



## What Did Jesus Do? He Cared for People

### *This week's Scripture passage* *John 10:7-18*

<sup>7</sup> Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.

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

<sup>9</sup> I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.

<sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

<sup>11</sup> "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

<sup>14</sup> "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—

<sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again.

<sup>18</sup> 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 Week's Message  
August 23, 2020

*What Did Jesus Do?*  
*He Cared for People*

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

John 10:11  
(New International Version)

On Sunday I will continue the series of messages titled *What Did Jesus Do?* For this message, we will remain in John's gospel. The Scripture text – John 10:7-18 – contains one of the most famous images of Jesus, that of the Good Shepherd. In verse 11 Jesus says, *I am the good shepherd.*

Jesus used a lot of analogies to help his followers understand what he sought to teach them. Using the everyday language of sheep and a shepherd was an effective way for him to communicate one of the most fundamental aspects of his ministry – care for people. In fact, the title of *pastor* is derived from the Latin word *pastor* (that's easy to remember, isn't it?), which means *shepherd*. Central to the work of any pastor is what we call *pastoral care*, which has been very challenging during this pandemic.

As we read the gospels, we find that Jesus demonstrated his care in two primary ways. First, Jesus took issue with the people and the systems that made life difficult for so many who lived during his ministry. Jesus was often critical, for instance, of the religious leaders because of their disdain of ordinary people and for the way in which their actions made life difficult. An example of this would

*Questions to Consider –*

\* What has been the hardest part of the pandemic for you?

\* What ways have you found to help you cope with the stress that has come with the pandemic? How has your faith and spiritual practices – such as prayer and the study of Scripture – helped you?

\* Would you say that the pandemic has strengthened your faith, or caused it to waver? What questions has it raised in your mind about faith and about the way that God operates?

\* If someone asked you how to keep their faith strong during this time, what would you say to them? Are there particular Scripture verses you would point them to? Are there Biblical characters that you find to be helpful and would recommend? Job, perhaps?

\* Jesus used the analogy of sheep and shepherds on more than one occasion, as it resonated with his listeners. He told the parable of the lost sheep, for instance, in Luke 15:1-7. If you were to choose an analogy that would be in keeping with our times, what might it be?

be when Jesus overturned the tables of the moneychangers in the temple and the benches of the merchants who operated there (Mark 11:15-17). The moneychangers and merchants took advantage of the many pilgrims who came to the temple, and Jesus was greatly angered by their actions. To protect people from unfair treatment is certainly a way of demonstrating care for them. Second, Jesus cared for people by comforting and strengthening them. His well-known words, *come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30). The gospels are packed with stories that tell of Jesus comforting and strengthening the weary and the burdened.

Living in a time of pandemic – and all of its attendant problems – has placed a great deal of stress and anxiety upon people. Even among those who have not been affected economically and among those who have remained healthy, there is much stress.

How do we care for one another in such a time as this? I struggle with that question, and I have struggled to find an adequate answer to that question throughout these months of the pandemic. In my almost forty years of ministry, this has been the longest stretch I have experienced of not visiting in hospitals, in nursing homes, in assisted living facilities, and in homes. As those visits are a cornerstone of pastoral ministry, I have struggled to find ways to continue pastoral care when those opportunities have been removed. While I am grateful for the technology that allows us to remain connected, it is not the same as in-person contact. On Sunday mornings, before and after worship, it is not the same to talk to one another from a distance, and while wearing masks. While we understand it to be a necessity, the everyday adjustments required of us take their toll on us in many ways.

But we continue on, and we do so with the assurance that Jesus is the good shepherd to us today, just as he was 2,000 years ago.

We'll talk more about this on Sunday, in person and via livestream, at 10:00 a.m. I hope you are having a good week, and as always, God bless you!