

Sermon- The World's Greatest Calling

Scripture: John 10:11-18

Sunday, January 6, 2019

Happy New Year church! It is good to be back and to share God's Word with you all. To dwelling in God's word is to drink deep from the fountain of life, right? Can I get an Amen? Today, we will be diving back into the Gospel of John. The last time we were in John, I preached on the 3rd I AM saying, I AM the Door. The Door as you know is the gateway between two worlds. Jesus says He is the gateway between the world ruled by Satan that we are born into and the world of the Kingdom of God that we are adopted into. Does that sound like Good News to you? Well, then today I am going to share with you some more Good News. Because Jesus is saying to you today in John 10 verse 11 that He relates to us in a another way. Jesus relates to us also as our Good Shepherd. This is His 4th I AM in the Gospel of John.

What does mean when Jesus Christ says I am the Good Shepherd? Well, if you look at the section from 11 to 13, the idea is explained like this. The Good Shepherd is contrasted with a hired shepherd. A hired shepherd essentially does the same job of taking care of the sheep. But taking care of the sheep includes watching out for and defending the sheep against some serious threats like wolves who want to have the sheep for lunch. Which means that the shepherds job is then to protect the sheep from the killer. And when you are fighting with a killer, you life is in danger as well right? You see, up to the point of the threat arising, you will not be able to see any different between the hired hand and the Good Shepherd. But when the threat arises, suddenly, the difference between the two could not be greater. When the threat arises, the hired hand focuses on protecting his own life and fleeing from the sheep without caring one bit for the welfare of the sheep. By the way a shepherd that does not care for the spiritual well being of the sheep is not just a bad shepherd, that kind of shepherd is an

enemy of God just as much as the wolves. The Good Shepherd on the other hand puts his own life as a barrier between the wolves and the sheep even if it means that the Good Shepherd loses his own life in the process. You see the hired hand is in it for the pay. The hired hand is in it for what he can get out of the job, the Good Shepherd is there because being the shepherd is his highest calling.

To understand this better, I want to set these two positions against the backdrop of three categories of work. One is a job, something that you do because you can make some money. Maybe it is flipping burgers or driving an Uber. This kind of job is something you have zero loyalty to. You punch in and punch out and one day you will leave if you get paid more elsewhere and no love is lost between you and your employer.

The next kind of job is a vocation. This kind of job is something you have a specialized skill and sometimes degree to do and this job gives you more than money. It gives you some standing within the community, and in some cases power, it gives you power as well. But even a profession that gives you money, power and prestige could in many cases leave you feeling pretty empty inside, because it is possible that you have all three things but you don't feel that your profession is giving you a deep sense of fulfillment.

That leads us to the third kind of job. A "calling". This kind of job is something you do because you feel you are being pulled into it by a higher power. A calling does not guarantee you anything but people who function within there call often end up accomplishing a lot and becoming very well-known even though that was never their objective. There are many very famous names of people who have lived out their higher calling, people like Gandhi who was a lawyer but felt that it was his actual calling to give his life to the cause of India's freedom struggle or Martin Luther King Junior who gave his life to the cause of eliminating the segregation of black people or even someone like Robert Muller who is now appointed as Special Counsel involved in a very big

investigation. Many people may not know that Robert Muller is a man who inherited great wealth but wanted to use his gifts to be a public servant in the highest sense of the term. This entire career he has done the most difficult assignments with great integrity and quietly behind the scenes. When someone is functioning because they are called to do it, it is not the paycheck, or name or fame that motivates them to get out of bed every morning and do what they do. What motivates then is the fact that their gifts and talents are aligned with some larger goal and they are willing to throw everything they have at, to see progress towards that goal. These people as you can imagine are not looking at how much money is coming in every month. They are looking at following a voice from above in doing something that only they can do and no one else. Some people wake up every morning to live out their calling.

Today I want to talk to you about a person who's calling exceeded the calling of all the people who followed a higher call in the history of the world, Jesus Christ.

First of all, who called Jesus Christ into whatever He did? Well, our passage is very clear, Jesus did what He did as a response to a command from his Father. That is verse 17. But our passage also says that Jesus has a great intimacy with the Father. That is what it means when it says, "As the father knows me, even so I know the Father". And verse 17 also says, the Father loves the son. Why do I point out these things about Jesus' relationship with the Father? Well, remember the first aspect of functioning in a call rather than a vocation or a job is that you are on fire for some larger cause or purpose? Now if this larger cause is chosen by a misguided person, you could have a misguided cause that is actually either evil like a terrorist attack or just plain misguided like the guy so wanted to tied himself to a rocket and fly into the sky to prove that the earth is flat 😊 I am not making this up. This is a real person whose was willing to risk money, life and limb in the year 2016 was to prove that the earth was flat! What a waste of a human being right? But when your truly calling comes from a higher power, in fact when it comes from the highest power, from God the Father Himself then that is the highest

calling you can receive and it can change the course of history. And that is exactly what happened in Jesus' case.

