



## The Christmas Shepherd

*... and this is how you will recognize him: You will find a baby lying in a manger, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth!” (Luke 2.10-12)*

In hindsight the strips of cloth should have been a clue. They are hardly the clothes of an heir of noble distinction. They were then what they still are today; the wardrobe of the poor. So it is ironic that the shepherds rushed to the manger to see a king and did not recognize that they were looking at one of their own—a shepherd.

Yes, this Shepherd would one day give His life for His sheep (unthinkable!)

Yes, this Shepherd would one day be exalted a King (unimaginable!)

Yes, this Shepherd will one day judge heaven and earth (unbelievable!)...

Yet, like a Shepherd He knows His sheep

*and His sheep know Him;*

Like a Shepherd He speaks and His sheep *still hear His*  
*voice today;* and

Like a Shepherd He will return for His own.

His watchful eye,

His guiding hand,

His abundant provision,

His defending staff and

His unfailing love all reveal His Shepherd's heart.

Be not distracted by the pomp and circumstance that surround Him at His birth nor the glory that surrounds Him now in heavenly splendor. The testimony of the Scriptures is clear:

Jesus Christ is the *Good Shepherd*.<sup>1</sup>

Look closely at Him. Goodness was the special excellence which seemed to gleam through the character of His life and ministry. His greatness was concealed, His power restrained, and His numbers were few. Yet His name evokes pause, His teaching remain unsurpassed, and His passion for people has never been contested. Where most saw only crowds He saw only sheep in need of a shepherd.

So He

Healed their sicknesses...  
Freed their oppressed...  
Taught all a liberating Word... and  
Wept over their sins.

When it came time for him to die, this Good Shepherd  
Stood trial  
Endured condemnation,  
Agonized on the mount of doom, where He  
Suffered, bled, and died.

Yet, He was not merely a good shepherd...

Jesus Christ is the *Great Shepherd*<sup>2</sup>

He dies a Good Shepherd;  
But He rises a Great Shepherd!  
His greatness is no longer concealed;  
His majesty no longer incognito.  
He, who once laid down His life for His sheep,  
Now stands up triumphantly before them.  
The stone is rolled away;  
There will be no more dying for Him.

For the next 40 days following His resurrection Jesus presents Himself to his followers. He does not exercise His power to impress, intimidate, or enslave those He leads. Neither does He use, trick, or manipulate people to make Himself great. Instead He chooses to manifest His power as a Savior who will not abuse nor abandon His sheep. He promises those He loves that He will send another, like Himself, who will empower them and shepherd them as He has.

In His greatness He gives the Holy Spirit who will be a counselor, advocate, guide, and teacher<sup>3</sup> to all who desire to be in the Great Shepherd's care.

He is the Great Shepherd;  
Ascended now on high;  
Riding in triumphal estate;  
Heralded by angels;  
Acclaimed and worshipped;

Wonderful, Counselor,  
Almighty God!  
Yet always the Great Shepherd you still see.

Jesus Christ *is* the Good Shepherd...  
Jesus Christ *is* the Great Shepherd...  
But He is still a great deal more...

Jesus Christ is the *Supreme* Shepherd!<sup>4</sup>  
Good in His dying!  
Great in His rising!  
Supreme in His coming again!

The Good Shepherd wears a crown of thorns  
The Great Shepherd wears the crown of Life  
The Supreme Shepherd *gives* the crown of Life.

Beloved, let me have your hearts here...

While He is the good Shepherd He is all alone,  
Dying for our sins upon the cross.  
While He is the great Shepherd he is still alone,  
Rising that we may be reconciled with God.  
But the Supreme Shepherd will not be alone when He comes again...

He will gather to Himself  
Every servant who has fed His sheep;  
Every teacher who has nursed His lambs; and  
Every worker who tended His blood-bought flock  
That together they will stand with Him  
No longer as His flock but *as His friends*.

Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd  
Who lays down His life that you may have life...  
Jesus Christ is the Great Shepherd  
Who rises that you may rise above all shame, sin, decay and brokenness  
Jesus Christ is the Supreme Shepherd  
Who will gather you unto His safekeeping.

Jesus Christ is the Christmas Shepherd;  
Born in a manger not to herd animals but to shepherd souls to God...  
He still feeds His flock like a shepherd;  
He still gathers up lambs in His arms  
He still gently leads those with young and  
His sheep still hear His voice...

At Christmas we rightly extol Him:  
Messiah, Son of David,  
Christ the Lord, Newborn King,  
Immanuel, Savior,  
Prince of Peace.

Yet, those who know Him, will always cherish this:  
He is our Christmas Shepherd.

This Christmas can you tell me how good a Shepherd Jesus was? Can you measure the height and depth of the extraordinary goodness that dwelt in him? Can you tell me how great a shepherd Jesus is? Can you imagine another like Him? Can you name another name whose greatness can possibly rival His supremacy? Who else has used their greatness to demonstrate love with the passion, impartiality, and faithfulness that has been the hallmark of His presence and influence upon all of history? Is there anyone who could possibly offer you more?

Every year Christmas presents each of us with the opportunity to receive the gift of the Christmas Shepherd. For some it is the opportunity to refresh and renew our relationship with Him. For others it is a chance to receive this Gift of gifts for the first time. For all of us it is the opportunity to say:

*Jesus Christ, Christmas Shepherd,  
Good Shepherd who gave your life for me;  
Great Shepherd who gives life to me;  
Supreme Shepherd who comes for me;  
Be born afresh in my life this Christmas;  
Be my Lord and Savior  
That I might follow you,  
The tender Shepherd of my  
Life, soul, mind, heart, and strength.  
Amen.*

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1. *John 10.11*
  2. *Hebrews 13.20*
  3. *John 15.5-16*
  4. *1 Peter 5.4*