

The Good Shepherd



Do you know any shepherds? Probably not. Early Christians were very familiar with shepherds, so Jesus spoke about them in his teachings. Jesus' disciples associated him with the Good Shepherd, and early Christian art depicts Jesus as a shepherd caring for his flock.

References to God as our "shepherd" first appear in the Old Testament. In Psalm 23, it says that the Shepherd will lead us to green pastures near water. The shepherd guards the sheep from evil. Also, in Ezekiel 34:15-16, we learn that God will seek out the sheep that stray and bring them back. He will heal the sick and give them rest.

In the Gospels, Jesus refers to himself as a shepherd. John 10:11 says, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep... I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me... [T]hey will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd." Jesus teaches his disciples that he knows us well. He knows us personally by name. He calls out to us, and we follow him, like a sheep to their shepherd. But Jesus is not just any shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd. He will never lead us to harm; He leads us away from evil, and into his loving arms. When we are lost, he searches for us. When he finds us, he picks us up and carries us on his shoulders, rejoicing. Most importantly, unlike any other shepherd, he lays down his life for us.

Soon, it will be Pentecost. Jesus will tell his apostles to go out, and spread the Good News. Jesus will tell Peter to lead our Church. Jesus will say, "Tend my lambs... Shepherd my sheep... Tend my sheep." John 21:15-17.

The image of the Good Shepherd reminds us that Jesus is loving, kind and caring. We are his sheep, and must follow.

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I follow the Good Shepherd.

