

20200503 (4th Sunday of Easter)

Psalm 23, John 10:1-10

Live life of the good shepherd

INTRODUCTION

1 Qualities of the Cowboy (Cowboy Preacher, Mar 3, 2005)

They were never looking for trouble. But when trouble came, they faced it with courage.

They were always on the side of right. They defended good people against bad people.

They spoke their minds and they spoke the truth, regardless of what people thought or "political correctness," which no one had ever heard of back then.

They were respected. When they walked into a saloon (where they usually drank only sarsaparilla), the place became quiet, and the bad guys kept their distance.

They always won. They always got their man. In victory, they rode off into the sunset.



2 Qualities of the Shepherd

Sounds familiar? We have seen this cowboy in the old western movies.

But we have also encountered a Cowboy from early 1st century Israel.

Jesus Christ has shown the qualities of the Cowboy.

We know Jesus is the only appropriate Good Shepherd.

However, we sometimes refer to ordained clergy as pastors or shepherds.

But as followers of Christ, we are required to be good shepherds as well.

Theme: Who are your sheep amid COVID-19? What are the qualities required of you as the good shepherds?

BODY

1 Good shepherds know their sheep.

1.1 Knowing English names as a Korean

One of the most difficult things for me is to remember and call the names of my congregational members. As a Korean, Caucasian people look the same to me (I guess it is same for you^^). Thus, it is extremely hard to recognize faces and remember names. In addition, there are many Davids, Janes, and Marys in our congregations. Having worshipped together for almost two years I can figure out who is who.

1.2 To call each sheep's name requires time, attention and care

Shepherds in the Middle East have names for their sheep.

I believe you have names for your dogs, cats, and horses.

Imagine that your pet was in a group of many animals, you would probably call out their name. Then as they came running to you, you would recognize them as yours.



Who are your sheep?

It would be your family, friends, coworkers, neighbours, etc.

Q: How can you distinguish them from other's?

A: Having developed a personal connection with the sheep, you can identify them.

You pay attention to the food your sheep consume.

You care for them when they are sick.

You take the time and energy to build genuine relationships with them.

“In this Gospel, Jesus calls the following ‘sheep’ by name, Philip, Mary of Magdalene, Thomas, and Simon Peter; and on each occasion it is a turning-point in the disciple’s life.”
(J.G. Tasker)

2 Good shepherds stay close with their sheep.

2.1 Learning to stay close to God amid stress

Several years ago, I learned that my friend in Korea suffered from severe depression for two years.

His doctor told him. "It is from stress, and you need to learn how to control it."

At first, he was somewhat embarrassed as a minister to have such an issue.

But he accepted that stress was part of life's journey, and that the Lord was still with him.

He told me, "During this period, I have been closer to God and learned the Lord is restoring my soul."



2.2 Good shepherds stay along with us

"Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me" (Ps 23:4, NLT)

We do not know what is around the next corner in our lives.

We may have something unexpected and troubling occur tomorrow.

Last May, you and I never thought COVID-19 would suddenly break out and greatly change our lives.

But as Psalm 23:4 teaches us, even when we are walking through troubled times, we are not alone. The Good Shepherd walks along with us.

The trouble in the valley drives us closer to the shepherd and brings us a deeper intimacy with him.

3. Good shepherds sacrifice their lives for the welfare of sheep

3.1 Sacrifice for his sheep

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11, NLT).

Jesus repeats about laying down his life for the sheep (10: 11, 15, 17-18).

It means Jesus made an incredible choice to sacrifice himself for the welfare of his sheep. Around 2000 years ago, Jesus decided to leave heaven, enter our world, and die on the cross for our welfare/salvation.

3.2 Korean Documentary, Man-in-Black: Rev. Tae-Woo Lee

In 2003, pastor Tae-woo Lee chose to move to North Philadelphia, probably the most dangerous neighborhood in the city, according to police.

Instead of starting a church, Lee has essentially been a pastor to his neighbors: drug dealers, homeless squatters, families, businesspeople, and especially the children.

He has shoveled snow for the elderly in the winter.

He has turned the entire block into a camp for kids in the summer.

He has handed out turkeys at Thanksgiving.

He has visited members of his “parish” in the hospital.

And, when needed, he has accompanied them to court.



He has willingly experienced personal sacrifice for the benefit of those he serves.

CONCLUSION

Jesus is the good shepherd.

He knows us. He never leaves us. He sacrifices for us.

As Jesus shows us a better way to live, let us live the qualities of life required to the good shepherds during COVID-19.

“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need” (Ps 23:1, NLT).

Thanks be to God. Amen.