I Am Jesus - Part 1

# The Good Shepherd

# (John 10:11)

I am so excited to be sharing this message with you today because it’s Mother’s Day, but also because we’re beginning a brand-new message series and I believe that God is going to speak into your life and your spirit today. But first I want to honor my mother in heaven, Dana the mother of my six children, and I want to wish a happy Mother’s Day to all moms.

I also want to pause to acknowledge that this can be a really challenging day for many people. For those of you who gave birth to a child this year, we celebrate with you. For those who lost a child this year, we mourn with you. For those who are unable to conceive, those who have a strained relationship with your mom, those who’ve lost a mom, lost a child, or maybe had a failed adoption, we grieve with you. To those who are on the front lines with little ones every day, those who are dealing with the tumbles, stumbles, and bruises, those who are foster moms as well as those who are spiritual moms, we appreciate you and we wish you a Happy Mother’s Day.

Well, I would say that it’s good to see you today, but except for the tech team and our musicians, I can’t see you. And so, would you let me know that you’re worshiping with us today on the chat, tell me where you are, say “hi” or something because even though we’re separated we’re still together. Even in this season of COVID-19, even in times like this we’re not going to let anything stop us from doing what God has called us to do. And so, we’re gathering together, we’re just doing it differently, because when you can’t do it the way you want to do it, you’ve got to learn to do it differently.

One of the things that I’ve learned through this season of social distancing is that there are other ways to do what we’ve always done. And so, we haven’t given up on meeting together, we’re encouraging one another, and even though we’re separated by social guidelines, we’re celebrating nonetheless. And so, if you haven’t been with us over the past few weeks, we’ve been talking a lot about the bread of life; we’ve seen Jesus breaking bread with his disciples and revealing himself saying,

*“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35).*

And so, over the past few weeks, we’ve dined with Jesus, we’ve walked with him, and today we’re beginning a new series entitled “I am Jesus” because not only did Jesus say I am the bread of life, but he also made many other “I am” statements. We’re going to look at a few of these statements because they describe qualities or characteristics of who Jesus is that are especially meaningful to us today.

Next week, we’re going to look at his statement, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). And in our third week, we’re going to look at the statement where he said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). But today, we’re going to look at a statement that Jesus made that is so personal to me and I hope it is to you as well. It’s recorded in John chapter 10, in verse 11, where Jesus said,

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).*

And that’s such good news, because he was willing to die for us, and he did, he literally died in our place.

Now, the part about the sheep is less favorable, that part is not very good news, you know the fact that we’re called sheep, because sheep are not very trainable, they’re not overly intelligent, they’re not well-equipped for the challenges of life. But what’s interesting is that sheep are mentioned more than any other animal in the Bible; in fact, one of the most well-known verses is in Isaiah chapter 53 which says,

*“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).*

And so, not only are we identified as sheep, but this passage is very inclusive and descriptive of the problem that we have. We all tend to wander, thinking that if we go over there, we’ll be happy, that the grass is greener on the other side, and so we end up wandering away which isn’t very good because sheep get lost very easily. You know, we get distracted and we get detoured, but that’s what makes the good news so good, our Savior Jesus says,

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).*

And so, in the remainder of our time together, I want to share with you from the book of Ruth, with a few snapshots from Psalm 23, and varied illustrations describing the qualities of our good Shepherd. My prayer is that these would connect to your heart so that you can apply them to your lives today. I’m going to begin by sharing with you from the life of a woman named Naomi and we’re going to see how the good Shepherd protects, guides, and provides as we consider insights of another shepherd named David. As you turn to the book of Ruth if you’re following along, number one, we see that Jesus is the good Shepherd who protects the sheep.

