

John 10:11-16 (NIV)

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

What does “good” mean today? A “B” average in school is said to be good. Anything that’s not horribly bad can be said to be good. Good can really mean average or simply not bad. Is that what this portion of God’s Word is saying here, that the good shepherd is simply average or not bad? Not at all! English doesn’t do justice in describing Jesus as our shepherd. Jesus is a shepherd in a class by himself. He is the most excellent shepherd that we could ever have. He is so excellent that he is perfect! He is the Perfect Shepherd. A perfect shepherd who protected his sheep at all costs, even to the point laying down his life!

Jesus served as our perfect shepherd by dying on the cross to take away our sins. He did it because he cared for us. He was completely different than the other shepherds that had been leading the Jews at this time. Jesus compares them to hired hands. They are only in it for the money; only concerned about bettering themselves. So, when things start to get dangerous, they leave the sheep to save themselves. When the sin and devil attacked the people, the religious leaders did nothing to stop it.

But Jesus did everything for his sheep. He saved them from the wolves of the devil by putting his life in their place, in our place. By that vicarious, substitutionary, selfless act, Jesus has created a bond with us as close as Jesus and his Father. Jesus knows us. He knows our names; he knows even the very hairs on our heads. He knows all of our wants and needs. He knows when we are hurting and in need of comfort. He knows us and has given us a way to know him. He’s given us his Word and Sacraments. He’s given us everything! He’s sought us out and brought us into his sheep pen with all other believers. He is nowhere near average. He is THE GOOD SHEPHERD!