

7 days



FOLLOWING

my
SHEPHERD



The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.
He restores my soul;
He guides me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.

Psalm 23:1-3

“Not to you, ye great and mighty, who lift your heads high, and claim for yourselves honor: not for you is peace, not to you is rest; but unto you, ye lowly ones, who delight in the valley of humiliation, and feel yourselves to be taken down in your own esteem—to you it is that the Shepherd becomes dear; and to you will he give to lie down in green pastures beside the still waters.”—C.H. Spurgeon

Over and over, God uses the picture of a shepherd with his sheep to demonstrate his relationship with us. Over and over, God uses the servant nature of a shepherd to demonstrate the qualities of a true leader.

Moses didn't step into his role as Israel's savior when he occupied a place of influence in Egypt. First, he was sent to the back country of Midian to learn the ways of the shepherd for forty years.

David, the shepherd boy, was chosen by God to replace King Saul and shepherd the nation of Israel.

Jesus declared himself to be the Good Shepherd.

Shepherding must be more than just a pretty analogy, useful for more than paintings of lost sheep. The meaning runs deep. But what does it mean to us?

Sheep

Isaiah 53 says, “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.”

What can be harder or more humiliating for a self-sufficient American to wrap their mind around than being compared to a sheep? It's our culture to mock those who follow the flock. 'Don't be a sheeple' is emblazoned on t-shirts and coffee mugs. Sheep are frequent backgrounds on political memes.

Americans think for themselves and fight for the right to do what they want. We resemble Isaiah 53 more than Psalm 23.

In John 10:27, Jesus says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

What does it look like to be Jesus' sheep?

It looks like ownership.

We love Jesus because he first loved us. We didn't choose Jesus. He chose us. Jesus said the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. When we were lost in the wilderness, Jesus left the ninety-nine to rescue us. He threw us over his shoulders and brought us into safe pastures.

That rescue came at a price. We have been bought and paid for with our shepherd's blood. Do we now try to take back control of our lives?

It looks like awareness.

Jesus' sheep hear his voice. They discern his call. His sheep stay close to his side, learning the nuances of his tone. They live in communion so close that day or night, they can distinguish the sound of his voice from another. They won't be fooled by an imposter.

It looks like intimacy.

Not only do Jesus' sheep know his voice, but they are known by him. He calls them each by name. They know that they are totally reliant on him for every aspect of life. That breed of dependence can never survive at surface level. Jesus' sheep wait for him to lead them to pasture. They depend on him for water.

"Sheep have many wants, yet they are very helpless, and quite unable to provide for themselves. But for the shepherd's cure they would soon perish. This, too, is our case. Our spiritual needs are numerous and pressing, yet we cannot supply any of them. We are travelers through a wilderness that yields us neither food nor water. Unless our bread drop down from heaven, and our water flow out of the living rock, we must die."—C.H. Spurgeon

The Encyclopedia Britannica says, "Sheep are basically timid animals who tend to graze in flocks and are almost totally lacking in protection from predators."

As sheep, we are dependent for food, water, even for protection. In 1 Samuel 17, there is a beautiful example of how the shepherd protects his flock. David is standing before Saul, arguing his case. He says, "When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him."

If David did that for an animal, how much more will our Good Shepherd protect us?

No matter how self-sufficient we like to believe we are, without our Savior's guidance, we are hopeless. And if we are navigating our lives just fine with little reliance on his shepherding, then I wonder if we are living the Christian life at all.

Our Shepherd, the Lamb of God.

Jesus is a true Leader. He has never asked of us something he wasn't willing to do himself. He doesn't place us in the position of sheep to subjugate or humiliate us. Isaiah 53 starts, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way;"

But it doesn't end there. Isaiah, carried on by the Holy Spirit, speaks of Jesus:

But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all

To fall on Him.

He was oppressed and He was afflicted,

Yet He did not open His mouth;

Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,

And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,

So He did not open His mouth.

By oppression and judgment He was taken away;

And as for His generation, who considered

That He was cut off out of the land of the living

For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, modeled for us a life of submission. He depended on God in every move he made. He lived close to his Father's heart. Following his Father, he emptied himself and stripped away the splendor of what was his by right to become an obedient servant.

"Christ and his church become an echo of each other: his the voice, theirs is but a faint echo of it; still it is a true echo, and you shall know who are Christ's by this. Do they echo what Christ saith? Oh, how I wish we were all sheep! How my soul longs that we may many of us who are not of his fold be brought in. The Lord bring you in, my dear hearers. The Lord give you his grace, and make you his own, comfort you, and make you to follow him. And if you are his, show it." —C.H. Spurgeon

Spurgeon, C.H. The Sheep and their Shepherd (Sermon No. 995). Retrieved September 8, 2018 from <http://archive.spurgeon.org/sermons/0995.php>

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. Sheep. Retrieved September 8, 2018 from <https://www.britannica.com/animal/sheep>

I AM

the good shepherd;
I KNOW MY SHEEP AND

my sheep know me just
AS MY FATHER KNOWS ME

AND I KNOW THE FATHER—AND

I LAY DOWN MY LIFE FOR

the sheep.

-john 10:14-15

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thoughts:  
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prayers:
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know that the

lord is god.

it is he who made us,

and we are his; we

are his people,


THE SHEEP OF HIS PASTURE.



-PSALM 100:3



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thoughts:  
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prayers:
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THE GATEKEEPER



opens
the gate for him,

and
the sheep listen

to his voice.

he calls his

own sheep

BY NAME

AND LEADS THEM OUT

-JOHN 10:3

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thoughts:  
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prayers:
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I HAVE STRAYED
LIKE A LOST SHEEP.



SEEK YOUR
SERVANT,

for i have not
FORGOTTEN
your commands.



-psalm 119:176

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thoughts:  
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prayers:
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WE ALL, LIKE SHEEP,


have gone astray,
each of us has turned
to our own way; and the


LORD HAS LAID

on him the


iniquity of us all.

-isaiah 53:6




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thoughts:  
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prayers:
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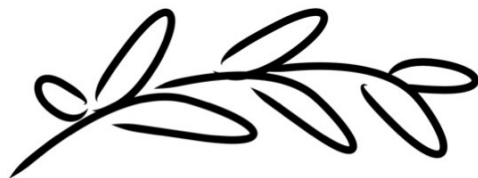
"he himself bore our
SINS" IN HIS BODY,
SO THAT WE MIGHT DIE

to sins and live for
RIGHTEOUSNESS; "BY HIS WOUNDS


you have been healed." for "you
WERE LIKE SHEEP GOING ASTRAY,"


" BUT NOW YOU HAVE RETURNED
TO THE SHEPHERD AND
overseer of your souls.


-1 PETER 2:24-25



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thoughts:  
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prayers:
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then we your people,
THE SHEEP OF YOUR PASTURE,

will praise
you forever, from generation
to generation we will proclaim
YOUR PRAISE.

-PSALM 79:13



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prayers:
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