

Good Shepherd, Lamb of God

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Jesus Christ calls us in His voice and His name. He seeks and gathers us. He teaches us how to minister in love.

Dear brothers and sisters, have you ever had trouble falling asleep and tried counting imaginary sheep? As fluffy sheep jump over a fence, you count: 1, 2, 3, ... 245, 246, ... 657, 658 ...¹

In my case, counting sheep doesn't make me sleepy. I worry about missing or losing one, and that keeps me awake.

With the shepherd boy who became a king, we declare:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

"He restoreth my soul."²

At this Easter season, we celebrate the Good Shepherd, who is also the Lamb of God. Of all His divine titles, no others are more tender or telling. We learn much from our Savior's references to Himself as the Good Shepherd and from prophetic testimonies of Him as the Lamb of God. These roles and symbols are powerfully complementary—who better to succor each precious lamb than the Good Shepherd, and who better to be our Good Shepherd than the Lamb of God?

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," and God's Only Begotten Son laid down His life in willing obedience to His Father.³ Jesus testifies, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."⁴ Jesus had power to lay down His life and power to take it up again.⁵ United with His Father, our Savior uniquely blesses us, both as our Good Shepherd and as the Lamb of God.

As our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ calls us in His voice and His name. He seeks and gathers us. He teaches us how to minister in love. Let us consider these three themes, beginning with Him calling us in His voice and His name.

First, our Good Shepherd "calleth his own sheep by name. ... They know his voice."⁶ And "in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ."⁷ As we seek with real intent to follow Jesus Christ, inspiration comes to do good, to love God, and to serve Him.⁸ As we study, ponder, and pray; as we regularly renew sacramental and temple covenants; and as we invite all to come to His gospel and ordinances, we are hearkening to His voice.

In our day, President Russell M. Nelson counsels us to call the restored Church by the name Jesus Christ revealed: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁹ The Lord said, "Whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it *in my name*; therefore ye shall call the church *in my name*; and ye shall call upon the

Father *in my name* that he will bless the church for my sake."¹⁰ Across the world, in our hearts and homes, we call upon the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. We are grateful for such generous blessing of our home-centered, Church-supported worship, gospel study, and wholesome family activities.

Second, our Good Shepherd seeks and gathers us into His one fold. He asks, "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, *until he find it?*"¹¹

Our Savior reaches out to the one and to the ninety-and-nine, often at the same time. As we minister, we acknowledge the ninety-and-nine who are steadfast and immovable, even while we yearn after the one who has strayed. Our Lord seeks and delivers us "out of all places,"¹² "from the four quarters of the earth."¹³ He gathers us by holy covenant and His atoning blood.¹⁴

Our Savior told His New Testament disciples, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold."¹⁵ In the Americas, the resurrected Lord testified to Lehi's covenant children, "Ye are my sheep."¹⁶ And Jesus said yet other sheep would hear His voice.¹⁷ What a blessing the Book of Mormon is as another testament witnessing the voice of Jesus Christ!

Jesus Christ invites the Church to receive all who hear His voice¹⁸ and keep His commandments. The doctrine of Christ includes baptism by water and by fire and the Holy Ghost.¹⁹ Nephi asks, "If the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water!"²⁰

Today our Savior desires that what we do and who we are becoming will invite others to come, follow Him. Come find love, healing, connection, and covenant belonging in Him, including in God's holy temple, where sacred ordinances of salvation can bless all family members, thus gathering Israel on both sides of the veil.²¹

Third, as the "Shepherd of Israel,"²² Jesus Christ exemplifies how shepherds in Israel minister in love. When our Lord asks if we love Him, as He did with Simon Peter, our Savior implores: "Feed my lambs. ... Feed my sheep. ... Feed my sheep."²³ The Lord promises that when His shepherds feed His lambs and sheep, those in His fold "shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking."²⁴

Our Good Shepherd cautions that shepherds in Israel must not slumber,²⁵ nor scatter or cause the sheep to go astray,²⁶ nor look our own way for our own gain.²⁷ God's shepherds are to strengthen, heal, bind up that which is broken, bring again that which was driven away, seek that which was lost.²⁸

The Lord also warns of hirelings, who "careth not for the sheep,"²⁹ and "false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."³⁰

