

A Different Kind of Hero
October 18, 2009

So how do you feel about that song?

Ahh, cowboys, now that's my kind of hero. Maybe that's what I should have been, probably is, growing up in Chicago, there weren't a whole lot of cowboys hanging around.

Now let me show you a radically different picture of a hero

John 10:11-12 (NCV)

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. The worker who is paid to keep the sheep is different from the shepherd who owns them."

Now maybe at first glance they can look sort of similar

Shepherd's can be rugged.

They can sleep in the wild with wild animals, never getting a day off, always called to be on the alert.

Truth be told cowboys and shepherd often share the same home, a pasture some place with the moon and stars as their night lights.

But that's just about where it ends.

Shepherd's love the sheep, now don't get me wrong I'm not saying that cowboys don't appreciate cows, it's just that they don't really know the animal, and really doesn't want to.

When was the last time you saw a cowboy, sitting on the ground petting a cow, or trying to carry one on his shoulders?

So what's the big difference?

I'll give you a hint . . . it's all about what's in the frying pan.

A cowboy's job is to lead a cow to slaughter, while a shepherd leads a sheep to be shorn. Shepherd's want the sheep's wool and so they get treated differently.

A cowboy drives his cattle, a shepherd leads their sheep.

A herd of cattle has dozens of cowboys, a flock of sheep, just one shepherd.

Cowboys wrestle, brand and rope their cattle. Shepherd's lead, guide and feed their sheep.

Cowboys only know the names of the other cow hands, shepherd's know the names of their sheep.

A cowboy will whoop and holler at his cows, the shepherd calls his sheep by name.

Have you ever thought about how much different the Christian life would be if Jesus had called Himself "the Good Cowboy?"

The problem is that a lot of Christians see Jesus like that, sort of a hard faced, whooping and hollering voice from heaven who's only job it is to drive people, against their wills, to a place they don't want to go.

If that's you, you've got the wrong picture.

Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd, the Shepherd who knows His sheep by name and lays down His life for them.

You can also be a “different kind of hero” by being a small group leader as a part of our middle school and high school ministries.

We’ve already begun for this semester, but we’d love to invite you to join in with a group that’s already meeting, learn the ropes and away you go. You can mark that box too.

Another choice might be that you like to be a different kind of hero by promoting the High School Ministry Post Game on October 23rd in my community. We have a table out in the lobby where you can pick up posters, get more information, talk to one of our student staff people with any questions that you have.

And then there are probably just a bunch of you that would say, “I don’t know what I’m supposed to do, but I just want to do something.”

You just simply need to write the word “Hero” on your communication card and we’ll get a hold of you and chat about what your hero status might look like.

A Shepherd who protects, provides, and possesses His sheep.

Do you have a Bible with you today? Hopefully when you came in you received a worship program and by now one of our students should have given you something to write with.

Here’s what I want you to do.

Depending on your Bible prowess either turn with me to the next few passages or write down the references I’m going to give you and then when you get home this afternoon, take your time going through your Bible, finding these verses and underlining them or chatting about them over lunch.

Let’s start in the book of Psalms, easy to find, right in the middle

Here’s the first one . . .

Psalms 23:1 (NCV)

“The Lord is my shepherd.”

And then there’s Psalm 79:13,

Psalms 79:13 (NCV)

We are your people, the sheep of your flock. We will thank you always; forever and ever we will praise you.

Psalms 80:1 (NCV)

“Shepherd of Israel, listen to us. You lead the people of Joseph like a flock.”

Psalms 95:7 (NCV)

“He is our God and we are the people he takes care of and the sheep that he tends.”

Psalms 100:3 (NASB)

“Know that the Lord Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; *We are* His people and the sheep of His pasture.”

And, at the risk of boring you with too much Bible turning, let me show you just a couple of places where the imagery is carried over into the New Testament.

Now here I just want you to write down the reference, and go home and read it for yourself this week.

In, **Luke 15:1-7**

We find He is the shepherd who will risk His life to save the one straying sheep.

In, **Matthew 9:18-38**

The Shepherd has pity on people because they are like sheep without a shepherd.

In, **Luke 12: 13-33**

We find that His disciples are His flock

Just a couple of more,

In **Matthew 26: 26-35**

We find out that when the shepherd is attacked, the sheep are scattered.

In **1 Peter 2: 21-25**

He is the shepherd of the souls of men.

