

God the Shepherd

Children's Chapel, St. Mark's Palo Alto | April 25, 2021
Supplemental materials for <https://youtu.be/2WEELoCpEPM>

Lectionary Reading:

John 10:11-18 Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

Theological Background

The image of Christians as "sheep" in God's beloved "flock" is a common one, though often twisted and misinterpreted. In this context, being a "sheep" doesn't mean being mindless chattel - it means being loved, cherished, and cared for.

In Jesus's time, sheep and other livestock were common parts of daily life. Most people were familiar with the way that a shepherd (someone who takes care of sheep) had to be attentive to the sheep's needs, protect them from pests and predators, feed and water them, and tend to them with constant, gentle care.

To be a sheep in a good shepherd's flock meant that you were loved, and that you always had someone trustworthy and competent who could help you with any trouble you were in. It meant that you would be missed if you disappeared, and that if you got lost, you'd be pursued and brought back to the flock. This is the type of love God has for us: constant, attentive, tender, and unfailing.

Go Deeper!

Talk with your child about the story of Shrek the sheep, who ran away to a place in the wilderness where his shepherd couldn't take care of him. He grew so much wool that he could hardly see, and he was very dirty. You can see some videos about Shrek and other sheep with similar stories here:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWf_S_LhV34
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlxLxzu8TRU>

Why do you think the sheep ran away? Why do you think he came back? What makes us want to “run away” from God? What makes us want to “come back” to God?

Have you ever taken care of an animal? How did you feel about that animal? What would you do if that animal was scared? Cold? Hungry? Hurt?

The care you felt for that animal is sort of like how God cares about us. How does it feel to know that God loves you like that?

Jesus talked about sheep and shepherds because the people he was talking to knew a lot about sheep and shepherds. If you were trying to explain God's love to a modern day person just like yourself, what examples might you use?

Do you or your child connect to worship experiences through music? Here are some songs about Christ as our good shepherd:

- Good Shepherd - Vineyard Worship <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ddy6ta4e9I>
- Shepherd - Amanda Cook <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVjedGudN8w>
- Good Shepherd - Mercy Hill Worship https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-iA-hjMz_bc