Responsive Reading

LEADER: “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me... and I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:14-15).

PEOPLE: The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want (Psalm 23:1).

LEADER: You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones (Luke 22:28–30).

MEN: [We] are the salt of the earth.

WOMEN: [We] are the light of the world (Matthew 5:13–14).

LEADER: Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Matt 5:16).

PEOPLE: The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

LEADER: Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field (Luke 10:2).

MEN: [We] are the salt of the earth.

WOMEN: [We] are the light of the world (Matthew 5:13–14).

ALL: The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want (Psalm 23:1).

It seems that... two American hikers in Scotland came upon a hole in the ground in the forest. The hole was deep and dark. Looking over the edge, they had no idea how deep it was. One of them tossed in a small stick. They heard nothing. The other one grabbed a rock, the size of a baseball. Tilting their ear to the hole they waited for a thud or a splash to signal how deep the hole was. No sound came.

Curious, the hikers shed their packs and started throwing larger items down the hole, hoping for a sound. They found a large stone and heaved it in together. Nothing. They found an old iron sink nearby & threw it in. Again, no sound. Everything they threw in was swallowed and never seen or heard from again. The pit seemed bottomless.

Then, they found a long, abandoned railroad tie (the large plank of wood they lay under & between railroad tracks) and they carried the heavy object over to the hole and threw it in. They waited for some noise, but again, nothing.

Suddenly, they were startled by a strange noise behind them. Turning around, they saw a wild-eyed sheep running right at them from a dense patch of trees. They both dodged out of the way and then were astounded to see the sheep run right at the hole and jump in. They couldn’t believe it! They were stunned!

A few minutes later a Scottish shepherd walked out of the forest up to the hikers. He said, “Have you lads seen a sheep of mine? He was around here, but I can’t find him. He was my daughter’s pet.”

The hikers regretfully informed him that they had just seen a wildeyed sheep inexplicably run out of the forest & into this bottomless pit.

“Well, that couldn’t be our pet sheep,” the shepherd replied. “Our sheep was tied to a railroad tie.”
Being a shepherd can be challenging.  
But in a way it is something God calls all of his followers to do.

In the Bible, God frequently uses the metaphor of sheep & shepherds to describe us and him and our relationship.

We are sheep.  

Psalm 79:13  
We are your people. We are your very own sheep. We will praise you forever.

Psalm 100:3 Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

And God is our shepherd  

Psalm 23  
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

Jacob said, Genesis 48:15  
God has been my shepherd all my life to this day.

Isaiah 40:11 said  
He [God] tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

God provides and protects and leads and guides.  
We are his sheep; He is our shepherd.

But that metaphor doesn’t work perfectly to every comparison.  
Jesus did not want his disciples to just remain sheep - dependent, passive, & simple.  
He wanted to change that some.

In the Gospel of Mark we again find Jesus interacting with his disciples. We pick up today in Mark 6.

Mark 6:31-37  
Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, [Jesus] said to his [disciples], “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

32 So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. 33 But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

35 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. 36 Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

37 But he answered, “You give them something to eat.”

After calling the disciples away, Jesus saw the crowd that was gathering and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

When the disciples insisted that he “send the people away so they could go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat, he answered, “You give them
something to eat” You feed my sheep!
Jesus wanted them to take the responsibility of a shepherd.
Jesus always wanted his disciples to take responsibility & authority.

Jesus then went on to break 5 small loaves and two fish miraculously.
But it was his disciples who distribute it all. They did the feeding.

So in this we might find another shift that we can say followers of Jesus all need to undergo in their minds, deep in their beings.

At certain times in certain ways,
and especially when we are young in our faith or young in life,
we can see ourselves as his sheep.
But at some point, as we follow Jesus and grow and mature,
we need to realize that Jesus did not just save us to keep us out of hell
or to forgive us or to fix our problems in life,

Jesus called us to follow Him on his mission & to do what he did.

Title slide
We need a shift in thinking from sheep to shepherd.

In fact, right from the very beginning of his story Jesus was not looking for sheep, he was recruiting shepherds. Mark describes his first encounters with disciples.
Mark 1:16-18
As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him.

Jesus was not looking for fish!
He was calling those who would be his followers to be fishers of men. Not sheep, shepherds.
From the very beginning, Jesus was not simply looking for followers or attracting a crowd.
He was on a mission. And implicit in the call to follow is a call to join that mission.

In Mark 3 we see him giving his disciples authority to do what he was doing.
Mark 3:14
They were to accompany him, and he would send them out to preach, giving them authority to cast out demons.

Later, he did the same.
And he called his twelve disciples together and began sending them out two by two, giving them authority to cast out evil spirits... So the disciples went out, telling everyone they met to repent of their sins and turn to God. And they cast out many demons and healed many sick people, anointing them with olive oil.

Those were the things that Jesus was doing.

1. He was preaching about the kingdom of God.
2. He was healing the sick.
3. He was casting out evil spirits.

He called and empowered his disciples to do the same things.

And he calls us to do them too.

Even today, Jesus wants us to engage in these 3 kinds of acts:

1. to preach the gospel—not with sermons, but with stories of our own lives that are meant to convince our friends of the power of God;

2. to heal the sick—not always by some miraculous sign, but by touching them in ways that empower them and help them to cope with their diseases; and

3. to deliver people from their evil—not always by exorcising some demon, but by helping them disentangle from sinful things that are destroying them.

And, these things are essentially the things a shepherd does.

1. She feeds her sheep – that’s what sharing the word of God can be.
2. She cares for her sheep – she binds up their wounds.
3. She protects her sheep – from evil in the world.

Blank slide

At some point in your life, you are going to grow up or wake up to the realization that Christ wants to do good in your life, but more than that he wants to do good through your life into the lives of others.

