

The Jesus Identity—Good Shepherd

John 10:11-18

July 19, 2009

Title: One Flock, One Shepherd

Grace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Face book. The internet social network. Over 240 million people now on Facebook. A primary means of communicating now. I'm not on Facebook yet, are you? I plan to be. Make me one of your friends on Facebook... Two things have propelled me to join Facebook—

This week I learned there is a Good Shepherd group on Facebook...of over 150 people. A community within a community—a invisible network—where people can quickly share life news and get news. Apparently, among our youth it's where they now determine who is and who will not be in attendance at youth group on Sunday nights. I'm one of the pastors of this church and I'm missing out on this? Not any longer.

I've even gotten some advice about what to post on Facebook—a picture of Almost Pastor Grover would be encouraged greatly. Also, please, no sermons---I'm told I'll lose a lot of friends that way!

But I also read this article about Facebook. Some people are sharing the depths of their souls on Facebook. Everyday the simple question is posted What's On Your Mind? According to Lenora Rand for some folks profound truths come pouring out...admissions of envy and rage, of inadequacy and fear, of disappointment with self and frustration with life. The truths about our lives are leaking out in this online world

Rand goes on: Someone wrote a note called 25 Things You May Not Know About Me. You were supposed to send this to 25 Facebook friends...25 Things about yourself. This chain idea spread like wildfire. Intimate details about lives such as:

“I couldn’t sleep through the night my first two months of teaching.” Rand concludes: Facebook allows us to remain intimate and honest, to know each other and be known by each other, even if that isn’t happening in the bricks and mortar world.

It’s not my idea of intimacy, I prefer the old face to face approach. But it is in our day where lives are being shared, a facebook.

Deep involvement in the lives of others. That’s who God is. We like to say God is omniscient, God is all powerful, God is omnipotent...but more so God up close and personal, God a huge set of ears, God a well worn hand, God a cozy pair of slippers, God, the one crying for us, laughing for us, cheering for us, patting us on the back and encouraging us. God --the Good Shepherd. God’s reason for being is to tend the sheep with all God is.

No hired hand would do that. We live in a hired hand kind of world. Most of us know it well. We get treated like hired hands and before you know it we ourselves begin treating people that way. We give our heart and soul to a company and when things get rough we are escorted out the door. That’s the way it is, we say. We reach out to the new neighbor only to never see them again. We drive into our garages, we put our decks and porches on the back sides of our homes, we live scheduled lives with little time for building up trust. We don’t know what it is to have someone come over and borrow some butter; we accept the adage that you can’t know more than a few people. We live in a hired hand kind of world, an increasing anonymous world, where more and more we bowl alone, we eat alone, we live alone.

So in such a hired hand world God becomes distant, far off, indifferent. Surely God doesn’t have time for you. In the movie Bruce Almighty Jim Carey becomes God. You see him swirling through trying to listen to billions of prayers. It’s too much. Here is a picture of God overwhelmed.

We know better. We witness the intimacy of God chasing us today. Evan Miles Eaton is marked with the cross of Jesus, claimed and set free, a member of Jesus' family. Known by name by the Lord of life. These baptismal waters glisson with the hound of heaven. Once he has found us, once he has found you, he continues to seek us on deeper levels than we have permitted.

We do not walk through the valley of the shadow of death alone.

We do not confront our anger toward others alone.

We do not decide how to invest our resources alone.

We do not live alone. We live in the presence of the Good Shepherd.

There is no deeper involvement, no deeper loyalty than to give your life for someone. Here in a hired hand world you and I are given the privilege of bearing the name Good Shepherd. Our very name. And more than a name—God the lover binding himself to us, calling us to a gracious cycle...the more he seeks us, the more we respond.

Some 40 Hispanic children came into the bosom of the Good Shepherd this week. Here they were known and loved. Every thing was provided for them. They reveled in it. Each day bounding into the walls of this Good Shepherd place with eagerness and excitement. Set aside the political issues that hang over their heads. See beyond the immigrant/illegal immigrant debates; go beneath the strife about paying taxes and social security; remove the pale of concern for paying for education...and get to know them as children beloved by Christ, children whom Jesus knows. Look at them with the mind and the heart of the Good Shepherd, whose flock is not finally finished or fixed, but is open ended.

Get to know someone and there is little way to label them.

The Good Shepherd is calling them by name.

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul.

He guides me along paths of righteousness for his names sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows.

Surely your goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

To be known and loved by the Good Shepherd shapes everything.

Facebook asks: What's on your mind?

The Good Shepherd whispers, You are always on my mind.

What is it to live under this great gift? It is to a life measured in perpetual trust.

It can't get any better than that!