

The Parable of the Good Shepherd

John 10:14-15 (NIV)

¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me--

¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Intro to Series

"What is a parable?"

A parable is, literally, something “cast alongside” something else. Jesus’ parables were stories that were “cast alongside” a truth in order to illustrate that truth. His parables were teaching aids and can be thought of as extended analogies or inspired comparisons. A common description of a parable is that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. In short it is a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson, as told by Jesus in the Gospels.

Jesus loved to use stories to illustrate profound, life-transforming concepts. He loved to use real and genuine settings, characters, and ideas that apply to all of us to reveal God’s heart of pursuit and love. For the next few weeks we’re going to spend time allowing the parables of Jesus to speak directly to our situations, mindsets, and core beliefs about who God is. Open your heart and mind to be transformed by the powerful and captivating stories of Jesus.

The Good Shepherd

Have you ever experienced a sense of grand perspective where you realize your smallness in comparison to the earth’s grandeur? Have you ever contemplated your small stature in light of how colossal the universe is? Every now and then, when I get a sense of my smallness I am overcome by the fear of being lost. I think, “Who will show me my path in this seemingly increasing world? Who will guide me through the various trials and changes that will undoubtedly come my way? Who will help me?”

One of my favorite metaphors in Scripture is God as the Good Shepherd. Jesus is the most equipped guide we could ever have. He holds all of creation in the palm of his hand, and yet he knows the number of hairs on our head. He is the God of the gigantic and a lover of every little detail about us. And he longs to lead us to safe pasture. As we look at the parable of God as the Good Shepherd today, allow your faith and affections to be stirred by God’s promise to guide you into the matchless life he has in store for you.

Jesus declares “I am the good shepherd.” He describes Himself as not only “the shepherd” but the “good shepherd.” What does this mean?

It should be understood that Jesus is “the” good shepherd, not simply “a” good shepherd, as others may be, but He is unique in character (Psalm 23; Zechariah 13:7; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 1 Peter 5:4). The Greek word *kalos*, translated “good,” describes that which is noble,

wholesome, good, and beautiful, in contrast to that which is wicked, mean, foul, and unlovely. It signifies not only that which is good inwardly—character—but also that which is attractive outwardly. It is a natural goodness. Therefore, in using the phrase “the good shepherd,” Jesus is referencing His inherent goodness, His righteousness, and His beauty. As shepherd of the sheep, He is the one who protects, guides, and nurtures His flock.

John 10:14-15 says, *“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”* Jesus paved the way for us to enter into the most amazing pasture of all: the very presence of the living God. He laid down his life as our Good Shepherd that we might eat of the fruit of his death and resurrection. But God didn’t only lead us to heaven; he continually leads us as our Good Shepherd day in and day out.

In the famous **Psalm 23** David writes, *Psalm 23:1-6 (NIV)*

¹ The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

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 me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

God’s staff is meant to comfort us. As our Good Shepherd he promises to lead us daily to the plans he has for us. That doesn’t always mean that we will be led out of *“the valley of the shadow of death,”* but that in the valley he will *“prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.”* Our great comfort is the fact that God will never leave us or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6). As **Psalm 139:9-10** says, *Psalm 139:9-10 (NIV)*

⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

God is with us in times of trouble. He will protect us, provide for us, and lead us to still waters.

God longs to guide you today and everyday. What trouble is before you? Where do you need guidance? Where do you need help? God promises to be your Good Shepherd. You have the most high God on your side. You can trust in his leadership. Jesus was faithful to come and die so that you might have eternal life. If he was faithful to lead you to heaven, he will certainly lead you through whatever trial you are going through now.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6). Your God is a trustworthy Shepherd. Enter into prayer with expectancy that he will guide you perfectly and in his perfect timing. Cast your cares on him and trust him. Allow him to “*make straight your paths*” as you follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

God as your Good Shepherd. Receive the truth of his promise to lead you and protect you.

“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.” John 10:14-15

“In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling. Exodus 15:13

“If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.” Psalm 139:9-10