Our Good Shepherd rejoices when we exercise individual moral agency with intention and faith. Those in His fold look to our Savior in gratitude for His atoning sacrifice. We covenant to follow Him, not passively, blindly, or "sheepishly," but instead desiring with all our hearts and minds to love God and our neighbor, bearing one another's burdens and rejoicing in one another's joys. As Christ freely dedicated His will to the will of the Father, so we reverently take upon us His name. We gladly seek to join His work of gathering and ministering to all of God's children.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is our perfect Good Shepherd. Because He has laid down His life for us and is now gloriously resurrected, Jesus Christ is also the perfect Lamb of God.³¹

The sacrificial Lamb of God was foreshadowed from the beginning. The angel told Adam his sacrifice “is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father,” which invites us to “repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore.”³²

Father Abraham, who established covenant blessings for all the nations of the earth, experienced what it meant to offer his begotten son.

“And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb ...?”

“And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb.”³³

Apostles and prophets foresaw and rejoiced in the foreordained mission of the Lamb of God. John in the Old World and Nephi in the New World testified of “the Lamb of God,”³⁴ “yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father[,] ... the Redeemer of the world.”³⁵

Abinadi testified of Jesus Christ’s atoning sacrifice: “All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the [iniquity] of us all.”³⁶ Alma called the great and last sacrifice of the Son of God the “one thing which is of more importance than they all.” Alma encouraged, “Have faith on the Lamb of God”; “come and fear not.”³⁷

A dear friend shared how she gained her precious testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. She grew up believing sin always brought great punishment, borne by us alone. She pleaded to God to understand the possibility of divine forgiveness. She prayed to understand and know how Jesus Christ can forgive those who repent, how mercy can satisfy justice.

One day her prayer was answered in a spiritually transforming experience. A desperate young man came running out of a grocery store carrying two bags of stolen food. He ran into a busy street, chased by the store manager, who caught him and began yelling and fighting. Instead of feeling judgment for the frightened young man as a thief, my friend was unexpectedly filled with great compassion for him. Without fear or concern for her own safety, she walked straight up to the two quarreling men. She found herself saying, “I will pay for the food. Please let him go. Please let me pay for the food.”

Prompted by the Holy Ghost and filled with a love she had never felt before, my friend said, “All I wanted to do was to help and save the young man.” My friend said she began to understand Jesus Christ and His Atonement—how and why with pure and perfect love Jesus Christ would willingly sacrifice to be her Savior and Redeemer, and why she wanted Him to be.³⁸

No wonder we sing:

*See, the Good Shepherd is seeking,
Seeking the lambs that are lost,
Bringing them in with rejoicing,
Saved at such infinite cost.*³⁹

As Lamb of God, our Savior knows when we feel alone, diminished, uncertain, or afraid. In vision, Nephi saw the power of the Lamb of God “[descend] upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord.” Though “scattered upon all the face of the earth ... they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.”⁴⁰

This promise of hope and comfort includes our day.

Are you the only member of the Church in your family, school, workplace, or community? Does your branch sometimes feel small or isolated? Have you moved to a new place, perhaps with an unfamiliar language or customs? Perhaps your life's circumstances have changed, and things you never thought possible now confront you? Our Savior assures us, whatever our circumstances, whoever we are, in the words of Isaiah: "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."⁴¹

Brothers and sisters, our Good Shepherd calls us in His voice and in His name. He seeks, gathers, and comes to His people. Through His living prophet and each of us, He invites all to find peace, purpose, healing, and joy in the fulness of His restored gospel and on His covenant path. By example, He teaches the shepherds of Israel to minister in His love.

As Lamb of God, Jesus's divine mission was foreordained and rejoiced in by apostles and prophets. His Atonement, infinite and eternal, is central to the plan of happiness and the purpose of creation. He assures us that He carries us next to His heart.

Dear brothers and sisters, may we desire to be "humble followers of God and the Lamb,"⁴² perhaps someday to have our names written in the Lamb's book of life,⁴³ to sing the song of the Lamb,⁴⁴ to be invited to the supper of the Lamb.⁴⁵

As Shepherd and Lamb, He calls, Come again "to the true knowledge ... of [your] Redeemer, ... [your] great and true shepherd."⁴⁶ He promises that "by his grace [we] may [become] perfect in Christ."⁴⁷

At this Easter season, we praise Him:

"Worthy is the Lamb!"⁴⁸

"Hosanna to God and the Lamb!"⁴⁹

I testify of Him, our perfect Good Shepherd, the perfect Lamb of God. He calls us by our name, in His name—even the sacred and holy name of Jesus Christ—amen.