I AM the Good Shepherd

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

Good morning and happy Sunday ! In this sermon series from the gospel of John I am focusing on Jesus great “I Am” passages. “I Am” is the name of God revealed to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus YHWH known as the tetragrammaton. It is clearly a claim to be God incarnate. The Jews or pharisees hated this claim so much they picked up stones to kill Jesus on the spot. Obviously they knew what he was claiming. It is a hard teaching to accept because Jesus is fully God fully man. However, it is in the bible from first to last beginning to ending. So far, we studied the wonderful passages John 8 where Jesus claimed “before Abraham was born I am” the eternal one and John 6 “I am the Bread of life.” The eternal come down from heaven to give his life for the life of the world. In today’s beautiful passage let’s think about Jesus claim “I am the Good shepherd.” May we come to understand the depths of his love or us more and more.

**I The Shepherd Sheep Relationship**

This chapter is a continuation of the previous one. In john 9, Jesus healed a man born blind on the Sabbath. Although the work of God was displayed in the man’s life, the Pharisees refused to accept Jesus. Instead they even tried to pressure the man to deny Jesus. The Pharisees were bad shepherds. In contrast, Jesus, the Good Shepherd risked His life to help this man. The man born blind recognized the voice of the Good Shepherd and worshipped Jesus. Jesus wanted to heal the Pharisees from their spiritual blindness so that they might know him. He rebuked them in love in the hope they would accept him as the Good Shepherd and learn from him. By studying this passage, we can learn how Jesus became the Good Shepherd. May God help us to personally accept that Jesus is our Good Shepherd, listen to his voice, follow his example, and have life to the full. We also pray that we may grow in Jesus’ Image and come to understand and know God’s flock, just as Jesus does this for us.

 ***“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice.***

* Jesus begins his message by comparing thieves and robbers with the shepherd.
* The religious leaders were thieves and robbers. They cared nothing for the man born blind and they tried to steal his joy. They tried to rob him of the new life and salvation that He had just received from Jesus.
* Instead of coming through the gate for the sheep to help, serve, and take care of God’s sheep, these religious leaders came over the fence, climbing in and frightening the sheep by trying to exercise their power and authority over them, even casting him out from the society.
* There were two kinds of sheep pens. The first kind was ***a communal sheep pen.***
* When the weather was cold, shepherds brought the sheep into the sheep pen after they had grazed in the open fields.
* A watchman would guard the gate. When morning came, the shepherd would arrive. The watchman would open the door.
* The shepherd knows his sheep. He calls them out, goes before them, and they follow him.
* The principle here is that there is a door, a **proper** way to gain entry. Not everyone who stands among the sheep enters the sheep pen in the right way. Some climb in some other way.
* The religious leaders gained their place among God's people in and through personal and political connections, through formal education, through ambition, manipulation, and corruption. All leaders act out of self interest without Jesus. A leader may even be deluded to think they are altruistic but because all people are corrupted and have total depravity apart from Jesus they cannot be a good shepherd. They claim to be acting on the sheeps best interest and lure them with false promises and hopes but with a hidden purpose to take advantage. Only the one who enters through the gate can be trusted by the sheep.
* He who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep: A true shepherd comes ***in the designed and legitimate way***: through love, calling, care, genuine, and sacrificial service.
* He enters through the gate. This shows that He has nothing to hide and his motives are crystal clear.
* His motive is to take care of the sheep. His concern is only for the sheep’s well being. entering the sheep pen through the legitimate and intended way. **Only with Jesus the Good Shepherd living in us and through us can we have such a pure motive** and eventually the sheep will come to recognise this even though conditioned to believe everyone’s motives are selfish.

 How does a shepherd lead his own sheep?

***V3b-4 He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.***

* In Jesus’ time, raising sheep was a major industry for the people living in rural areas.
* It was common to see shepherds with their sheep, as they lead them to graze in the field.
* But the picture here is that God is the shepherd, and we are His sheep. God’s heart is that of a shepherd who takes care of the sheep.
* Sheep are woolly, fluffy, and cute creatures who mostly think about eating. They are defenseless creatures, nearsighted, and not very smart.
* Sometimes they get lost as they are searching for more grass in the field. They are easy prey for hungry wolves.
* Sheep are also known to wander easily or to fall in a hole or off a cliff.
* In short, sheep really need a shepherd to lead them, guide them, and protect them.
* In the Bible, we are compared to sheep and Jesus is our Shepherd.

Isaiah 53:6 says,

**“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way…”**

Psalm 100:3 says,

**“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 95:7 says,

**“For he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.”**

* The point is that **we are sheep**. This is not terminology exclusive to UBF. Rather it’s a Biblical term. We are sheep in God’s eyes.
* Sheep need the shepherd. Sheep need a shepherd to lead them, guide them, help them, watch over them, and protect them.
* Jesus is our Good Shepherd. We need his care, protection, & leading.
* However, there are many people, even inside the church who vehemently say, “I am my own man! I don’t need anyone’s help! I don’t need anyone’s guidance!”
* They deny God, thinking they can take care of themselves. However, those who think that way are **wandering sheep.**
* Such people become slaves of their sins and slaves of anxiety and fear. When a person denies that he needs the Good Shepherd Jesus, he becomes a restless wanderer going from one activity to the next and going from one relationship to the next.
* As long as we recognize that we need Jesus as our Shepherd, then we can have a deep sense of security and peace.
* As long as sheep have a shepherd, they are safe and sound.
* This is why each of us must come to recognize that we are sheep who need his love, care, and guidance. It is a humble heart attitude.
* Jesus always viewed people as sheep who need a shepherd. It is because we were created that way to have a shepherd sheep relationship with God.

Mark 6:34 says

**“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.”**

***V3b He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.***

* Jesus knows us personally as the shepherd has a personal connection with the sheep.
* When Jesus calls us by name, he knows everything about us.
* He knows us better then we know even ourselves.
* Because Jesus knows us by name and knows where we are and where we go; he even knows our thoughts. That’s what omniscience is. Sometimes I’m thinking a thought and out o the blue the Holy Spirit falls on me. I am reminded in awe that Jesus is reading my mind all the time. Knowing this, we can have complete trust and security in Him, that He is watching over us and is with us all the time.
* Everyone wants someone who knows them and understands them. One major complaint among spouses is their saying that, ‘You don’t understand me!” Jesus knows us and Jesus understands us. This is why we should come to trust him as our shepherd and learn to listen very carefully to his voice.
* When we do this, He will begin to lead us and show us the way out of our lives of sin. He will lead us into a fruitful and blessed life of faith.

***He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.***

* The shepherd leads them, providing direction and leadership - without driving the sheep.
* Likewise, Jesus does not force or push us as pigs which were pushed from behind with a stick. Rather he leads us through His sacrificial example, leading the way, going ahead of us. Praise Jesus!
* The shepherd merely gave his distinctive call, and his sheep came out, following him out of the sheepfold. Sheep are experts at discerning their shepherd’s voice.
* During World War I, some soldiers tried to steal a flock of sheep from a hillside near Jerusalem.
* The sleeping shepherd awoke to find his flock being driven off. He couldn’t recapture them by force, so he called out to his flock with his distinctive voice.
* The sheep listened and returned to their rightful owner. The sheep could not be stopped from returning to their shepherd when they heard his voice.

1-4, Why don’t sheep follow a stranger? (5)

***But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”***

Sheep are experts who can discern their shepherd’s voice for,,, it is a matter of life and death.

* Likewise**, we** need to learn to recognize Jesus’ voice. Jesus speaks through the Bible, and through his servants who bring us the word of God.
* If we are his sheep, we will learn **to humbly listen to his voice**. We will be able to discern what is Good for us and Bad or us according to his voice.
* We will begin to be able to follow Jesus.
* When we were invited to Bible study by our Bible teachers, at first we could **hardly** discern what kind of voice it was speaking to us through the Bible. I we were honest with our conscience we followed.
* As we continued in Bible studies, we **gradually** recognized Jesus’ voice through the Word of God and through our shepherd’s gentle rebuke.
* This got our attention and we came to know that it was God speaking personally to us through the Bible. Upon hearing God’s voice, we repented of our sins before God, and were born again.
* That is why we are compelled to go out and invite others to one to one Bible study.

 **6-10 Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. 7 Therefore Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.** What did Jesus declare about himself?