He doesn’t just want you to follow.

He wants you to help lead, feed, protect, and care for his sheep.

Here’s what’s so important about this:

When you realize this or get this or start caring or start serving,
that’s when your life will start to really make a difference for God!!

Here’s what it could look like.

Some examples.

We have a group who prepare and serve dinners at the church for those who have funerals.

A couple weeks ago, they did one for a family in Armbrust ...

Then they did a large dinner for Jeanie Roland ...

They are shepherding for Jesus, caring for his sheep.

Sue Skovira is starting a book club soon.

Once a month.

That’s new for her.

She is being a shepherd for Jesus, feeding his sheep.

Rick Shaw introduced me to his brother in law and his girlfriend a few weeks ago.

Rick had some conversations with them about their faith in JC.

They came to a couple services and affirmed their faith in Jesus with me.
Rick is being a shepherd to his friends.

Rick and Jeryl are a couple who have been coming to our church for about six months or so. I got to know them a little better in our Discover Armbrust lunch and in the membership meeting they came to last week.

One of their primary concerns is to have a church that preaches the Word and that is a good fit for their 4 teenage children.

They are shepherding their family – caring for and guiding them.

Another new family Kenny and Krista are doing the same thing with their 3 little kids. They were a military family. When they finished their term, they settled in Mt Pleasant because of a job, and because it’s half way between their families.

They are relatively new in the area and they are doing a good job shepherding their kids into Christ.

Anyone who helps with AWANA, our midweek kids program

Or any Sunday School teacher is shepherding.

In case you haven’t heard, we have great Sunday school teachers.

Jim Ramey has recently begun teaching the Evangel class and people love the depth of his knowledge and the great teaching.

Our whole worship team shepherd us, leads us, into the presence and praises of God every week.

Our church has a visitation team.

They help visit people in hospitals and homes.

Pastor Keith and they had a meeting recently. They want your help.

Caring for the sick is shepherding.

We all are called to be shepherds as we follow Jesus.

As we follow Jesus, we are to shepherd those in our lives, in our families, our work places, our church if we can.

So, quickly let me put it in the “what do you want me to do” terms.

How to be a shepherd for the Good Shepherd:

1. Identify your sheep.

Jesus said

John 10:14

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.”

You not just a shepherd, as a follower. You have specific sheep.

In the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, Jesus, the Shepherd knows his sheep.

Ask God to show you.

2. Lead/guide your sheep.
Ezekiel 34 is a passage where God talks about being a shepherd.
Ezekiel 34:11-12
For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.

Go after, seek, direct, guide your sheep to follow Jesus.

Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice. And they follow me.” This meant he led them to good places. A shepherd went before his sheep and they followed his voice.

David was called Israel’s shepherd, not because he cared for each person in the nation, but because a shepherd is a leader.

3. Feed your sheep.
Preach the gospel with words and with your life.
Help direct their consumption of God’s word and of truth.
   Read the Bible with your family. Talk about his word.
   Have Bible study with a friend.
   Start a Bible study in your home.
   Get involved in a teaching ministry here at church.

After Jesus rose, he had a talk with Peter, his disciple.
John 21:17 Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”
   He asked Peter “do you love me?”
   Peter said “yes.”
   Jesus said, “then feed my sheep.”

How can you be a shepherd for the Good Shepherd?

4. Protect your sheep.
David, in the OT was a shepherd.
   And what was remarkable was how he protected his sheep with his slingshot. He killed the bear and the lion for his sheep.
Protecting our sheep could be helping them to be delivered from the destructive things in their lives.

Last one.

How can you be a shepherd for the Good Shepherd?

5. Care for your sheep.
Ezekiel 34:16
I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.... I will shepherd the flock with justice.
   I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.
Bind up wounds. Heal the sick. Shepherds care for wounded and sick sheep. It would be a little more inspirational if Jesus called us to be cowboys.

The cowboy and the shepherd have a few things in common.

They’re rugged.
They’re strong.
They’re heroes.

Both cowboys and shepherd lead their animals through the wilderness.
Both sleep under the stars.
Both deal with danger and protect.
And both are more at home in the canyon than the city.
But, that’s where the similarities end.

Blank slide
In a book called *Gentle Thunder*, Max Lucado says,

“*The shepherd loves his sheep. It's not that the cowboy doesn't appreciate the cow; it's just that he doesn't know the animal. He doesn't even want to.... Why the difference? Simple. The cowboy leads the cow to slaughter. The shepherd leads the sheep to be shorn. The cowboy wants the meat. The shepherd wants the wool. The goal is different for a cowboy and a shepherd, so they each treat their animals differently. The cowboy’s journey ends with the death of their animal. The shepherd’s journey never quite ends – they live life w/their sheep. The cowboy wrestles, brands, herds, and ropes. The shepherd leads, guides, feeds, and anoints. A shepherd cares.*

So where are you?
Who is one person you could begin to shepherd?
What is one way that you could feed or care for others in the church?

Start where you are.
What can you do to improve the spiritual climate of places where you have influence?
Who in your field of life needs to be fed? Who needs to be healed or delivered?

You could start a Bible study, gather for prayer, organize a reading club, begin to witness, write prayers and circulate them.

**Whatever Jesus asks you to do, do it!**
You might protest that you don’t have enough time, money, education that you’re not adequate; that you don’t have the connections; or that you don’t know where to start.

Somewhere in God’s plan to save the world, he left room for us. Even now, he calls us to move forward, quit following him from a safe distance behind, & walk alongside him, helping him to do the things he is trying to do in this world.

It all begins when you hear the familiar voice of your shepherd say, **Those people over there are**
like sheep without a shepherd. *You* feed them!