

Wednesday in Lent 3
"I Am the Good Shepherd"

3/11/26
John 10:11-18

A true story about an ill-fated fishing trip to Alaska.

Two men and a father and his 12-year-old son went on a fishing trip to Alaska. They found a secluded bay and landed their small seaplane. They fished all day. They were surprised when they returned to find that the tide had gone out and the plane was high and dry. So, they waited till morning. The next morning, they loaded the plane and took to the air. Within moments, the plane fell back to the water. One of the pontoons had a hole in it and had filled with water. All began to swim for shore. Not only was the water freezing cold, but they found themselves swimming against a vicious riptide. The two men barely made it to shore. They saw the father cradling his son in his arms as they were swept out to sea. The father could have made it alone, but he would not abandon his son.

Throughout this season of Lent, we have been looking at the "I Am" sayings of Jesus from John's Gospel. Tonight, we hear Jesus say to us, "I am the Good Shepherd."

There is perhaps no more beautiful or dearly loved picture in the Scriptures of our relationship to our Savior Jesus than He being our Good Shepherd and we being the sheep of His pasture.

The Good Shepherd "*lays down His life for the sheep.*" We cannot swim against the vicious riptide of sin. It would pull us down into the depths of hell. But, God will not abandon us to sin and death. He saves us! He sent His Son to be our Good Shepherd. He lays down His life for us. And, He takes it up again and wins for us the victory over death and the devil. He will not abandon us, even when the vicious wolf attacks. He is with us always, to give us everlasting life.

Although it is a dearly loved picture of our being sheep, to be called a sheep is not exactly a compliment.

You have heard my mantra on sheep before. Sheep are often seen as not being real bright. Granted, sheep are not the smartest of animals. But, lack of intelligence is not their biggest problem. Their biggest problem is that sheep have only 21 feet of vision. Quite literally, sheep are blind. They get into all kinds of dangers and problems, because they can't see where we are going.

Is it easy to see the comparison between us and sheep? The Eternal, Living God breathed His eternal life into us. But, we chose to live for the moment and fell into the death of sin. And, because of the death of that sin in which we fell, we daily sin, rebel, against our Creator in our thoughts, words, and deeds. With our 21 feet of vision, we live for the fleeting pleasure and treasure that sin offers. Yes, we poor sheep got ourselves into trouble, the eternal trouble of death and hell.

The Church of the Good Shepherd in California has a large stained-glass window above its altar. It shows Jesus, the Good Shepherd, with His sheep. In the scene, there is one gray lamb running away from Jesus with a backward glance over its shoulder. It's that gray lamb running away from the Shepherd that gets everyone's attention. That gray lamb is you and me.

How true are the words of the Prophet Isaiah, *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way (Is 53:6)*.

Because we strayed away from the Good Shepherd's pasture and wandered into sin and death, He laid down His life willingly as punishment for our sin. He is not like a hired hand who runs away at the first sign of trouble. Our Good Shepherd sacrificed Himself for His sheep.

Because we blind sheep could not care for ourselves, God sent His only-begotten Son, Jesus, the Son that He loved, to be our Shepherd. "*I am the Good Shepherd,*" Jesus says to us. "*The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep*" (v. 11)."

So that we would be spared the eternal flames of hell, Jesus the Good Shepherd became for us Jesus the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world. What a Shepherd we have! God laid upon Him the guilt of all of our sin. He carried the sorrow of our sin. He was stricken by God, smitten and afflicted. He was led as the innocent Lamb to the slaughter of Calvary's cross to die the death that our sin demanded so that we could be forgiven.

Jesus rose in triumph on Easter morning, bursting the bonds of the grave. He lives forever; death has no hold on Him. Our Good Shepherd's resurrection means for us that in Him we rise to eternal life.

In our baptism, we are buried with Christ into His death and raised to a new life, an eternal life, in Him. Because He lives, we live in Him.

In this time of Lent, you are invited by God to ponder again that it was your sin which put Christ on the cross. And as we ponder that, God invites us to rejoice and give thanks, be comforted and find peace, that because our Good Shepherd laid down His life for us, we do not perish. We are not swept away in the ashes of God's judgment. We do not remain in the dust of the grave, but rather our Good Shepherd leads us through the valley of the shadow of death to the green pastures of heaven where we will live, in safety and joy, for eternity.

There is no need for us to run from God as Adam and Eve did in the Garden, for the Good Shepherd who suffered, died, and rose again from the grave 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” (vv. 14-15).

As that father would not abandon his son in the cold waters of Alaska, Jesus will not abandon us. He is our Good Shepherd. He lays down His life for us. He richly blesses us. He wraps His arms around us and no one -- not even death, the grave, or Satan -- can snatch us away from Him!

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.