

Wesley United Methodist Church

May 7, 2017

“No Need to Worry.”

John 10:1-18, 27-30

Many people worry in life. The truth of the matter is, if you just look around you, you realize that we all have reasons to worry. I mean you have to stay out of the sun, because it can cause skin cancer. Air vents in public places can cause lung clotting molds to form in your body. Potato chips have too many carbs and too many vitamins can be toxic. Think about this—why do they call an airport a terminal? Why is it the pilot has to say just before you are about to land, “We are about to make our final approach?” Why can’t he say, “We are about to make our semi-final approach?” Think about this—the flight attendant will say, “Stay seated until the airplane has reached a complete stop.” What other kind of stop is there? Do you have fractional stops? Partial stops?

We all have worries. The question I want to ask you is, “What are you going to do about your worries?” You find in your bulletin a small card I want you to write your biggest worries on it. When you come up to the communion table, you will find a bucket to put them in. If you think about it, you can really only do one of two things; you can try to handle your worries yourself or you can let someone else handle them for you. We know how to do that with some things. We let a bank worry about keeping our money. We let a financial planner worry about planning our retirement. We let a doctor handle diagnosing and treating our illness.

What about the worry of a marriage that is on the rocks? What about the worry of children who you suspect are doing drugs? What about the worry finding your purpose in life before your life is over? What about the worry of death? What about the worry of eternal destiny? The truth of the matter is, there are a lot of worries that you can’t handle and that is where God comes in, because believe it or not, God will handle all of your worries if you will let him. How do I know that? Because he said so. “Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about what happens to you.” (1 Peter 5:7). Let me summarize what this verse really says. Your worries matter to God because you matter to God. Indeed, this verse tells us that our worries are actually a sign that we matter to God.

Today we are going to see that God wants to take care of you just as a shepherd takes care of sheep. Several times Jesus made an “I am” statement that absolutely astounded the people who heard it. “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep” (John 10:11). I have no doubt that if we take a vote this “I am” statement would be one of the most popular of Jesus’ sayings.

Some of you may know this, but the Bible often compares people to sheep and it often describes God as the shepherd. Perhaps the most well known verse in the Old Testament is this one, “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1). We see the same theme repeated over and over. Psalm 95:7 says, “For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.” In 1 Peter 2:25 we read, “For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.”

Jesus used a lot of examples and metaphors to describe himself. As we heard, he called himself a door. He called himself a light. He called himself a vine. He called himself bread. More often than anything else, he called himself and was called by others a shepherd. Let’s learn why, as the good shepherd, we not only have no need to worry if we are part of his flock, but it is because we are part of his flock that we really matter to him.

One of the things that fascinates me is to see how Jesus looked at people. He didn’t see nameless faces, a bunch of hang-ups or hiccups, he saw people as sheep. Most of us in this culture really can’t appreciate what that means, because we don’t live in an agricultural culture where shepherd and sheep are abundant. In that day and age, shepherding was a very intimate occupation. The shepherd knew each one of his sheep by name and he had one job – to provide for the sheep and protect the sheep. The very existence of a sheep depended on the care and leadership of the shepherd and helps you to understand this verse, “Seeing the people, he felt compassion for them, because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:35). Why is a flock of sheep with no shepherd so sad? They are totally helpless. Sheep have no sense of direction and without any leadership sheep will just wander aimlessly. They will stray away from the flock. They will lose their way and will even walk over a cliff to their own death.

That is exactly the way most people live their lives; they don’t know where they are and they don’t know how to get to where they need to go. So, husbands and wives wander away from their marriages. Children will wander away from their parents. People walk off cliffs on drugs, alcohol, or materialism. Sheep need guidance. They need direction and leadership. That is the job of the shepherd. What is the second verse in the 23rd Psalm? “He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters.” That’s the difference between a cowboy and a shepherd. The cowboy drives his cattle. The shepherd leads his sheep. When you allow the Lord to become your shepherd, you can read his word for guidance, you can actually talk to him and ask him for direction and he promises that he will lead you where he wants

you to go and where you need to go. If I am in his flock and he is my shepherd, I matter to him and there is no need to worry. Because he is the good shepherd...

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. Jesus repeats something in this scripture four times. He says four different times that he "lays down his life for his sheep." He says it in verse 11, 15, 17, and 18 and that's why he is not just any shepherd, he's the good shepherd.

We know that sheep are totally defenseless apart from the shepherd. Think about it, dogs can bite, cats can claw, skunks can spray, but sheep can't do anything. They need protection and that's the job of the shepherd.

I want you to notice that I didn't say that the shepherd guards us from difficulty. I said that the shepherd guards us when we face difficulty. The shepherd cannot prevent sheep from coming in contact with bears or lions or other wild beasts, but the shepherd can protect the sheep when they come into contact with those animals. What does that mean to us? If Jesus is my good shepherd, nothing can touch me without his permission. However, if he does permit something to touch me, I know that I will have him to lean on.

The apostle Paul, who wrote half of the New Testament, made an interesting statement in 2 Timothy. "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom; to him be the glory forever and always. Amen" (2 Timothy 4:18). That's a great promise that any of us can claim if Jesus is our good shepherd. What does the word "good" mean? It doesn't mean "nice" or "effective", the word means "one of a kind, in a class by itself." Do you know what the good shepherd does for his sheep? He always does what is best for them and sometimes that will include difficulties, problems, tragedy, and trouble. Because Jesus is the good shepherd, we can always know this, 'No problem before me is bigger than the God that is above me.' This shepherd who gave his life for us also came back from the dead to prove that if he can conquer death, he can conquer anything.

Let me ask you a question. Of all the worries that you wrote on that card, "What is your greatest worry? What is your biggest concern?" Whatever it is, remember this, the concern of the sheep can never be greater than the care of the shepherd. So, why worry? If I am in his flock and he is my shepherd there is no need for worry. Because he is the good shepherd...Amen.