The second aspect to note in Jesus' calling is that His task that he was called to was to be the Shepherd of sheep. And because he was so deeply loved by the Father, He stepped into the role of Shepherd with that same kind of love that exists within the Trinity. A love that is so deep that it is beyond our understanding. Isn't that amazing? And this relationship gets even better because embedded in this love is a deep knowing. In verse 14 He says, "He knows the sheep and the sheep know him". Hear this friends. In this world some people are known by a few 100 people and some people are known by half the planet. But in God's eyes, in the eyes of the Good shepherd there are no anonymous sheep. Our Shepherd who sits in heaven knows you better than you know yourself. Psalm 139 talks about exactly this knowing in these words

You have searched me and known me..

² *You know my sitting down and my rising up; ...*

You understand my thought afar off.

³ *You ^[a]comprehend my path and my lying down,*

And are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ *For there is not a word on my tongue,*

But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. You know sometimes there is a word on the tip of your tongue but it is just not coming to you? Well the Good Shepherd knows that too!

⁵ *You have ^[b]hedged me behind and before,*

And laid Your hand upon me.

⁶ *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;*

It is high, I cannot attain it.

This is the kind of knowledge that the Good Shepherd has of each of His sheep. It is a mutual knowledge and it is something like the love relationship Jesus Christ has with the Father. Jesus the Good shepherd knows his sheep and loves his sheep. In other words Jesus Christ has a job he really loves. He loves being our shepherd, people!

Now mind you, this is where it gets even more amazing. Jesus Christ loves His job not because it is easy. In fact you know what? His sheep don't love him a fraction of how much he loves his sheep. You agree? You see in the flock there are some sheep that are close to the shepherd. But there are some sheep on the edge of the flock. You know the barely there sheep? The sheep who want to be part of the flock more like an insurance policy rather than because they love the sheep? Well the Good shepherd loves those sheep just as much as he loves the others because loving is what the Good Shepherd does. It comes from the inner most part of his nature. I John 4:8 says, God is love.

And this is how much the Good Shepherd loves His sheep. The Shepherd is willing to go to spiritual battle for the sheep that is a battle deeper than we can understand. That spiritual battle my friends is the mother of all battles. It is a battle with a very surprising twist. The stronger party dies. And it is a battle that has a surprise ending because the one who dies shows his true strength and authority by rises from death, giving victory not only to himself but all who put their faith in Him. It turns out that Christ had the power and authority to take his life back, thus proving that He was the perfect lamb of God who died for the sins of the sheep of the world. His sheep. Guess what, Our shepherd not only loves his job, our shepherd, is willing to lay everything he has on the line for his job. He is even willing to die on the job. He loves his job that much! Because for Jesus Christ, it is not a job, it is not a career, it is a calling that comes from the purest and highest place. I wanted to say highest place in the universe but you know even that is limiting in some way because the Father is in the universe but he is also outside the universe because he is above His creation and there is no word to describe this place,

except to say, it is the highest place there is. Jesus Christ's calling comes from His heavenly Father.

Friends, here is where it gets personal. Because if you are part of the flock of the Good shepherd, it also means that there are things that need to be considered. Like how close to the shepherd in the flock are we? Are we on the edge out there? Half in the kingdom and half in the world? Or are we all in? Are we satisfied with the fact that the Good shepherd will love us and therefore get away with anything, or are we seeking to please our Good Shepherd? And if the spirit of this same Good Shepherd, who has died for us is in us, then friends that means we all who have the Holy Spirit should be functioning as called people and not just doing our time for a pay check. I am not implying that you should quite your jobs. What I am saying is, when you look at your whole life, do you see that the way God has uniquely made you being fully used to address some pain that the world around you is experiencing? When you see kids in our neighborhood who need love and guidance and you have love and guidance to offer, and don't count the cost you hear God speaking to you and you go meet that need that is function as a called person. When the food pantry is going to be closed and the question is, who will help feed the hungry and you don't count the cost but you say I will go, that is functioning from a call.

Friends, as the new year starts, I am working with Pastor Kurt to make the rounds of Mennonite colleges to call young people into the work that God is doing in Argentina. I am going to appeal to the students to relocate and maybe relocate as a group if possible. We will have to figure out many things to meet the needs of the young people but the time has come to make God's call to our neighborhood to go out loud and clear.. Prophet Isaiah describes His own call like this, in 6:8 *Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"*

Friends, Jesus Christ brought us to himself because it was His highest calling. And following His calling because His calling was tied into His identity. That is why his resurrected body still has the holes on this hands and feet. In this New Year of 2019, let us pray that we are not just a flock in the neighborhood, but a flock whose calling is as obvious to the neighbors as it is obvious to us. Pray that your call and my call to this neighborhood is so powerful in the New Year that many people from many parts of the country might hear the same call and when they hear the words, Whom shall I send? Who will go for us? Many will respond with the words, "Send me!" Remember, if the called one is in you, then you are a called one too. Let us pray.