

March
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the good
shepherd

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Introduction

This week, we examine Jesus' proclamation that he is the Good Shepherd in John 10. In this chapter, we read the Savior's words where He compares Himself to this common laborer. This is not the first instance in which a shepherd plays a key role in the events recorded by scripture. Consider David, who's long, lonely hours of herding animals on the open range prepare him to become a conqueror and king. As he prepares to fight the great Goliath of the Philistines, David hearkens back to the victories over a lion and a bear. Fast forward to the time of Jesus' birth, when a delegation of angels visits the shepherds in the fields around Bethlehem. These lowly nomads are charged with spreading the news of this remarkable message of God's visit to planet earth. Fast forward to 1947, when in an ironic twist, a group of Bedouin shepherds unearth the most significant finding in Biblical archaeology, the Dead Sea Scrolls. Of all the occupations to choose from, Jesus uses the shepherd to illustrate God's unsurpassed love for lost souls.

Discussion

Read John 10:1-16. Then discuss the following.

1. The first role of a shepherd is to lead the animals under his care. From verses 3-5, how does the shepherd coax the sheep to follow him? From this analogy, how do we know when God is speaking to us? What are some ways we can tune in to God's voice rather than be misled by the voice of a "stranger"?
2. A shepherd must also protect his sheep from thieves and wild animals. Who is Jesus referring to when he speaks of thieves and wild wolves in verses 7, 10 and 12? How does Jesus foretell His death on our behalf in verses 11 and 14? From Luke 15:3-7, what shepherd's analogy does Jesus use to portray His love for every person?
3. A third responsibility of the shepherd is to feed and nurture his flock. In what ways did Jesus spiritually feed His followers while He walked the earth? How do we tap into this same resource in our daily walk? When Jesus challenges Peter in John 21:17 with the question "Do you love me?", He instructs Peter to "Feed my sheep." How can we extend Christ's love to others in our spheres of influence?

Think About It

We hear that unmistakable thump as the plane door closes. The flight attendant reminds us to buckle our seatbelts and store belongings under the seats. The massive jet engines rev up, and we take notice as the pilot releases the brakes and the plane lurches forward. Looking out the windows, we see the surrounding structures moving past as we taxi to the main runway. Then, in a moment of anticipation, we sink back into the seat as the plane accelerates to its critical takeoff speed. It might never cross our minds that every sequence of this takeoff, and the eventual landing that follows it, is being directed by a distant voice. By following the firm and calm instructions of the air traffic controller, our pilot ensures this will be a safe and timely voyage. Now consider - are we listening to God's voice as we embark on our daily journey?

Do Something

1. Find a quiet place in nature this week and read Psalm 23. Consider how you can follow Christ in the same way a lamb follows its shepherd throughout the mountains and valleys of life. Then commit to integrate this approach into your rhythms.
2. Thinking back to your discussion about Jesus' charge to Peter in Question 3, and ask God to impress someone on your heart you can minister to this week. Are they hurting in a relationship, suffering health issues, struggling with finances or troubled by challenges in the workplace or classroom? Seek to touch them in a practical way to help them get through this time.