

**JOHN 16 : 11**  
OVER-AND-ABOVE FOR THE FLOCK !

***I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.***

Some statements in life are well said and are packed with meaning. They become memorable. "I shall return," General Douglas MacArthur. "It aint over till it's over," Yogi Berra. The Bible has many: *God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).* *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God (Romans 8:28).* *My Kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36).* This morning's text from Jesus is also such a verse: *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.* The words and the picture they describe are packed with meaning and comfort!

**"I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD"**

I --- Jesus is talking about Himself. It can't be seen in English, but it is a very emphatic **"I."** Some people talk too much about "I" or "Me"—what they have done, where they have been, their latest assessment of every situation. When Jesus talks about Himself, it is not to brag or to put others down. It is to help. "Focus your eyes on Me, your best friend and Savior." In English we can make a play on words. Think of the other word "eye." The "eye" of a storm is the point around which the whole system rotates. The bull's "eye" of a target is dead center. Jesus is the "I" and the "eye" of the Bible and our salvation. He is God's specially sent Redeemer to buy you back from condemnation, your Savior.

AM --- Jesus does not say, "I was"—as if it's over and past, no longer applicable today"; but He says, "I AM, for you right now." He does not say, "I will be"—as if "not yet" or "someday" or "look Me up later and I'll be able to help then." "I AM already, right now." Jesus does not say, "I might be"—as if it's a possibility, but not for sure. Jesus says, "I AM, definitely your Savior right now." What are our troubles? What is your guilt that you are carrying around? Jesus says, "I AM your Savior."

THE --- The word "the" is definite, as in "this is the password to my account," meaning there is no other. In grammar "the" is called the definite article. Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd." He does not say, "I am a Good Shepherd," as if there are more. "A" and "an" are called indefinite articles—a baseball, an airplane. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Look nowhere else, stop trying to find another—there's no comfort there. In Acts, Peter spoke to those who had crucified Jesus and declared to them that the same Jesus whom they crucified was indeed risen and alive! Peter said, He is the stone that the builders rejected as unfit, but in reality has become the "chief cornerstone." Then he said, *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12).* Jesus is the Savior.

Good SHEPHERD --- A shepherd is a sheep-herder, a herdsman. The shepherds of the day knew and cared for each member of their flock. Likewise with Jesus. In U.S. history many open-range cattlemen did not have much use for sheepherders and despised them; their sheep grazed the grass too short for the cattle. Being a shepherd has never been a glorious job. Remember the Egyptians who wanted to have nothing to do with shepherds and so gave Jacob and his family the land of Goshen, apart from the rest of Egypt. Remember the twins Esau and Jacob. Esau was a man of the fields and the open country. Jacob was a man of the flocks. When Jacob was trying to convince his blind father that he was really Esau the first born, his father asked him to come near and kiss him. He did. Jacob was wearing Esau's clothes. Father Isaac noted the aroma of the garments, "*Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed*" (Genesis 27:27). I imagine that Jacob's clothes would have smelled like sheep. Jesus, the shepherd, was not, and is not, afraid to get His "hands" dirty with the likes of us.

GOOD shepherd --- "Good" has several different shades of meaning. "Be a good boy while you're at Grandma's"—obedient and well behaved. "This food tastes good"—pleasing and nourishing. "This is a good place to stop"—convenient and beneficial. "Exercise is good"—of great value. "She is a good student"—dedicated and eager to learn. "King Willaim is a good king"—wise, kind, staunch vs. evil, concerned for the nation, concerned for the true welfare of each citizen. Jesus is your "Good" Shepherd in every one of those ways. Everything He did, and does, works in perfect harmony. He has come to secure your eternal safety. In His care you need not fear. The wolf who wants to harm you is kept at bay. Nothing happens by accident in this life. He knows. Certainly, you can walk

