

Like a Child at Home”  
Psalm 23; John 10:1-10

Today is sometimes called Good Shepherd Sunday. We hear from the tenth chapter of the Gospel of John this Sunday about the Good Shepherd, Psalm 23, and other passages that speak of the love of the Great Shepherd of our souls, Jesus Christ.

In this Gospel of John, Jesus, a True and Good Shepherd, authoritatively tells his audience that, “My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand.” He speaks of his relationship with his flock with such certainty that those who belong to him know and hear his voice.

He is so in-tune with his flock that he knows them individually, and we can say as Pope Francis said, that Jesus smells like his flock. Jesus is the Good Shepherd that can give life, his life, eternal and everlasting life to his flock so that they shall never perish.

What does it mean that Jesus smells like his flock? It means that Jesus our Good Shepherd dwells with us and knows and loves our humanity, warts and all. It means that if we stray or sin that he will not abandon us but bring us back.

In the Gospel of John in chapter ten Jesus says “I am the Gate of the Sheepfold”. At night the Palestinian shepherd or shepherdess was literally the gate as he or she slept across the opening of the sheep pen so as to ward off wolves and other threats to the flock. The shepherd stayed with the sheep at night.

If we are to be on the side of the sheep like Jesus, then we have to remember to follow Jesus' example. Remember the feeding of the 5000? Jesus, the king, fed the hungry. Remember the Woman at the Well, when Jesus offered her living water? Jesus provided water for the thirsty. Remember Jesus inviting Matthew, the tax collector—someone no one wanted anything to do with—to join his company of disciples? Jesus welcomed the stranger.

The Gospel is clear as to what the expectations are. If we wish to reign with Christ in Heaven, we are to imitate Christ here on Earth.

But we live in a world where the idea of “king” looks nothing like the image of the Shepherd-King presented to us in Scripture. Remember Jesus warning his disciples that in his kingdom the leaders don't Lord it over their followers, but serve one another?

### **The Good Shepherd smells like his flock.**

I want to include Luke 15:3-7, Jesus' Parable of the Lost Sheep, as another expression what the Good Shepherd does:

*Jesus said, “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” (Luke 15:3-7 NIV)*

This short parable here (just five verses) reminds me that I am not part of the ninety-nine, rather I am the one, the lost one, and honestly, so is everyone else. Jesus makes it clear that heaven celebrates “one sinner who repents” with overwhelming joy which means no one is overlooked, no one is too small, and no one is forgotten.

Pastor Timothy Keller often said, “The gospel is this: we are more sinful than we realize, yet more loved than we ever imagined,” and that's exactly what this passage shows, God doesn't love us as a crowd, He loves us one by one. Heaven rejoices not over numbers, but over one life changed, showing the personal joy of God in every salvation. This means when we read this story, we don't just see a sheep. I see myself being carried home, and I see every person around me as someone God is still searching for. It humbles me, because I know I was once lost, and it challenges me, because I should care about the “one” the way God does. At the end of the day, in God's eyes, no one is just part of the crowd. Everyone is the one He loves, the one He seeks, and the one He celebrates when they come home.

### **The Good Shepherd seeks us.**

The Good Shepherd comforts us. He comforts us through the fear and anxiety of this present day, guides us during war, famine, disaster, and plague, and gives the promise of eternal life beyond this life is what the Good Shepherd does.

He promises us eternal life—“My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.” (John 10: 27-28) In Psalm 23:6 the Lord as Your Shepherd blesses and guides us — “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

Let me finish with this... Isaac Watts was an influential Dissenting minister and poet in England. A Dissenter was a Protestant living in England during the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth centuries who did not follow the Church of England. Watts was born in 1674 and died in 1748. He has 13 hymns in our Presbyterian Glory to God hymnal. His best known hymn is “Joy to the World”.

Watts aimed to make the Psalms more accessible and relevant to Christian worship by paraphrasing them and often used rhyme to drive home his point. I want to draw your attention to another of his hymns... Pick up your hymnal and turn to Hymn #803, “My Shepherd Will Supply My Need” and let’s read out loud together the third and final verse:

*Your sure provisions gracious God  
attend me all my days;  
oh, may your house be my abode,  
and all my work be praise.  
Here would I find a settled rest,  
while a others go and come;  
no more a stranger, nor a guest,  
but like a child at home.*

**The Good Shepherd brings us safely home...He brings us to his home where we are his family!**

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