



Poland Presbyterian Church

At the Green since 1802

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**A Sermon by
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"To Live as Christ Lived" *

John 10:14-18

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'

I would like to thank everyone for such a warm welcome this morning. I want to also thank the PNC for all the ways they have taken care of me and made me feel that this is the place for us to be.

I also wanted to Thank Marshall for his introduction this morning, of all the introductions I have received over the years, his was by far... the most recent.

This morning we are looking at a Scripture in which Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd.

A shepherd was extremely important to the welfare and wellbeing of a drove of sheep.

The shepherd would make sure

- the sheep stayed together,
- were fed
- and would fight off predators to keep the sheep safe,
- even sacrificing himself to make sure the flock was protected.

Because a shepherd would do anything to protect his sheep, they became his companions and it was second nature to the shepherd to put their lives ahead of his own.

When Jesus called himself the good shepherd he was demonstrating how far he would go to protect God's people. He even says, the good shepherd gives us his life for the sheep.

Now if that statement from Jesus wasn't bold enough, in Verses 17 and 18 Jesus explains that he makes this choice of his own free will.

Of this passage William Barclay declares, "Few passages in the New Testament tell us so much about Jesus in so short a compass." (Daily Study Series, Gospel of John)

He goes on to say that in these verses Jesus displays

- obedience to God,
- confidence in God,
- and the freedom to choose God in the decisions of life.

Lets' look at each one.

First, Jesus was obedient to God.

Jesus was on earth because he had a job to do.

- The behavior,
- sinfulness,
- selfishness,
- and willfulness

of humanity had caused a huge separation between the people and God.

The laws that God had bestowed upon Moses had become so twisted and nuanced from their original meaning these laws had nothing to do with how to love God and each other. Instead the laws became a get into Heaven check list.

Also, Israel had taken the notion of being God's chosen nation to such an extreme they were looking for God's Messiah to come and eradicate their enemies giving them prominence and their proper place in God's kingdom.

Jesus came to change all that.

- He demonstrated that God's Messiah came to vindicate with love and forgiveness.
- He came to show that the best way to destroy an enemy was to make them a friend, showing copious amounts of mercy and grace.
- Jesus came so that we could understand that the law was not an enemy to be feared but a guide to righteous living with a loving father.
- And he came to show that following the law was important but never to the detriment of human need and understanding.

Jesus came to show that being in God's kingdom was more about serving than it was about power.

Jesus came to complete a very difficult and important task.

And to clearly convey what our loving creator was all about Jesus had many skills, or resources, or tools at his disposal. To properly instruct the world on who God was Jesus needed to be a:

- Teacher – using allegory and parables to paint a clear and concise picture.
- He needed to be a healer – performing miracles to help others see and understand the power of God.
- Jesus needed to be a preacher – so that God's message could reach everyone
- He also needed to be:
 - Patient
 - Forgiving
 - Kind
 - Honest
 - Forthright
 - And Merciful

Jesus was able to do what he did on earth because he was obedient to God.

His obedience showed a strong faith and his strong faith showed an utter and complete trust in God.

Jesus obedience allowed him to follow God's plan

- He didn't argue
- He didn't suggest that he knew better
- He didn't decide to do things his own way

Jesus was obedient, he never did what he liked or what he wanted, he, instead put his energy and trust in God and did what God wanted.

In his obedience, he knew what a right relationship with God was all about.

The second thing we learn about Jesus is that he had confidence in God.

My father was also a minister and the saying he used to instill confidence in his sons, was this

"The secret in life is to find something you don't do well, and then DON'T DO IT."

This was my Dad's funny way of saying focus on your strengths, and work hard to accomplish your goals.

We all learn from life that any great accomplishment is usually earned with a whole lot of work and effort.

- Earning that degree only comes after years of study and devotion
- Receiving that promotion takes years of dedication
- Being a master or an expert in your career takes a lifetime of experience and learning
- Being a great athlete takes lots of training and discipline.

What we do in life takes, work, patience, and confidence.

Coming to earth as God's Messiah and taking on the sins of the world so that we can be right with God - Making that sacrifice so that whoever believes in Jesus will not perish but have everlasting life.

succeeding in that great accomplishment was hard to do, impossible for you and I, but for Jesus it was possible because he had confidence, but not just any confidence, he possessed a confidence in God.

- Jesus knew God was with him
- Jesus knew that God would not give him something he was not capable of achieving
- Jesus knew that God was in the midst of all the evil
- Jesus knew that God would never leave his side
- Jesus knew that God would never stop loving him

Jesus never ran away from the cross and never doubted that God would see him through.