away from Him, you can wander away from Him, you can run away from Him, to your own harm. He will come looking for you. Do not ignore Him or turn a deaf ear to Him. Do not say and insist, “Ya but, I want.” Children can be like that, adults too. When my father would discipline us, he would often say, “And no ya-buts” Period. Jesus has brought you to life, He knows how you are different from everyone else; He does not just operate on a one-size-fits-all policy. He feeds you and clothes you. He clothed Adam and Eve with garments of skins as He ushered them out of the Garden of Eden. He knows you by name. You are not just one of a massive swarm of bugs on earth. He does not deal with the whole swarm and maybe a few are missed. *God our Savior will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4).* He manipulates your steps, to lead you through and around all the inroads of evil—some of your own doing, some of others. He opens His Father’s arms of forgiveness, He opens your grave, He opens the doors of heaven for you. We are talking about a very Good Shepherd here. Good in every sense of the word. You cannot give one, not even one, example in life where The Shepherd ignored you or “did you dirt.”

The GOOD SHEPHERD gives His life --- Jesus repeats the term “Good Shepherd. Surely He wants to impress on us 1) who He is—the Good Shepherd; 2) what He does—cares for the sheep; 3) and why He does it—from the goodness and love of His heart, not because He was “s’posed to,” or that it was His “job.” He has come and still works in life to save you.

GIVES --- Gives His life. Gives it. It wasn’t extracted from Him by force. It wasn’t extracted from Him against His will. He gave it. He “laid it down.” Not by accident and not because He could see it was useless to keep on struggling. He gave, He laid down His life. Imagine going into a high-end store and coming up front with thousands of dollars worth of merchandise. In the days before credit and debit cards, the clerk might say. Before I ring this all up, lay down your money here, so I know this is not a pointless game. (Or today, the clerk might check the limit on your card.) Jesus “laid down,” “gave,” His payment, His life, for you.

HIS life --- It was not someone else’s life, to spare Himself the grief. It was not “fake” human life, as if He merely *looked* like He had human life. God took upon Himself human life. He was fully God and fully man in one person, which I can’t understand or analyze. It was not just that the man part of Him died on the cross. It wasn’t just that His human nature died. The God-man died. But how can that be? God can’t die? We humbly trust the Word. All we can say is, according to His human nature, the God-man died. The Good Shepherd gave—laid down—His life for us all.

LIFE --- He gave up His LIFE. Not gold, or silver, of which there is always more. Not a part of His power or a part of His honor, of which God has plenty. He gave up His life, His one life as the God-man. It was dear and precious to Him. “No man takes it from Me. I lay it down of My own accord, that I may take it up again.” He laid it all out there, for you.

FOR --- “For” means “to the benefit of.” I have a gift “for” you—to your benefit. Jesus gave His life “for” you, to your benefit. But do you realize that “for” carries a secondary meaning?—“in the place of” Jack went into the game to play “for” Al who was hurt—not for Al’s benefit, but in place of Al. Jesus gave His life “for” the sheep. He took what we should get. Christ died for you—He died in your place. “He died for all.”

For THE Sheep --- Again “the”—the “definite article.” Not just some sheep, or a few sheep, but for the sheep. The whole class—actually plural, “the” sheeps. All sinners. Whenever you think you are too bad or too much of a failure, remember He died for the—the whole close of—sheep. You are one of the sheep. He gave up His life for you! Such a comfort.

SHEEP --- Plain ol’ sheep. Not prized bulls, not treasured cows that bear a good calf every year. Not a horse that is a Kentucky Derby winner. Not the alpha wolf and leader of the pack. But just a plain old sheep. He loves you and wants you in heaven. He took your punishment for you and rose in victory to share His triumph with you. When it rained all day last week, were you go out in the rain to tend to a cow with her calf? No fun, I’m sure. Perhaps a hired hand wouldn’t have done it. But she’s your cow and it’s your calf—your livelihood. Jesus did more than go out in the rain so for you. He died for you—not because you are His livelihood. You are just a plain old wanderlust sheep. He did it because He loves you. He went the extra mile, He went above and beyond—far above and beyond—He gave His life for you!

This Bible verse is a memorable verse packed with meaning—each word a treasure. ***I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*** Treasure your Shepherd and live for Him.

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach--