

John 10:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Analysis

Jesus declares 'I am the good shepherd' (ego eimi ho poimen ho kalos), using *kalos* (good/beautiful/noble) rather than merely *agathos* (good). The quality emphasized is not just moral goodness but excellence, attractiveness, and nobility of character. The defining action follows: 'the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep' (ten *psuchen autou tithesi hyper ton probaton*). The verb *tithemi* (to lay down) indicates voluntary sacrifice, not forced death. The preposition *hyper* (for, on behalf of) shows substitutionary purpose. Contrasted with the hireling who flees (10:12-13), the good shepherd remains with his flock regardless of cost. This imagery draws from rich Old Testament metaphors where God is Israel's shepherd (Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34). Jesus claims to fulfill this role perfectly, offering His life as the ultimate expression of shepherding care.

Historical Context

The shepherd metaphor resonated deeply in agrarian first-century Palestine. Shepherds were socially lowly yet bore great responsibility - protecting flocks from predators, finding pasture, preventing sheep from wandering. David began as a shepherd (1 Samuel 17:34-37), and shepherd imagery pervades the Psalms. Prophetically, Ezekiel 34 condemned Israel's false shepherds and promised that God would shepherd His people Himself. Zechariah 13:7 prophesied the striking of the shepherd, quoted by Jesus (Matthew 26:31). Early Christians understood Jesus' death as the fulfillment of these prophecies. The discourse occurs after Jesus healed the blind man (John 9), whom the Pharisees excommunicated - false

shepherds rejecting the sheep. Church iconography frequently depicts Christ as shepherd, reflecting this passage's influence.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What makes Jesus the 'good' shepherd in contrast to false shepherds?
2. How does voluntary laying down of life demonstrate ultimate shepherding care?

Interlinear Text

Ἐγώ	είμι	ό	ποιμὴν	ό	καλὸς	ό	ποιμὴν	ό	καλὸς
I	am	G3588	shepherd	G3588	the good	G3588	shepherd	G3588	the good
G1473	G1510		G4166		G2570		G4166		G2570
τὴν	ψυχὴν	αὐτοῦ	τίθησιν	ὑπὲρ	τῶν	προβάτων·			
G3588	life	G846	giveth	for	G3588	the sheep			
	G5590		G5087	G5228		G4263			

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 23:1 (Parallel theme): The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

John 15:13 (Parallel theme): Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Revelation 7:17 (Parallel theme): For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Isaiah 40:11 (Parallel theme): He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

1 John 3:16 (Parallel theme): Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

2 Samuel 24:17 (Parallel theme): And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

Hebrews 13:20 (Parallel theme): Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Ezekiel 34:23 (Parallel theme): And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

Ezekiel 37:24 (Parallel theme): And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

Zechariah 13:7 (Parallel theme): Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.