

**Jesus: The Good Shepherd | Psalm 23; John 10:1-10 | LUMC | April 30, 2023**  
**By Grace Kanake**

Dear Church family and friends: We are still within forty days of Jesus being on earth. He continues to reveal himself after his resurrection. We continue being excited that he was on earth in his human body. In this celebrative mood, the framers—writers of the liturgical calendar—interrupt the celebration with a flash-back reading from the book of John to remind us that the Jesus we continue to celebrate is not a casual being! He is the epitome of the Godhead, God with us. He is our leader par excellence. He is God who is ever present.

John uses the shepherd metaphor to let believers know that Jesus cares just like a shepherd care for his flock. In ancient times shepherds availed themselves 24 hours; they provided security both day and night. I recall that in my community shepherds built a boma made of shrubs and a house Infront gate. They counted their flock as they came in during the evening. They knew their animals each by its name. When the last animal entered, the boma was closed with the shrubs until the morning. The shepherd stayed at the gatehouse keeping guard.

Jesus is our good shepherd. He protects and guides us and offers care and support to those who believe him and believe his teachings. Those who know Jesus by his name, know when he is at work in their lives. Jesus is the Savior, Emanuel—God with us—and our protector. To know Jesus is to follow him exclusively and thus experience the full blessings he offers.

Jesus lets us know not to follow him blindly because, though many people may say they are coming in his name, they are wolves in sheep's clothing. They associate themselves with Jesus with a view to mislead the flock from following the right path to salvation. Jesus' correlates those who mislead others for self-benefit, with thieves whose purpose is to steal, kill, and destroy the life of believers. Most false prophets (there are many in the modern world) fall into this category<sup>1</sup>

If you recognize Jesus as your good Shepherd, continue perfecting your relationship with Him as I do. Encourage other followers with sincere hearts in their following; and you will know them by the fruits they bear. We who know Jesus and have admitted following him physically and practically, remain as people of one mind and faith in our journey of faith. Jesus' deeds during this season clearly define him as the best Shepherd. He lay down his life for us—he died on the cross to save us. Jesus knows us by name, and we also know him by name, and we participate in his saving grace.

The shepherd leads the flock to lush grass and clean water when the animals need it. The shepherd is always on the alert for wild animals that lurk in the bushes or gullies. The shepherd is aware that extreme heat in the middle of the day makes

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<sup>1</sup> I draw your attention to one preacher arrested this week for preaching the wrong gospel and misleading innocent members. Please know this message is too emotionally disturbing, read or leave it for your own peace and sanity.

<https://www.tuko.co.ke/kenya/503297-william-ruto-pastor-paul-mackenzie-terrible-criminal-terrorist/>

animals uncomfortable, and the cold at night can cause them to shiver. Animals would be in great danger without a shepherd willing to lay down their life for them. This is why Jesus uses this symbolism to let us know he continues to lay down his life for us!

Without Christ, believers are utterly exposed to so many worldly temptations. There is temptation to amass so much material things for ourselves by any means! There is temptation to seek out others uninformed and take advantage of their weakness. There is temptation of misusing our earthly gifts, including wisdom, energy, and ability to discern things.

We are surrounded daily by evil ideas crashing into our thought system and causing us to focus on self-improvement and self-promotion. This is the reason Jesus defines himself as the Good Shepherd who can help us overcome our daily sinful acts. It is Jesus alone who can quench the insatiable greed of the human heart. He can provide safety when we feel a lack of it and he can nourish us when we are finding no satisfaction in life.

The reprieve for our security is hearing Jesus' voice. I mean, Christ speaks to us through various ways, and we ought to be listening intently: to the scripture being read, to the songs we sing, to the testimonies we hear from others; to the sermons coming to us from various sources, and to our commitment to prayers. These are the ways I personally harken to Jesus' voice. When any of these means of grace convicts me, I repent and follow the Lord faithfully.

In the modern era, stealing utilizes different methods, including coercing, indirect speech, and offering free but inappropriate help for a perceived need. Some of the offers come with intent to mislead you to a wrong gospel later, and some come with indirect advice to undercut your success whether in business, your family's achievements, your children's gifts, or your spiritual ventures.

Most modern-day thieves do not break boma, shops, houses, or churches (though when such break-ins happen they may not be resulting from emotional and psychological impetuses or twists). Modern-day thieves twist their victims' thought processes with intent to provide improper teachings etc. I dare desire to listen carefully to the voices of those in my life, asking Christ to help me discern truth from scorn, sincere talk from hypocrisy, and enticements away from an unwavering commitment to follow Christ who offers me the abundant life.

Some modern-day thieves thrive by gaining access into our lives through other means than being in Christ. Listen carefully to the discussions in Bible studies and in casual conversations lest you get misled. Enemies of the cross are multiplying daily. I know most of us discern which sources to listen to for news and switch off those that feed us incorrect information. In the same way we must discern what Christian dialogues are beneficial and which to switch off. Avoiding wrong gospel does not mean terminating the relationship; it means being careful what you take away from the relationship. Jesus is literally warning us to avoid wrong doctrines. It is better to enter by the gate for access to the truth than climbing over the wall or poking a hole in the

fence. And those who try to gain access to believers through cheap grace are also warned to avoid these illegitimate means.

Accepting Christ is obeying his teachings found in the scripture and relying on the historical Christian truths.

Jesus died and rose for us to achieve abundant life, a life with overflowing spiritual gifts, the blessings after blessings, and the endless joy. To know and understand Christ's voice from other voices is very satisfying and rich at the core. Jesus taught the abundance concept that only became real after his death and resurrection, so we are the beneficiaries of abundant life.

May our faith draw us to the cross and give us confidence in God who offered Christ, a sacrifice for our sin. May our confidence grow strong day by day and attest to the saving grace that is greater than life. The grace that lights our way and sustains our love for Christ and one another—may that light of the cross illuminate our way through this earthly life. May our faith be our vision that provides healing when we get tempted and fall short of God's favor. May this faith draw us back to the cross. May our faith drive us toward a hopeful future with God and one another.

**Amen.**