

I AM Part 6: "The Good Shepherd" (12-10-2017)

This series . . . As we move towards Christmas this year, instead of exploring the Nativity, we will be looking at the **Identity & Mission** of the child that came into the world.

The series is titled: I AM . . . we will be exploring Jesus identity & mission through the eyes of the apostle John

There are 7 proclamations Jesus made in John's Gospel, about His Identity . . . The 7 "I AM" statements

There are 7 proclamations Jesus made in John's Vision (Revelation), to His People . . . The 7 letters to the churches

We will be looking at the connection between Jesus' Identity & Mission, and our own.

Today: Part 6 – "I AM The Good Shepherd"

John 10:11 (ESV)

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

- Jesus calls himself the good shepherd and defines what a good shepherd looks like: Sacrificial Love!
- Shepherd is a common theme throughout scripture, and the shepherds who lead sheep, also become leaders of God's people . . . **Guides for a Nomadic Life!**
- Examples in the Bible:
 - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - The Patriarchs we're Nomadic Shepherds
 - Moses – 40 years as a shepherd (in the same wilderness he would later lead Israel through)
 - David – the slayer of Goliath, King of Israel, Jesus is a King from his blood-line
 - Even Abel – the 1st man ever killed, was a shepherd (notice the detail of the Holy Spirit)
- Following Jesus is a Nomadic Life – we are now strangers on this earth, we look for another home.

John 10:1-5 (ESV)

(1) "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. (2) But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. (3) To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. (4) When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. (5) A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

Notes:

- (1) Remember this for later – the idea of the unknown person who comes into the sheep is a thief
- (3-4) The Sheep hear his voice, are personally known, and they follow His lead.
- (5) Whose voice is familiar to me? Is it possible that I am so familiar with another voice, that I don't recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd in my life?

John 10:11-16, 27-28 (ESV)

(11) I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (12) He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. (13) He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. (14) I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, (15) just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. (16) And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd . . . (27) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (28) I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

Notes:

- (11) Jesus defines a good shepherd – He is sacrificial (that’s love).
- (12-13) Not only are their thieves (outsiders) who want to rob, there are hired hands (insiders) who drop the ball – and the wolves snatch & scatter.
- (14-15) Not Jesus – He knows his own & his own know Him. He knows what its like to love, so He loves!
- (16) This is almost certainly a reference to you & I (gentiles) who are adopted into the family of God.
- (27-28) **Heaven our True Home!** The Shepherd gives us eternal life, we won’t perish, we won’t be snatched away.

Sardis History: Map of the 7 churches & Picture of the Ruins and Acropolis of Sardis

It stood on the northern slope of Mt. Tmolus; its acropolis occupied one of the spurs of the mountain. At the base flowed the river Pactolus, which served as a moat, rendering the city practically impenetrable. Through the failure to watch, however, the acropolis had been successfully scaled and the city attacked twice!!!

The ancient city was noted for its fruits and wool. Its wealth was also partly due to the gold, which was found in the sand of the river Pactolus, and it was here that gold and silver coins were first struck.

In 17 AD, when it was destroyed by an earthquake, the Roman emperor Tiberius remitted the taxes of the people and rebuilt the city, and in his honor the citizens of that and of neighboring towns erected a large monument, but Sardis never recovered its former importance. The greatness of the city under the Roman empire was due entirely to its past reputation.

The city continued to flourish until 1402, when it was so completely destroyed by Tamerlane that it was never rebuilt. Among the ruins there now stands a small village called Sert. Now an unhealthy desert; not a human being dwelt in the once populous Sardis for several hundred years.

The patron deity of the city was Cybele (similar to the goddess Diana worshipped in Ephesus), but Cybele is conceived as possessing different attributes from those usually associated with the name. A special characteristic was the power of restoring life to the dead.

Revelation 3:1-6 (ESV)

(1) "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. "'I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. (2) Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. (3) Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. (4) Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. (5) The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. (6) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Notes: Who is this letter written to?

- To a new believer/follower who is keenly aware of life without Jesus – the offer of a Good Shepherd is received eagerly with Faith and Joy. It is refreshing, life giving news!
- But this letter isn't to a new church. It is for an established church with a good reputation. However, it is to the wizened veteran of the faith that this offer of a "Good Shepherd" can be the most difficult to believe & receive. Why?
 - Because the longer we walk with Jesus we need to watch out for living the Christian life that "settles in" and just tries to make ourselves at home here on earth.
 - This is dangerous because it will lead to either:
 - Severe dis-appointment (and distrust of the Shepherd) because we can never quite get things arranged the way we want them
 - Or Settling for a "sedentary life" resulting in major complacency, and ultimately death (think about the image of "soiled garments" in verse 4)
- You see this is 1 of only 2 church letters where there is no internal church conflict or external conflict with the city (persecution) – no conflict leads to either asleep unto death (Sardis) or a growing apathy/lukewarm (Laodicea)
- There is no good news or anything to be celebrated. There is also no specific issue with any doctrine that is wrong, or evil practice. It is simply a dead religious group – no life in them.

Jesus offer: Wake up and be strengthened! Remember all the things you have heard – but actually keep them (do them) and repent!

Jesus warning: If they don't wake up they will miss Him! I wonder how often we miss the presence of Jesus because we are sleepwalking through life and our relationship with God. Remember John 10:1-6 the one who the sheep don't know that sneaks in is a thief – Jesus is saying that he has become unknown to them – his presence is like that of a thief who steals & attacks! (vs 3)

(verse 1) Jesus is offering supernatural power and life – to those who appear alive (naturally/outwardly/by reputation only?) but are in fact dead.

(verse 5) Jesus offers garments – white as wool, and an eternal home, established and sure!

Closing Prayer:**Psalm 23:1-6 (ESV)**

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 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. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.