 (7, 9a) ***Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 9 I am the gate.***

* The shepherd is the gate. In Jesus’ day, there was another kind of sheep pen used in the countryside.
* It was a rough circle of rocks piled up to be a wall, with a small opening. The shepherd would bring his sheep there at night.
* Since there was no door or gate, the shepherd would sleep at the opening, literally becoming the door to keep sheep in and predators out. Jesus said “I am the Gate.”
* The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. By his death on the cross and resurrection **Jesus became the Gate to eternal life, forgiveness of sins, and the kingdom of heaven for all who put their trust in him. He is the only way.**

John 14:6 says,

**“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.”**

Acts 4:12 says:

**“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” Amen ?**

So then ,who are thieves and robbers? (8)

***8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them.***

* Thief implies deception and trickery; robber implies violence and destruction. These take away life. They are the con men of the spiritual world. ***v9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.***

II The Abundant Life

* We all want full life. This kind of life might be a successful life. It might be a materially wealthy life. But these things are not really as they appear.
* Without Jesus, even such things as material wealth and worldly success, leave us empty. The **full life** Jesus is talking about here is **life with him**.
* By believing in Jesus as our shepherd, our **cup overflows**. If he is in our hearts and we are having fellowship with Him and serving Him, then we are experiencing the full life with him.
* "The Greek word for 'abundance,' *perissos*, has a mathematical meaning and generally denotes a surplus.
* The **abundant life** is above all the **contented life**, in which our contentment is based upon the fact that God is able to **supply all our needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."**

Ephesians 1:8, 9 says,

**“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace**8**that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding”**

1 Timothy 6:6 says,

**“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”**

* Thus, an abundant life isn't necessarily an especially long life,or an easy, comfortable life, but a life of **satisfaction and contentment** in Jesus.

**11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 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. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.**

Lets think about why Jesus is the Good Shepherd

**III I AM the Good Shepherd**

***“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.***

* Jesus is the good shepherd because he gave his life for unworthy sinners who did not love him, worship him, or care about him.
* In verses 11-18, the words, “I lay down my life for the sheep”, is repeated five times.

 From the beginning of his life on this earth, Jesus was already laying down his life for us. He did it first by leaving heaven and coming to be born in a manger, the humblest place. He lived a very poor life in a country that was under Roman occupation.

* He went out of his way to help the **most** unlovable people. He served the despised and rejected people. He gave his life, with hopes that they would somehow recognize his unconditional love.
* He healed a paralyzed man on the Sabbath. By doing so, he risked his life.
* He could scarcely do anything because they repeatedly rejected him. They even tried to drive him off a cliff and kill him.
* Though Jesus came to serve and not be served, it seemed the sheep were very unthankful. We have tasted this unthankulness through shepherding Bible students or by parenting our children. It’s hard to be unconditional in our love and service.
* However, Jesus is the good shepherd because his love is unconditional. Jesus is the good shepherd for he lays down his life for the sheep.
* Jesus never gave up when the sheep were slow to understand.
* He kept teaching the disciples the meaning of his coming by telling them about his suffering, death and resurrection.
* Even though they did not understand what he was saying, he kept telling them again and again.
* Even though they had their own ideas and plans, Jesus was patient with them to the end.
* Jesus said on the cross, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” Jesus teaches us how to love **unconditionally**

How is the hired hand different from the shepherd?

***V12-13 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. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.***

* The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. His motives are for his **own** benefit. He cares more about his paycheque than the sheep. when it appears that his life will be in danger he runs away. Those who do not know Jesus personally are fake shepherds and blind guides. Not all, but many leaders in the church are like this because they just wanted a noble career and good job. This actually sounds reasonable and even noble but in light of Jesus teaching they are the hired hand and cant actually be a shepherd who loves the sheep enough to sacrifice and meet danger. In the hour of testing they run away to save themselves because they are only in the business of shepherding for personal gain.
* **But Jesus is the good shepherd and the only good shepherd because he alone died and shed his life-giving blood on the cross to save us and give us everlasting life.**
* He did not do anything for his personal gain and profit. It was all for us. No one else could do this.
* Godly people can lead us to come to know God. But Godly people cannot be the one to give us salvation.
* Therefore no one can say that they are a good shepherd. There is only one good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

 Why does Jesus declare himself again as the good shepherd? (14, 15)

***14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.***

* Here the verbs “know” or “knows” are repeated four times.
* Let us think about how much our Shepherd Jesus knows each of us and how we as His sheep know Him.
* **First,** **The Good Shepherd(Jesus) knows the sheep(us)**. He knows our needs, our wounds, our hearts, and our desires.
* Jesus knew that the man born blind was bound with chains of fatalism. Everyone, including the blind man himself, thought that he was blind because of some sin for which he was being punished.
* But Jesus told him that it was not because someone sinned, but that God wanted to display His own work, His love, power, and mercy through his life.
* Upon receiving this word from Jesus, hope and vision was born in the man’s heart. The Good Shepherd knows each sheep by name. Each one is **unique** and **specially loved**.
* The Good Shepherd knows the character and needs, the weaknesses and strengths, the sins, failures, and victories of each one.
* He loves them. He knows them because he created them. There is a relationship of love that binds the sheep and Shepherd together.
* This union with Christ is the **work of the Holy Spirit**. He knows our individual name - everything about each of us.

