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SERMON TITLE: Jesus' True Identity Revealed
SCRIPTURE: 1 Chronicles 11:1-3, Isaiah 40:9-14
DATE November 27, 2022
Online service at www.fpcd.org/live

Read also Luke 2:8-18, *The Message*

Shepherders work pretty much 24/7. There they were, in the middle of the night tending their sheep. They were herd watching all night long.

It is like a new mother who lies down in bed each night but always with one ear attuned to her baby's cry. Sleeping, but knowing that she is "on call" for that midnight feeding. And then again at 3 a.m.

A shepherd's occupation is like that: vigilance.

At the same time watching for danger, from the elements and from predators. That's like a father. You know how a little boy when threatened by the neighborhood bully says, "I'm getting my dad—he can beat up your dad!" There's the sense of security, strength, and support. Shepherders are like that; carrying a rod along with their staff. The rod is the weapon he uses to ward off predatory animals and thieves. The lethal mallet has sharp points all around.

Shepherders are responsible for every area of herd life—settling them down in lush pastures to eat; leading them to still water; retrieving the ones who wander from the fold; rescuing the ones with his staff who fall into a crevice.

Sometimes the animal is so traumatized by falling into a hole that it cannot stand, and the shepherd has to hoist it up on his shoulders and carry it back to the fold.

This is why the Psalmist wrote, "your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

Sheep have no defenses. While a dog growls and bites and a cat bites and scratches and both can run fast; while a bear can crush, claw, and chase its prey, a sheep can only butt someone with its head—and it can outrun no one.

To shepherd is a verb; it is constant action. To be a shepherd is a noun; someone expressing constant carefulness, commitment, and care.

What shepherd imagery in the Bible comes to your mind?

God said about his "flock," that is, his people,
"I will set shepherds over them who will shepherd them,
And they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed,

Neither shall any be missing" (Jer 23:4).

Let's read how God did just that. READ 1 Chronicles 11:1-3
Then all Israel gathered before David at Hebron and told him, "We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, even when Saul was king, you were the one who really led the forces of Israel. And the LORD your God told you, 'You will be the shepherd of my people Israel. You will be the leader of my people Israel.'" So there at Hebron, David made a covenant before the LORD with all the elders of Israel. And they anointed him king of Israel, just as the LORD had promised through Samuel.

King David, whose occupation was shepherd, became king. This is an amazing stretch. He was a shepherd (noun) who would shepherd (verb) God's people.

To be a shepherd of God's people is both noun and verb. It is both "being"—and "doing."

David was a shepherd who shepherded people. He often gives the victory to the Lord, who helped him defeat lions and bears who threatened his flock (1 Sam 17:37). David writes, "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want." The victory of the shepherd was the victory of the king.

Jesus' ancestry reads:

"Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife" (Matthew 1:5-6).

King David had a checkered past, but as he wrote in Psalm 23:3, "[The Lord who is my shepherd] *brings me back/he causes me to repent*.¹ He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

God, as David's shepherd, took full responsibility for David's need for repentance. Thus, God confronted him about his affair with Bathsheba and led him out of the danger of collapse as king to the return to "paths of righteousness." He was able to carry on as king.

Do you ever get in over your head? Do you even fall into sin? God will help you as you respond to God's correction. Repentance leads to forgiveness which leads to restoration "for his name's sake." This is good news!

¹ This is the Aramaic and Syriac translation of the Hebrew text.

From the beginning of the Old Testament God has not given up on us. God continues to work to bring God's plan to fruition, step-by-step. God's plan is Jesus.

The shepherd, then, is the image; he is a multitasked person who cares for those entrusted to him. We have a beautiful picture of it throughout the Old Testament, including shepherds who do a terrible job.

In the Old Testament the leaders of Israel are also called bad shepherds. Some were religious; some were governmental leaders. It did not matter; when they are bad, the Bible exposes them. This happens now—how many fallen leaders have we seen, both political and in the church. God has high standards and the only way to keep those standards is to expose the bad shepherds.

Regardless, God is preparing for the best! Let's hear it. READ Isaiah 40:9-14

O Zion, messenger of good news, shout from the mountain tops! Shout it louder, O Jerusalem. Shout, and do not be afraid. Tell the towns of Judah, "Your God is coming!" Yes, the Sovereign LORD is coming in power. He will rule with a powerful arm. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes. He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young. Who else has held the oceans in his hand? Who has measured off the heavens with his fingers? Who else knows the weight of the earth or has weighed the mountains and hills on a scale? Who is able to advise the Spirit of the LORD? Who knows enough to give him advice or teach him? Has the LORD ever needed anyone's advice? Does he need instruction about what is good? Did someone teach him what is right or show him the path of justice?

Take note of this passage: God's shepherd has worldwide creator experience; God's shepherd has borne the weight of the world; God's shepherd has wisdom regarding goodness; you need NO OTHER AUTHORITY than God's shepherd.

But, don't miss this one verse: he brings his reward with him as he comes (v. 10b)

We are the Shepherd's reward. He came to gain his reward!

Isaiah tells us that God's Shepherd came to bear our sins—like a shepherd who rescues the wandering sheep from a ravine:

At the cost of his life, so we are whole
At the pain of his suffering, our bruises in life are healed
At his humiliation, we are given light and life.

Scripture says we are like sheep who wander off. But JESUS RESCUES US because we are his reward. You come to fullness in Him! You are who he wants with him! (Col 2)

Think about it this way. If your pets were in trouble, would you rescue them? How about your children? Your spouse? Can you always rescue people no matter what? NO! Of course not.

- There are sicknesses you cannot heal;
- addictions you cannot break;
- disenfranchisements that break down relationships; and

→ hurts you cannot always overcome.

Only Jesus has the power to overcome all these things because Jesus holds the weight of the world in his hands. Jesus shepherds you.

Do you have a vision of Jesus' true identity? God fully committed to shepherding us even before getting the relationship established through Jesus.

You are God's treasured possession, given to Jesus as his reward.

Once Jesus told the story of the shepherd who owned a large flock of sheep. When even one of them got lost, the shepherd went to find it. And then when he found it, he held it close and carried it home— so happy to have it safely back he even called his friends and neighbors to celebrate with him.

Sometimes a ewe has a baby with a problem and she rejects her baby. It is called a bummer lamb. The shepherd will keep the rejected lamb with him and hand-feed it, wrap it in warm blankets and hold it close so the lamb can hear his heartbeat. This strengthens the lamb so it can be returned to the flock. When the shepherd calls, which sheep do you think runs to him first? Yes, the one he intimately cared for, who knows him best and trusts him.

Jesus said that the happiness over these victories extend even to the angels in heaven; who rejoice over God's victory.

Imagine a whole stadium full in heaven rejoicing over you when you reconnect with God's true Shepherd, who is Jesus.

This season of Advent, are you looking for the true identity of Jesus, and will you respond to Him? That's what Advent means. Make yourself ready, for he loves you 24/7.

AMEN

Luke 2:8-18, *The Message*

Eugene Peterson

There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger." At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to all men and women on earth who please him. As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherds were impressed.