

## *Leadership through Sacrifice*

John 10:11-18 (April 25, 2021)

### ***John 10:11-18***

<sup>11</sup>“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup>The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. <sup>14</sup>I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup>just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. <sup>18</sup>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.”

### ***Historical Context***

The ancient shepherd of Palestine or Asia Minor had to be tough, worked often in areas of sparse growth, frequently amid danger from wild animals and sheep stealers, and had to protect the flock, especially at night. John 10 reflects this less than idyllic world. The shepherd was also a common image used for rulers, from ancient Egypt to Israel. It reflected both versatile strength and nurture. It was an image of engaged leadership.

### ***Theme: Leadership through Sacrifice***

Sacrifice seems to be an ugly word these days. Self-indulgence, not self-giving, is society's keyword. Yet, beyond the self-absorbed veneer of culture, people are willing to give up for something greater. They are willing to sacrifice for those they love and for that in which they have faith. Sacrifice is the yardstick that measures one's character and values. Self-giving proves the worth of one's words and intent. Just how far should we be willing to sacrifice for others and for our ideals?

Jesus painted two contrasting pictures of spiritual leadership: the loyal leader and the coward. But, underneath the contrasting pictures, Jesus emphasized leadership was a process of ongoing choices between self-giving and selfish preservation. The loyal leader died for his or her flock (even a little each day) in hope of resurrection. But, the hireling didn't want to die for the flock, because he or she had another agenda. How did a Christian leader know if he or she was a good shepherd? The shepherd empowered the sheep to an intimate relationship with the Lord and his Father. This was the value for which one would willingly give up his or her life.

We are to shepherd in the same fashion, to sacrifice out of love. We are to lead by giving of self for the good of others. More important, we are to lead in a way that brings others to Christ and through Christ to the Father. So, to lead in this fashion, we need to sacrifice self-interest and ego. But the rewards of love make that sacrifice worth the cost.