

## “Jesus Is Our Good Shepherd”

John 10:11-18

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There was a little girl who recited the 23rd Psalm. She said, "The Lord is my shepherd." But she forgot the next part of the Psalm. She quickly finished her recitation by saying, "The Lord is my shepherd, that's all I want." Even though this little girl forgot the correct words, she knew the most important thing in faith. Let me try to think about why: What if I want to change my sermon title to this: "Who is the good shepherd?" What will be your answer? Now, it seems to be very easy, "Jesus is our good shepherd!" I believe this is a good enough idea for today!

While I was preparing for today's sermon, I prayerfully read our Scripture passage more than ten times. I asked myself: What does God want to say to our church through these words? I tried to picture this scene in my mind. There is a flock of the sheep. They are grazing the grass on a green pasture. A shepherd stands and watches over the sheep. The shepherd holds the rod and staff to protect the sheep from any dangers. In our Scripture reading, there is a contrasting image between the good shepherd and the hired man. The good shepherd is caring, nurturing and supporting. The shepherd is willing to lay down his life for the sake of his sheep, but a hired man wouldn't care because he is ready to run away if there is any threat or crisis to him. Definitely, Jesus is our good shepherd that stays with us even through the danger of death.

Today's Scripture reading starts with saying, "Jesus is the **GOOD** shepherd." In other words, there were many **UNCARING** shepherds in their faith community. Then, another question we might ask is who was the audience of this story. The audience must be disciple John's faith community. John assured them that Jesus was the good shepherd and he was completely different from other false leaders. Let's revisit our parable again. You may assume that the shepherd is the main character of this picture, and the sheep are lesser characters. But I want you to look at a different perspective of the shepherd. Let's think about the role of the shepherd. Basically, the shepherd's job is to guide, to support and to protect the sheep. The shepherd is needed to guard the lives of the sheep. Without the sheep, there will be no shepherd. Shepherd serves the sheep. Our reading shows us that the good shepherd is willing to lay down his life for the sheep. The sheep is not object but subject to the shepherd. The sheep is the main important character in our reading. It is important for us

to see that Jesus Christ, the good shepherd was sent for the lives of the sheep.

We often compare the role of the shepherd with leadership of the church. The pastor is commissioned to lead the church. He or she is in charge of church ministries. But it doesn't mean that congregation is not also charged to lead and serve. Rather, pastors are servants.

When I read our Scripture the second or the third time, I checked up on myself between the good shepherd and a hired man. As you know, technically, United Methodist church pastors are hired pastors by our conference and appointed to local churches. I asked myself whether I have been faithfully serving and caring for our church with the heart of a good shepherd. Or have I been functioning with a hired man's attitude. My wish is that I would like to be a good pastor to you.

I grew up in a mixed culture of religions where Buddhism, Confucianism and Shamanism are dominant and powerful spiritual forces. Christianity was introduced to Korea by two American missionaries in 1885. Christianity is still regarded as a young, new concept of religion to the Korean people. I was raised in a 4th generation Christian family, I found my God in Jesus Christ, especially through reflection on Jesus' life, death and resurrection. What truly touched my soul in Christian faith is that Jesus Christ, almighty God's Son, was willing to give away his life and died for me on the cross, because God loved me this much. God is incarnated to Jesus Christ as a human form and showed us his servanthood through his life and ministry. Jesus Christ is the good shepherd because he was willing to die for us. His status was not the first main concern, but he laid down his life for others. The good shepherd is ready to give his life to the sheep.

Let me challenge you this morning. Christians are Christ-like people. Jesus gave away his life for us. He was the good shepherd for us. I believe God is calling you to be a good shepherd to His sheep, who is your sheep then? Who will be the good shepherd for our neighbors and for our community beyond our church? I heard that United Methodist Committee On Relief (UMCOR) gave us reports about what is happening around the world. According to the US Census, 43.6 million people in the United States were living in poverty in 2009. Every day, nearly 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes—one child every five seconds, according to Bread for the World. The lack of sufficient sources of clean drinking water translates each year into 1.4 million child deaths from diarrhea; 500,000 deaths from malaria; and 860,000 child deaths from malnutrition. Not only globally, but also locally, I heard that almost a thousand homeless people come to Union Gospel mission or Loaves and Fishes for meals,

a place for sleep, clothing and shelter.

Let us go back to the very first question that I raised in the beginning of my sermon. “Who is the shepherd?” In different ways, we are called to do God’s ministry in our lives. I believe that God calls all of us to be shepherds and to serve our community and the world as God’s good shepherds. I want you not to think of your role as a passive role of the sheep, but the more active shepherd to serve the people locally and globally. The shepherd didn’t serve his sheep in word, but in action. We are called to stay and to serve those who are vulnerable, those who are hurt, and those who are in need. We are called to be their shepherds to carry them and to encourage them on their way. Will you be able to become good shepherds? Amen.