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Shepherd Work

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Shepherd Work

Abstract

"Jesus, the good shepherd provides and protects his sheep to the point of laying down his life for all of us and then, because he can, he takes his life up again and continues living."

Posting about Jesus' gentle care from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/shepherd-work/>

Keywords

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Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Shepherd Work

 [inallthings.org/shepherd-work/](https://allthings.org/shepherd-work/)

Shirley Folkerts

“I am the good shepherd.” [John 10:11-18](#)

Pause a moment to roam in and around Jesus’ words. What do you remember? What emotions stir? Where do your thoughts go?

I remember stories of David, a well-known shepherd boy in the Old Testament scriptures, who rescued and protected his sheep from wild animals even though he was a young boy ([1 Samuel 17:34-35](#)). Moses was another shepherd in the Old Testament. He heard the voice of God from a burning bush that never burned up ([Exodus 3:1-15](#)). I think of the shepherds who abandoned their sheep the night Jesus was born. Shepherds, though low on the social and economic ladder, were the first to receive the good news that the Messiah had been born ([Luke 2:8-18](#)).

I have no idea what it is like to be a shepherd. Well, wait a minute. Does herding cows count? I grew up on a small dairy farm. When I was young, my sister and I often took the cows out to the pasture for a few hours most summer afternoons. When it was time for their milking we would herd them back to the fenced-in yard. One day while we watched the cows, dark, eerie-looking clouds took over our sky. We knew something was amiss when Dad left his cultivating in a distant field and stopped his tractor on the road some 200 yards perpendicular to us. We heard his voice but could not make out the words. We saw his arms forming the top half of a frantic jumping jack from his position on the tractor. “What is he saying?” “Do you think he wants us to come to him?” “And just leave the cows?” The thistles drew blood on our bare shins as we ran for our lives, leaving the cows to fend for themselves in the coming storm.

I ramble through [Psalm 23](#), the words appearing from nowhere—“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” I stop and go back to Jesus’ words, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Here I am, trying to pray those words of [Psalm 23](#), “I shall not want,” knowing full well that I want so many things. And there Jesus is, wanting nothing for himself but to give up his life for the sheep—and not just the sheep in one flock, but, he says, from other flocks as well. He lays down his life not just for the people of his human ancestry, but all people. Jesus, the good shepherd provides and protects his sheep to the point of laying down his life for all of us and then, because he can, he takes his life up again and continues living. He continues forever. He continues when my wanting stops and I rest in him.

One more verse eases in as I ponder Jesus’ words. It is from the prophesy of Isaiah, chapter 40, [verse 11](#). “He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.”

Good Shepherd, lead us, guide us, know us, provide for us, rescue us, be with us, renew us, continue in us. Amen.