

**Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
May, 2009 Sermon Series: “Stewardship: I Believe”  
“Worship”  
John 10:11-18

Jesus the “Good Shepherd”

**Context:**

The concept of the divine shepherd goes back to the Old Testament. The Psalms (23), Jeremiah (23:3), and Ezekiel (34:12, 15) all use the metaphorical description of God as a shepherd. Here in John, Jesus uses and develops the sheep/shepherd imagery and calls his followers to acknowledge and trust Jesus as their good shepherd. A shepherd who cares for, and in fact, “owns” his sheep—you and I. Our response to this acknowledgment is praise and trust.

**Relevant Scriptures:**

*Isaiah 40:11* 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.

*Jeremiah 31:10* "Hear the word of the LORD, O nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.'

*Hebrews 13:20-21* May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, <sup>21</sup>equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

*1 Peter 5:4* And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

*Matthew 6:7-8* And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup>Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

*1 Peter 2:24* He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

*Romans 12:1* Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

**Prayer:** Reflect upon Jesus as your shepherd. Jesus lays down his life for you. Does it make a difference that Jesus will not leave you when the going gets tough? As our shepherd, Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves. Jesus gave his life for us so that we might live lives of meaning and love, now through eternity! Our response is to **worship and surrender** to Jesus in all we do.

□ **Day #1--Monday, May, 4<sup>th</sup> Read:** *Deuteronomy 10:12; Psalm 9:1; Psalm 64:10; Psalm 73:26.*

As was noted yesterday, the month of May will be devoted to Christian stewardship. Stewardship is taking care of what God has given to us—which is everything we are, have, and desire! You were sent a brochure outlining our stewardship theme, “I Believe.” The brochure describes stewardship as “...our response to what we believe. We believe that God made us and all we have. We believe that Jesus has washed our sins away and made us acceptable to God the Father. We believe that the Holy Spirit has enabled us to believe this good news. Our response then is to thank Him and serve Him as faithful stewards, managers of all that He has entrusted to us.” Believing, understanding, and responding to God occur through four primary Christian disciplines: Worship, Study, Fellowship, and Service. At Red Hill, we believe that it is through these four disciples that we grow as disciples of Jesus so that we may love Jesus’ world. During the next five weeks, we will be exploring these disciplines and how they shape Christian stewardship. This week, we will be looking and studying what the Bible teaches about a life that is focused on the worship of God.

Jonathan Edwards was a Congregational pastor and a key figure in the “Great Awakening” of the eighteenth-century. In his writings, *Religious Affections*, Edwards writes:

The kind of religion that God requires, and will accept, does not consist in weak, dull, and lifeless ‘wouldings’-those weak inclinations that lack convictions-that raise us but little above indifference. God, in His word, greatly insists that we be in good earnest, fervent in spirit, and our hearts be engaged vigorously in our religion...This fervent, vigorous engagement of the heart is the fruit of a real circumcision of the heart that alone has the promise of life...

The life of a Christian is more than just “wouldings.” What God wants is our hearts. The Biblical understanding of the “heart” is the center of the self. God desires a life lived with abandonment, a full throttle openness to God and God’s surprising work in this world and your life.

Reflect: If I changed the definition of my faith from “wouldings” to “wild abandonment”, what would my daily faith look like?

□ **Day #2--Tuesday, May, 5<sup>th</sup> Read:** *Ephesians 1:4; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Revelation 4:11.* Why did God create you? To love you! You were created for God’s pleasure. When God formed you in your mother’s womb God smiled and couldn’t wait for you to grow and love Him back. We begin this week with three Biblical affirmations of why you are here on this earth.

1. You were created because God wants to love you. God wants to have a personal relationship with you! See Ephesians 1:4.
2. God has a plan for your life. God has created you with certain spiritual gifts, talents, and abilities. Part of living is discovering and learning what God has put you on this earth to do. One thing is certain, it always involves others. See 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.
3. You were made to last forever. This life is not our only level of existence. We will either live eternally with God or eternally separated from God. Rick Warren, in his book *The Purpose Driven Life*, says, “Life on earth is just the dress rehearsal before the real production. You will spend far more time on the other side of death-in eternity-than you will here...This life is

preparation for the next.” See Ecclesiastes 3:11. When you remember these three truths, life takes on a whole new focus.

Reflect: God put me here on this earth because He wants to love me!

