sense that he is consistently the same:8
 1. "*good*" = consistent, integrity, noble
 2. "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*" Heb13
 3. Consistent in gracious nature, integrity-filled in doing what he said, and noble in that he will never stop loving us

He wants to lead; will you follow?

- His credentials stand for themselves
 1. His sacrifice in which he laid down his life— **he is no martyr** (vs. 15, 17a)
 2. His resurrection claim — **no other religious leader has come back from the dead** (vs. 18a,b)
 3. His sending authority from the Father – **he's authorized** (vs. 18c)
- What is keeping us from diving in to a deeper commitment to follow him?
 4. What barren ground in your life is your Good Shepherd asking you to leave behind for his green pastures?
 5. What wolves (job, recreation, commitments, passions) are eating you alive that he wants to lead you away from?
 6. Why are you resisting his lead to come away from that which doesn't satisfy or will destroy you?
 1. **Ills.: Heeding the Call to Safety**
 2. "*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 55:2
- Follow the Shepherd's heart
 7. **For you** ("*until Christ is formed in you.*" Galatians 4:19)
 1. Trust — what he did, what he says, and where he's taking you — "*my sheep listen to my voice and follow me*"
 2. Surrender – willing alter your life's course to begin walking in the will and way he wants for you

8. *For others*

1. Celebrate when the “*lost has been found*”
 - *Ills.: Looking for lost sheep*
 - “*God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*” 1 Tim. 2:4 — do you?
2. Make room for “the other” sheep
 - Notice Jesus not make them join our fold (Jew/Gentile debate of Paul’s day; proselytizing other Christians)
 - “*that they become one flock with one shepherd.*” Vs. 16

Who’s Your Shepherd?

I own a marvelous little book written nearly a quarter of a century ago by a former shepherd, Philip Keller. He titled the book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm Twenty-Three*. He tells about his experience as a shepherd in east Africa. The land adjacent to his was rented out to a tenant shepherd who didn’t take very good care of his sheep: his land was overgrazed, eaten down to the ground; the sheep were thin, diseased by parasites, and attacked by wild animals. Keller especially remembered how the neighbor’s sheep would line up at the fence and blankly stare in the direction of his green grass and his healthy sheep, almost as if they yearned to be delivered from their abusive shepherd. They longed to come to the other side of the fence and belong to him. Christians understand that the identity of the shepherd is everything. It is wonderful to be able to say, “The Lord is my shepherd.” **Citation: Leith Anderson, “The Lord Is My Shepherd,” *Preaching Today*, Tape 136.**

The Ultimate Sacrifice

Friday, April 23, 2004---WASHINGTON — Pat Tillman, a former pro-football player who left the gridiron to become an Army Ranger, died during a combat operation in Afghanistan, military officials said Friday. The 27-year-old decided to stop playing for the Arizona Cardinals and join the Armed Forces after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. He passed up a \$3.6 million contract with the NFL team to be a Ranger. . . “Pat Tillman personified all the best values of his country and the NFL,” commissioner Paul Tagliabue said in a statement. “He was an achiever and leader on many levels who always put his team, his community, and his country ahead of his personal interests.” (Fox News Web page 4/23/2004)

Heeding the call to safety

When the infamous September 11 airplane barreled into the Pentagon, Officer Isaac Hoopii was nearby but outside the building. Immediately he began helping people straggle out of the building—in some cases, carrying them out. But Hoopii wanted to do more. Wearing only his short-sleeved blue police uniform—no mask, no protective coat, not even a handkerchief—he ran into the inky blackness of the Pentagon. Someone yelled at him to stop. “We gotta get people,” he shouted back. Suffocating on smoke, Hoopii heard the building cracking. He called out, “Is anybody in here? Anybody here?” Wayne Sinclair and five coworkers were crawling through rubble and had lost all sense of direction when they heard Hoopii’s voice. They cried out, and Hoopii responded. “Head toward my voice. Head toward my voice.” Following his voice, Sinclair and the others soon made their way out of the crumbling building. Jesus saves us in the same way. He says, “Head toward my voice.” **Citation: Steve Gertz, Wheaton, Illinois; source: *U.S. News & World Report* (12-10-01), pp. 24-32**

Looking for lost sheep

At Chancy Lutheran Church in Clinton, Iowa, the kids from VBS were preparing for their grand finale production of "The Good Shepherd." Guests slipped into their seats and checked their watches. The special stars of the show were two sheep, kept in a pen outside the church. Then things got complicated. Ten minutes before the play was to start, the sheep well! they were lost. They ran away. Just got scared (stage fright, maybe?), hopped over the fence, and lit out for points unknown. The play's director, Sandy Mussman, along with her two kids, ran through town, chasing the sheep. "At one point," she later reported, "we passed a lady who was out in her yard. She said, 'Did I just see what I thought I saw?'" Eventually, they tracked one of the sheep down near Clinton Community College, but at last report the other one was still on the lam, though several people reported seeing it around town. The church's pastor was even out looking. According to Mussman, "When people asked what he was looking for he'd say, 'A lost sheep.' Then he'd have to tell them he really was looking for a lost sheep, that he wasn't looking for sinners." I suspect that in the finest tradition of the theater, the show went on. After all, the first act was entitled "The Lost Sheep." **Citation: Lee Eclov, Vernon Hills, Illinois; source: Associated Press (8-22-03)**

John 10:14-18

¹⁴"I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep as the Father knows me. My sheep know me as I know the Father. ¹⁵So I give my life for my sheep. ¹⁶I also have other sheep that are not from this pen. I must lead them. They, too, will respond to my voice. So they will be one flock with one shepherd. ¹⁷The Father loves me because I give my life in order to take it back again. ¹⁸No one takes my life from me. I give my life of my own free will. I have the authority to give my life, and I have the authority to take my life back again. This is what my Father ordered me to do." [GW]

Ezekiel 34:1-6 The LORD spoke his word to me. He said, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy to these shepherds. Tell them, 'This is what the Almighty LORD says: How horrible it will be for the shepherds of Israel who have been taking care of only themselves. Shouldn't shepherds take care of the sheep? You eat the best parts of the sheep, dress in the wool, and butcher the finest sheep. Yet, you don't take care of the sheep. You have not strengthened those that were weak, healed those that were sick, or bandaged those that were injured. You have not brought back those that strayed away or looked for those that were lost. You have ruled them harshly and violently. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd. When they were scattered, they became food for every wild animal. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered throughout the whole earth. No one searched or looked for them. [GW]