## 1. He Protects

Reading from chapter 1 of the book of Ruth, we’re going to discover some principles that I believe will help us in our faith, in our Christian walk, and in our relationship with God. As we begin, Naomi and her family are experiencing a famine, there’s a drought in the land of Judah, there’s a shortage of food, and so they decide to look for food somewhere else. Verse one says,

*“A man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion…” (Ruth 1:1-2).*

And so, they leave the promised land, the land of Judah, and they go into the land of Moab, but soon they find that things get even more difficult for them. Verse three says,

*“Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband” (Ruth 1:3-5).*

Now Naomi finds herself all alone in a foreign land, without hope of protection, provision, or guidance. Everything that she’d relied upon had died and I wonder if there are any of you who’ve gone through painful situations, a loss or setback, and you’re having difficulty because of the disappointment. In fact, you may be having a difficult time even trusting God, trying to stand on his promises, because you’ve lost your confidence. Whatever it was, it did something to your heart, it did something deep inside, but today the Good Shepherd wants to reveal himself to you as your protector and comforter. David said it this way in Psalm 23:

*“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” (Psalms 23:4-5).*

Jesus wants to comfort you today; he is the Good Shepherd and he wants the oil of the Holy Spirit to flow in this place and in homes everywhere healing hearts. He is your protector, he’s with you, and he’s working in all things to bring about good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose. David knew that he didn’t have to fear because God was with him, his rod would protect him and his staff would comfort him. The oil of the Holy Spirit makes the love of God become so real as he removes every hindrance in our hearts, so that we can trust him once again, looking forward to his provision. And then number two, the good Shepherd provides.

## 2. He Provides

As the oil of the Holy Spirit is flowing, we want to move ahead in the anointing, we don’t want to build memorials of what God hasn’t done in our lives, but we want to build monuments to what he is doing. We want to take him at his Word, trusting him and watching his faithfulness in our lives. When Naomi heard in verse six,

*“That the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home” (Ruth 1:6).*

I want you to notice that Naomi didn’t focus on what she’d lost. She didn’t focus on her deceased husband, she didn’t focus on the loss of her two sons, she didn’t focus on what she lacked, but she was focused on what was ahead. This is the kind of faith focus that we need, this is what David said in Psalm 23,

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures…” (Psalms 23:1-2).*

This is more powerful than we understand, because most of us don’t see sheep very often, but when the good shepherd is present the sheep are not afraid, the sheep are not in want, because he’s there as their protector and their provider and so they’ll lie down and actually get some rest.

Naomi prepared to return home and her daughters-in-law with her, but she said,

*“Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband…" At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-by, but Ruth clung to her” (Ruth 1:11-14).*

I want to make sure you catch this, because Naomi almost made a mistake, she was begging for Ruth to leave her and she almost missed the provision of God. One daughter-in-law stayed home, but Ruth clung to her, and if you know the end of the story God was about to do a miracle with what she had left.

For some of you listening, God is going to come through in your life not with what you lost, but with what you have left. God is going to do a miracle with your children, not the one that you lost, but the one that you have now, the ones that stayed. The Good Shepherd is your provider, he’s going to bring about restoration, but you don’t want to lose your Ruth. He’s going to bring restoration, but you’ve got to hold onto what you’ve got, hold onto that little bit of oil, because God’s going to take it and he’s going to multiply it. I want to encourage you not to abandon your Ruth because you’ve lost your husband or because you lost your sons. Hold on to the little bit you have, thank God for it, bless it, and watch him multiply it.

When they brought Jesus five loaves of bread and two fish it wasn’t enough to feed 5,000 people, it wasn’t enough for so many, but Jesus didn’t reject what little they had. He didn’t rebuke his disciples saying, “What do you think I’m supposed to do with so little?” No, he didn’t do that, but the Good Shepherd said to his disciples,

*“Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. They all ate and were satisfied…” (Luke 9:14-17).*

Jesus took the little bit they had, he blessed it, broke it, and worked with it. He took those five loaves and two fish and fed 5,000 people plus the women and children. I’m believing that if you take the little that you have, you bless it, give it to God, and begin to work with it; he’s going to do a new thing in your life, in your children, and in your family. Just begin to work with what you have, believing, praying and fasting, seeking God’s face, and you’ll see his faithfulness in your life.

I want to encourage you not to leave your calling or your promise just because you’re going through a season of famine. You see, we all go through things in life, situations where we seem to get stuck, a season where there’s a famine, and it’s in those times when we don’t feel the presence of God, we don’t feel like God is moving, but we don’t want to make the same mistake that Naomi and her husband made, leaving the Promised Land and going someplace else just because there was a famine. Instead, number three we want to trust the Good Shepherd to guide us.