The final piece that Jesus shows in this passage of scripture, is that Jesus was given the freedom to choose.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus willing gave up his life for his sheep.

We see evidence of this in scripture

- In the Garden, when the guards came to arrest Jesus, he stopped Peter from defending him
- In Matthew Jesus said that if he wished to do so he could call in a legion of angels to save him.
- And He made it quite clear that Pilate was not condemning him but that he was accepting death

His :

- Hand was not forced
- He did not get caught up in the moment
- He did not get backed into a corner
- He did not get himself into a situation and this was the only way out.

Christ made the conscious decision to choose what was before him. His choice was to follow God's plan for his life and he never wavered or regretted that decision.

I really like what Barclay says when he talks about Jesus as the good shepherd shows us Christ's obedience, confidence, and ability to choose God.

But, is it any real revelation that Jesus was obedient, had confidence in God and Chose God each day?

And isn't it equally clear that in our relationship with Christ the same thing is expected of us?

So I want to talk about being obedient, having confidence in God and choosing God in a personal way.

I have many sayings that I use a lot in ministry and with my own children. Thankfully, for today I have narrowed it down to four, sayings, or mottos, or axioms that I want to apply to our three points in today's sermon. I call them "Dadisms" because I use them *ad nauseam*.

First let's look at our obedience to Christ.

I use this first phrase when I want to help my children when they feel slighted or that they are being treated unfairly. This phrase usually comes out when they say, "That's not fair." I tell them, "Life is not always fair, but you can be."

When we are obedient to Christ

- we love,
- we help,
- we forgive,

We follow Christ's example,
And do what Jesus would do.

When we are obedient we treat people with kindness not cruelty.
We treat people with fairness not harsh realities.

How we treat people should always be done out of love and never out of a sense of anger or retribution.

As Christians we need to have confidence in God.

When my children come to me with a situation in which they have

- created a problem,
- or made something worse,
- are feeling guilty for what they did
- or did not do,

I tell them this:

“It’s not what you do, it’s what you do next that counts.”

It’s not that you lied, it’s that you were brave enough to tell the truth
It’s not that you failed, it’s that you never gave up
It’s not that you hurt someone, it’s that you were able to apologize
It’s not that you were wrong, it’s that you did everything you could to make it right
It’s not that you were selfish, it’s that you learned to be giving
It’s not that you were blind, it’s that you finally learned how to see.

Having confidence in God, means trusting in God and that allows us the courage to do what comes next.

It’s not what you do, but what you do next that counts.

Finally, a life with Christ is a life in which we get to choose.

For years I have been a big fan of Tony Compolo.

He has written many books and when I was younger I went to see him preach at a youth ministry event.

Tony said something that I always liked but it didn’t have a life changing effect on me until I had children.

What he said was this,

“Many times parents come up to me and say Tony, I try and be a good parent and I love my children more than anything, and all I really want for them in life is to be happy.

Tony Compolo’s response was, “I don’t wish happiness for my children, I wish goodness.”

I have that same desire for my two children.

I don’t want them to be happy I want them to be good. If they are good, happiness will come to them. You can be happy and not be a good person.

These attributes that Christ the Good Shepherd displayed are important for our daily faith journey, because when we are

Obedient to Christ

When we have the confidence of Christ

When we choose to have the living presence in our lives each day, we aren’t just better people we are transformed people.

Let me tell you how important transformation can be.

There was once an Amish family who decided it was time that they saw what the real world was like.

They were still living in the 80’s the 1880s and they wanted to know what the modern world was like.

They took a trip into the city and went to a huge department store. The mother and the daughter decided to check out all the clothes that were for sale.

The father and the brother just stood and stared at this great big silver box. You and I would call the box an elevator, but they had no clue as to what it was and what it did.

The man just stood there fixated at the sight of the silver giant box. As he stood there, a old, hunched over woman came hobbling up to the box.

She pushed a button and the box opened, she went inside and the box closed.

A few minutes later, the box opened up again and a gorgeous 22-year-old model came from within the box.

The Amish man could not believe what he was seeing. Without ever taking his eyes off of the magic box, he called his son over and said, Run as fast as you can and go get your mother there is something here she jus has to try.

That is transformation.

When we are obedient to Christ, we are transformed, for we treat others with kindness and compassion.

When we have the confidence of Christ we are transformed because we have the courage to do what comes next.

When we choose to have God in our lives each day, we are transformed because we are filled with God's goodness.

When we can live this way we live as Christ lived, let us pray

*Sermon printed in "presentation" format

A video link to this sermon can be found on our website: www.polandpresbyterian.org