**He loves you and he proved it by dying for you**. He invites all of us to hear his voice, to come into his sheep pen, and to have **abundant life.**

* **Secondly,** we learned that even though sheep do not know much, the **one thing** they do know is **the voice** of their **shepherd**.
* In Greek, there are two words for the verb “know:” one is “ginosko,” and the other is “oida”.
* “Ginosko” refers to the knowledge which comes through learning or experience (a posteriori knowledge).
* “Oida” refers to “a priori knowledge, so called inborn or innate knowledge.
* Sheep know nothing, but God gave them inborn knowledge to know the voice of their shepherd. So sheep follow their shepherd, hearing their shepherd’s voice.
* To “know” also implies an intimate personal relationship. It is different than to “know about.” Jesus said in John 17 that eternal life is to **know** the Father and **to know** Jesus the Son.
* Faithful leaders will display the same characteristics as the Good Shepherd. They will sacrifice for the sheep, know the sheep, and be known by them.

Hebrews 13:7, 17, 20

**“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”**

**“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”**

**“Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,**21**equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”**

* That is also why we respect and continually pray for our Pastor Joshua and missionary Sarah to know each of us with Jesus’ shepherd heart.
* The title *pastor* translates the same ancient Greek word used here for shepherd. Shepherd is Pastor1
* Peter recognized the value of being shepherds after Jesus’ heart and encouraged others to grow as shepherds.

**1 Peter 5:2 says,**

**“Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve”**

* We need to know our sheep and children and their inner agonies. We also need to find the way for them to know us in Jesus and be united in love.
* May the Lord richly bless our prayers to know each other reciprocally through accepting Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. Amen.

So then, Why is it important for us to know Jesus and to be known by Jesus?

* We are living in the age of information and data. Society teaches us to pursue all forms of knowledges such as how to keep up with technology and acquiring business skills.
* However nothing is more important than knowing Jesus and being known by Jesus for it has to do with **our eternal life**.
* John 17:3 says, “Now this is eternal life: that they **know you**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

So How do you think Jesus’ ‘laying down His life’ is related to ‘knowing the Father’? (15b)

***V 15b I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.***

* Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was by his own decision.
* The work of Jesus as the Good Shepherd was rooted in His unity with God the Father. It was done out of love and as an example for us. He was not a victim of cruel fate. He suffered and bled and gave his life for us so that we might inherit eternal life. I am Jesus' sheep - not because I have done anything to deserve being Jesus’ sheep but because he died on the cross for me. Praise Jesus!

**V6-18 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.**17**The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again.**18**No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”**

This is also an example or us. God loves us when we **willingly** lay down our lives as a **living sacrifice** to care for and feed his sheep out of love and gratitude or what Jesus has done or us.

***v16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen.***

* Jesus is referring to the Gentile world. He is thinking of the whole world where people are waiting to hear the news that God loves them.
* Jesus said that He must bring these sheep also, who would hear His voice.

***I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.***

When we studied Titus 2 and shepherd Ian delivered his message, I was deeply moved by Gods loving purpose and hearts desire to “purify for himself a people that are his **very own** eager to do what is good.” Titus :14b God **really** wants this and has always wanted this. He established Israel from the seed of Abraham for this, but they broke his heart. Now for 2000 years he has been calling a people from among all the gentiles that are his very own. When Jesus returns ultimately there will be one shepherd from all the called ones of Israel and all the called ones from the gentiles and we will be one flock with one shepherd living in the abundant life of the shepherd sheep relationship beyond what we can even imagine. He will surely do it just as Jesus prayed that all of his disciples might be one as the Father and Son are one. No one is coercing you no one is trying to control you or manipulate you. Jesus is calling you. **Softly and tenderly** Jesus is calling, calling O sinner come home.