## 3. He Guides

It’s easy in these times, in these COVID-19 times, to come into a place of discouragement, where you feel like you’re in a famine, where you’re in a drought, but we’ve got to learn to trust our good Shepherd to guide us. You see, when Naomi leaves, things don’t get better and when you leave the presence of God, when you leave your dream behind, when you leave the promise that God has given you and you’re just kind of wandering aimlessly looking for a better place it doesn’t work out. In fact, there’s no better place than in the presence of God, there’s no better place than in the purpose of God and in the place where God has called you. Even if you’re in a famine, keep going, keep holding on, because God has a promise on the other side. David knew this and he said the Good Shepherd,

*“He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake” (Psalms 23:3).*

When you find yourself with a big decision to make and you don’t know what to do, if you’ll seek the Lord, if you’ll listen for his voice, he’ll reveal himself to you and he’ll guide you. In fact, Jesus said this in John chapter 10,

*“The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice” (John 10:3-4).*

This is so powerful, he guides us, because we recognize and we know his voice. In other words, he’s going to talk to us, he speaks audibly, or he may speak through his word, and you can hear him. God can speak in all kinds of ways and the sheep who belong to him know his voice.

Naomi finally decided to return to the land of Judah because she’d heard that God had come to the aid of his people. And today if you will continue to press in, to seek God, he’ll come through, he’ll meet you at that place of need, he’ll guide you and he’ll position people and resources your way. Naomi starts making her way back, she’s lost a lot at this point, she’s not only a widow, but she’s lost her two sons and only Ruth continues with her. She determined to return, to go back where God was moving, where God was blessing. And when Naomi arrives back in Bethlehem, she is welcomed by the people, but she says,

*"Don't call me Naomi, call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty” (Ruth 1:20-21).*

She was disappointed, her heart was filled with grief, she was deeply wounded, but the Good Shepherd was guiding her and positioning her to receive his provision and his protection.

Today I want to assure you, that whatever you’ve lost, whatever unanswered prayer there is, however you’ve been wounded, and wherever there are mysteries or unanswered questions, God is not responsible for it. In fact, the Bible says the mystery of lawlessness is at work, but he’s being restrained by the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:7). And so, whatever has happened in your life, I don’t have an explanation, but one thing I do know and this I assure you, that God is a good God, he’s a Good Shepherd, and he’s a loving Father. In fact, the Bible says,

*“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father…” (James 1:17).*

And so, God has no sickness or death to give, no temptation, discouragement, or disappointment. All of that was nailed to the cross with his Son Jesus Christ, but in this world he says, you will have trouble (John 16:33). He said, the enemy came only to steal, kill, and destroy; and so, we need to stop holding God accountable for what he didn’t do and what hasn’t been done, but look forward to what God is about to do (John 10:10).

He is the good Shepherd, and when we understand God’s sovereignty we can trust him to guide us, to provide for us, and to protect us. We can trust him knowing that nothing happens to us that wasn’t under the jurisdiction of his control. And so, we don’t always know what’s happening, we don’t always understand what’s going on in the spiritual realm, we don’t know what kind of battles are going on up in the heavens, but we do know that God is on our side. No matter what challenges or difficulties you’re facing today you can choose to move forward, praising him in the midst of the storm, because the Good Shepherd is working to bring healing to your heart, he wants to help you live again and he wants to restore the passion in your life.

There are some of you listening and you’re feeling like this whole message is just for you. It’s as if God were speaking directly to you and he is because he loves you that much. In fact, Jesus told a parable which said,

*"If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? (Matthew 18:12).*

Today you may be that one, he’s coming for you and he wants you to know him because he is your Good Shepherd. He wants to protect you, he wants to give you a rich and satisfying life, and he laid down his life so that you would know his love and you could have the freedom of following the Good Shepherd.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ’s Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

May 10, 2020

(301) 447-4224

[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

cccaog.online.church

*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*