Pray: *“My God, I pray that I may so know you and love you that I may rejoice in you. And if I may not do so fully in this life, let thy name go steadily on to the day when I come to that fullness...Let me receive that which you promised through your truth, that my joy may be full. Amen.”*

**Day #3--Wednesday, May, 6<sup>th</sup> Read:** *Psalm 9:1; 1 Peter 1:3; Psalm 100:2-3.*

Yesterday we looked at why God created you. God created you to love you. Here is the other side of that truth: You were created to love God in return. Our loving response to God first loving us is called worship. You were made to worship. Worship is the natural response of a life that knows it is loved. When you worship you are remembering that it was God who made you and it is from God that you receive life, hope, strength, and salvation. God gives, you receive. Your response is praise. Praise flows from the lips of those who know that all we have is from a loving Father and He is in control. This is what Max Lucado writes:

Praise is the highest occupation of any being. What happens when we praise the Father? We reestablish the proper chain of command; we recognize that the King is on the throne and that He has saved His people.

God has saved us! God had told us that He would never leave us! God promises that His love will last forever! What work does God want you to do to receive these promises? Nothing. Accept them and just love Him back.

Pray: *“Lord of all, I worship and praise you for all that you are. Amen.”*

**Day #4--Thursday, May, 7<sup>th</sup> Read:** *Psalm 138:1; Psalm 52:9.*

Gratitude...Living a life of worship begins with a spirit of gratitude before God. We will not praise God and worship if we believe that God “owes” us something. Notice the word gratitude has the same root as our word “grace.” I am thankful to someone when they have given me something I do not deserve or did not expect. Worship is surrender to the reality that our lives are a gift from God. God desires that our worship be motivated by love, gratitude, and joy, not guilt or duty. Thankful people are JOYFUL people. Do you know people who are joyful? I guarantee they are thankful people. As you reflect on the kindness of God, the goodness of God, and the faithfulness of God, what are your thoughts?

Reflect: What one action can I do today that will demonstrate my gratitude to God?

**Day #5--Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup> Read:** *Matthew 4:10; Revelation 14:7.*

God is the object of praise. Does it sound too simple? It is, yet it is also something that we need to be reminded of. My life and your life are about God, not about us. God put us here. God has a plan and a will for us and for this world. We can choose to live for God or live for ourselves. When we worship, either corporately or in the other aspects of our lives, we are saying, “God you are the reason

I live. You are the reason I breathe” as we sing in our contemporary services. Evelyn Underhill, a Theologian and writer expresses it this way:

Worship, then, is an avenue which leads the creature out from his inveterate self-occupation to a knowledge of God, and ultimately to that union with God which is the beatitude of the soul; though we are never to enter on it for this, or any other reason which is tainted by self-regard... Thus worship purifies, enlightens, and at last transforms, every life submitted to its influence... God’s invitation to it and man’s response, however limited, crude, or mistaken this response may be, are the appointed means whereby we move towards our true destiny..:”

Our “true destiny” is found in God. After all, He is the one who gave us life.

Reflect: What obstacles sometimes hold me back from making God the object of my worship?

Pray: *“You are the reason I live, and move, and have my being Jesus. You are the source of life and truly are worthy to be praised. Amen.”*

**□ Day #6--Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup> Read Again: Hosea 6:6; Psalm 150.**

On Sunday morning, tomorrow, “church day”, we gather together as God’s people in order to honor God for who God is and what God has done in our lives this week, what God will do in the days to come, and what God is doing in this world. We worship in very different ways. Tomorrow morning there will be traditional liturgical worship, Contemporary, some hymns, some “praise songs”, some liturgy, some anthems, offerings, organ, guitar... you get it. Worship is not about style. It’s about the heart. If our “style” of worship is offered in spirit and truth, then it is pleasing to God. Let’s be reminded of two important truths about worship:

1. Worship is not for my benefit. Of course I “get something” from worship, but that is not the primary focus. The primary focus is God. When we go into the corporate worship tomorrow, our thought needs to be, “How can I please God today?” “How can I demonstrate to God how I feel about Him?”
2. Worship is not just Sunday—it’s everyday. We have already talked about this. However, again, Sunday worship is the time that we set aside to honor God and demonstrate to God that he deserves our getting out of bed, getting dressed, and joining with others brothers and sisters in Christ to glorify God’s name. We also continue to glorify God as we leave Red Hill and head to breakfast or back home. It’s all worship.

Reflect: Is there any attitude I need to change about worship so that I can give myself to God?

Pray: *“Tomorrow Father I will worship you with your people. Prepare my heart now for worship tomorrow. May I please you in my singing, with the words I speak, with a smile and greeting to someone, listening to the choir and band, and in my inner most heart. May my whole life be an offering of praise to you. Amen.”*