

Good Shepherd Sunday/Mother's Day

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Our Savior's Way

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Mother's Day is probably the toughest Sunday of the year to preach on. Most of all because it is just a minefield of emotions. Most of us, I think, look forward to this day. It is a time to honor our mothers, celebrate what they do, and give thanks to God for one of His greatest gifts—mothers. But then, some have had mothers that maybe weren't everything they could have been. Other's may be grieving the loss of their mother. Women who are sad today because they are struggling with infertility, or miscarriage, or the death of a child. Do you see what I mean? It's not easy to preach on Mother's Day. Then add in the fact that Mother's Day is NOT a church holiday. Today is the 4th Sunday of Easter. It's also called Good Shepherd Sunday. The Scripture reading is about sheep—not mothers. But I'm going to try to put together both Mother's Day and Good Shepherd Sunday. So, moms, this sermon is for "EWE". We'll start with a video clip about a mother sheep being reunited with her lost lambs.

It's amazing—the bond between a mother and her babies. Baby lambs can immediately recognize their mother's voice. Jesus uses this imagery when he talks about Himself as the Good Shepherd in John chapter 10. Today, I want to share with you three passages from John 10.

The first passage, John 10:11, Jesus says, ***"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep."*** What did Jesus mean? Easter is just one month behind us. With 50/50 hindsight we can know exactly what He means. The Good Shepherd ***"lays down his life."*** Life is not taken away from Him. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, willingly gives His life for the sheep—that's us. That's the cross. That's Good Friday. Jesus said to his disciples, ***"Greater love has no one than this—that he lay down his life for his friends."***

In John 10:14, Jesus says, ***"I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me."*** Let me ask you, do you know the Good Shepherd? And more importantly, does the Good Shepherd know you? Have you ever even met a shepherd—good or bad? The people in Jesus' day--they knew exactly what a shepherd was. So, when Jesus called

Himself “The Good Shepherd” it brought all kinds of images to mind. But a key image was from the “Shepherd’s Psalm”—Psalm 23. This Psalm tells us what a “Good Shepherd” is. Let’s take a moment and pray through Psalm 23 together...

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Lord, thank You for being our Good Shepherd. When we are anxious, lonely, scared, or frustrated, we pray that Your Holy Spirit would remind us of this truth. We are dependent on Your care and provision, and You have our best interest at heart, always watching over us and giving us what we need for godly living.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.

Lord, we are thankful for the calm and peace You bring to our hearts when we go to You with our troubles. Help us to turn away from worry and despair. Help us to turn to You instead, the source of all comfort and wisdom. Restore our souls in Christ, and give us an unshakable faith that You will, indeed, lead us to green pastures and still waters.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

Lord, guide us back to the path of righteousness when we’ve wandered from it. We praise You that You are a loving Lord who leads us on the right path, not only for our own good but for the glory of Your name. Help us to keep our eyes on You, always seeking Your will above our own, and trusting where You lead us.

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.

Lord we are so grateful that You lead us through the hard times and the broken times with a sure hand, instructing us and correcting us when we turn away from the path, and protecting us from the enemy who might harm us. We know that whatever happens, You will work it for good for those who love You, and that Your comfort and care will sustain us.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Lord, even when things are hard, we know the truth is that You provide for us in abundance. We are Yours in Christ, sons, and daughters of the King, and we are under Your rule and protection. You are our portion and our cup. We pray that when we hit a bump in the path or are

struggling with some problem, we would be reminded of how full our cup really is, and how blessed we are as Your children.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Lord, thank You for all of these things. For Your goodness, mercy, love, provision, discipline, guidance, and comfort. And for the promise of eternal life. In the name of Jesus, we pray, Amen.

Finally, in John 10:27-28, Jesus says, ***“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”*** I’m thinking now about mothers and some of the things that mothers say to their children. Things like:

- Don’t EVER let me catch you doing that again!
- Are you going out dressed like that?
- Don’t talk with your mouth full.
- Don’t make me come in there.
- What part of NO don’t you understand?
- You’ll always be my little boy/little girl. I’ll always love you.

A mother’s love knows no bounds. Now think about this—God’s love is bigger than that. And, think about the things that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, said:

- ***“Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”***
- ***“My peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives, give I unto you.”***
- ***“Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest.”***
- ***“Lo, I am with you always, even to the very end of the world.”***

And then, of course, the words that are our Gospel for today: ***“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”***

A mother’s love is just a hint of the immense, overwhelming, unstoppable love of God—the love that God has for you. The love that caused Him to send Jesus to be your Savior. So, let’s take a moment to praise God for His incredible love and to thank Him for the gift of mothers.

Sermon Notes - Good Shepherd Sunday

1. What is your favorite pet?
2. John 10 contains two of the seven “I AM” sayings of Jesus from the Gospel of John. Jesus says, **“I am the Good Shepherd”** and **“I am the (door) gate for the sheep.”** What does Jesus mean by this?
3. How did Jesus, The Good Shepherd **“lay down his life”** for the sheep?
4. Why did Jesus say to his disciples, **“Greater love has no one that this—that he lay down his life for his friends”** (John 15:13)?
5. In John 10:14 Jesus said, **“I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me.”** On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you know the Good Shepherd? What would need to happen for you to get to know Him better?
6. How well do you think the Good Shepherd knows you?
7. Psalm 23 is the “Shepherd Psalm.” Which words of Psalm 23 are most meaningful to you? Why?
8. In John 10:14 Jesus says, **“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”** What promises does Jesus make in this verse?
9. What was the turning point for you in terms of hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd and responding?
10. How do you discern His voice from all the other voices that vie for your attention?
11. How does it make you feel to think about God caring for you like a Good Shepherd?