

# Christ Church Kid's Lesson

## John 10:11-16

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.



There is a lot to learn from this short passage. Let's start by figuring out what every part of Jesus' story means. Jesus makes it clear that he is the good shepherd, the one who takes care of the sheep.

Can anyone guess then, who the sheep are? That's right, we are the sheep.

Before we go on and look at the other parts of this story, let's get a good idea on what sheep are like. When Jesus compares us to sheep, he is not paying us any compliments. Have any of you ever seen sheep at a petting zoo or farm? Sheep aren't the cleanest of animals, are they? They are smelly and dirty. Every time they lay down, they get grass and burs and dirt caught up in their wool. They can't help it. And they can't clean themselves either. So without the shepherd's help, sheep stay dirty. Let's think about us now. Can we clean ourselves of our spiritual dirtiness? Is there anything we can do, all by ourselves, to wash away our sins? Of course not. We have to go to Jesus, our good shepherd, to be cleansed of our sins.

Not only are sheep dirty, they are not the smartest. I know it is not the nicest thing to say about anyone or anything... But with sheep, it really is true. Sheep don't think for themselves. They just follow other sheep who seem to be in charge. This means that sheep will even follow other sheep right over the edge of a cliff without another thought.

Can you think of ways we follow others without thinking? Sometimes we are so eager to fit in, to be cool or liked that we do or say things that other people do or say without even thinking about it. It is very important for us to think through our actions and words and even our beliefs. I don't want any of you to follow others just because what they say seems right! Whenever you make a decision about something to say, or do, or believe, be sure to pray and read your Bible on your own, and let Jesus help you decide whether what you are doing or saying or believing lines up with what the Bible says is true.

Another interesting fact about sheep is that they are directionally challenged. The poor things couldn't find their way out of a wet paper bag. If they wander off from the flock and shepherd, it's hard, if not impossible, for them to get

back on their own. The shepherd has to come and find them. Jesus shares a story about this very thing happening in Luke 15:4-7.

*It says, 4 "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. 6 When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' 7 In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!"*

This is what our good shepherd, Jesus, does with us when we start to wander away from him. He comes after us and carries us back to the fold, and then he celebrates that we are back in right relationship with him. Now imagine if the shepherd didn't come after the little lost sheep. The sheep would probably be okay, right? I mean, if a cat or dog gets lost, it can fend for itself pretty well for a while, can't it? If anything tries to come and attack a cat, the cat will arch its back, hiss, and scratch the living daylights out of anyone who gets too close. And a dog, if it feels it's being attack, will bare its teeth, growl and bite an attacker. So a sheep, if it's going to be attacked by a wolf, will fluff itself up to look big and mean, and then it will start growling all mean, show off its sharp, pointy teeth, and charge the attacker, right? No way! Sheep don't have sharp, pointy teeth or claws. They can't growl or poof themselves up to seem bigger. They can't even run away, they aren't fast enough on those scrawny little legs. If a shepherd doesn't come after a lost sheep, that sheep is destined to become wolf chow.

How are we like sheep in this way? When we wander from the flock, when we stop going to church and spending time with other Christians, we have a harder time living like Jesus wants us to. We can't protect ourselves from the dangers and temptations of the world. If we want to be like Jesus, which is what life is all about, then we need to spend time with Jesus and others who are learning to live like him.

The last fact I want to share about sheep is pretty funny, and also a good picture of us. If a sheep falls down and ends up on its back, it can't get up again on its own. It will just lay there, flailing its little legs, until either someone helps them up, or they die. When we get into a place in life where we feel like we are flat on our backs, either through our own sins or through tough times, we can't save ourselves. We are totally dependent on Jesus Christ to save us, to lead us, and to keep us clean.

Now we see how much we are like sheep, let's look at shepherds and hired hands. The crowd Jesus was speaking to would have understood all about bad shepherds and what they meant spiritually. The Old Testament talks a lot about good and bad shepherds. If Jesus is the good shepherd, who do you think that bad shepherds were? At that time, they were the Pharisees. Before the Pharisees were in charge of the church, there were others that had power to care for the church of God, and even today there are bad shepherds. Bad shepherds are the people who don't really care for the sheep, but for what they can get from the sheep. They want the sheep's wool and their meat and their milk, but they don't want to put in the work required to help the sheep grow. The Pharisees probably knew that when Jesus called himself the good shepherd, he was calling them the bad shepherds. There is a very big difference between the good shepherd and the bad shepherds. Jesus points the difference out twice in today's passage. Can anyone tell me what Jesus says the good shepherd does?

Look back at your Bibles, at John 10:11-16, to remind you. Twice in this passage, Jesus says that the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He says it twice because it is so, so important for us to remember. In fact, this may be the most important thing we ever learn. Jesus, our good shepherd, sacrifices his life for ours. Based on everything we have learned about sheep, and how much we are like sheep, why do you think we need Jesus to lay down his life for us? (Allow responses.) Sheep are dirty, dumb, directionless and defenseless. We too, are full of dirty sin, we make wrong choices instead of trusting and following Jesus, we easily get lost, and there is nothing we can do to protect or save ourselves. Without our good shepherd, we will die. The wolves, or temptations and sin, come in and threaten to kill us, but then Jesus our good shepherd steps in and dies in our place. He did this without us

getting ourselves clean, and hopping up on our feet all by ourselves first. He did it while we were still lost sinners.

He loves us that much!

Today we are going to close in prayer in a slightly different way. This is Psalm 23, which is a song that praises God for being our good shepherd and tells of the great things he does for us. Bow your heads and praise God as you read it or listen to it.

1 The Lord is my shepherd;

I have all that I need.

2 He lets me rest in green meadows;

he leads me beside peaceful streams.

3 He renews my strength.

He guides me along right paths,

bringing honor to his name.

4 Even when I walk

through the darkest valley,

I will not be afraid,

for you are close beside me.

Your rod and your staff

protect and comfort me.

5 You prepare a feast for me

in the presence of my enemies.

You honor me by anointing my head with oil.

My cup overflows with blessings.

6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me

all the days of my life,

and I will live in the house of the Lord

forever.