And finally in **Hebrews 13: 20-25**

He is the great shepherd of the sheep.

Being an example, demonstrating a life worth following, reproducing yourself in someone else has to be one of the highest callings there is and I’ve come today to say if the body of Christ is going to be what it’s supposed to be then this simply is not an option.

That’s right, everyone of us, called to be a “different kind of hero” that’s what I’m talking about.

Here’s what I’d like you to do . . . reach into your worship program and find your communication card.

Hopefully by now your name is on there and if you’re interested in finding out more about the journey of faith you’ve written “First Steps” somewhere on your card.

But what I’d like you to do now is turn the card over and look with me at the back for just a minute.

Here’s where the hooves meet the trail.

I’ve put some boxes on the back of your cards that I want you to consider, ways that you can tangibly be a “different kind of hero.”

Here’s the first one,

I want to be a different kind of hero, please pass along to me information about being a student ministries prayer partner.

Mark that and you’ll be able to be a hero to students by having influence on the heart of God for the cause of Student Ministries.

that I spent my first Sunday as a part of the Wooster Grace pastoral family.

Beginning my 9th year, I almost can't believe it.

And do you know what's even more amazing than 8 years at Grace? The church I pastored at before coming here to Grace, I was there 11 years. And do you know why? Because people aren't born sheep, they are born lambs.

And so for the 11 years of my life that I served at that church I took seriously the challenge to finally be one Christ following adult that students could look up to,

Someone that didn't say one thing and live something totally different, someone who could help and heal in their times of hurt, and someone worth following who wasn't going to quit on them just because life got hard.

And maybe to you that sounds like a cowboy, but to me that sounds like a shepherd. See I stayed so long because I knew the Lord had called me to stand watch over His lambs and that wasn't a responsibility I planned on taking lightly.

Hero? Not a word I would use about myself. To even talk about it feels foolish. And yet I'll confess that one of my life long prayers has been that I would be a hero, a person worth following, especially to my wife and to my kids.

The difference is that in Student Ministries, we are not looking for cowboy type heroes, but a different kind of hero, we're looking for shepherd heroes.

People who will take seriously the truth about how Jesus guides us, feeds us and cares for us and then turn around and live that message out loud in front of and alongside of the students got has entrusted to our care as a church.

I read somewhere once that 80% of Jesus' listeners made their living off of the land, that means probably plenty of them were shepherds.

People who lived on the mesas with the sheep. If you were a sheep, you had a shepherd. One that was never off duty.

When you wandered he found you, when you fell he carried you, when you were hurt, he healed you.

See we all know that sheep aren't that smart. Know why running water is so dangerous for sheep? They stroll in, their wool gets soaked and then they get so heavy that they drown. So if you raise sheep, you'll probably want to keep them out of the family pond.

Maybe that's why the words of Psalm 23 mean so much, when we are promised to be led to be led besides still waters.

Psalms 23:2 (NIV)

"he leads me beside quiet waters"

Sheep don't have claws, horns or fangs, they are pretty much helpless. Sheep need a shepherd who can protect them,

Psalm 23:4

"your rod and your staff they comfort me."

Sheep don't even have a very good sense of direction.

What they really need is someone who

Psalms 23:3 (NIV)

"guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

And so do we.

I don't know about you but I can be swept away by waters I should have avoided.

I don't have any defense against the evil lion that prowls around looking for someone to devour.

And man can I get lost, just ask anybody that knows me.

Which reminds me of Isaiah 53:6,
Isaiah 53:6 (NCV)

"We all have wandered away like sheep; each of us has gone his own way."

We need a shepherd to guide us not a cowboy to herd us, and we have one who knows us by name.

How important is someone knowing your name? Can I just tell you that being a pastor in a church this size is quite the challenge.

Have you ever been in a situation where someone forgot your name?

ILLUS: I read a story this week about a woman who underwent some surgery and when she woke up in the recovery room she could hear another patient just sort of groaning.

As this woman laid there she could hear a very well meaning nurse come up to the man trying to comfort him, "Settle down Tom, settle down."

But the man continued to moan, and the nurse leaned over and said, "It's all right Tom, just go with the pain. It will be okay Tom, it's just going to take some time."

Finally, after a few more attempts to comfort the man, he finally spoke in a low, painful voice, "My name's not Tom."

The room got real quiet, the nurse reached over, grabbed the man's chart and said, "It's all right Harry, you'll be okay."

True story.

There's just something about when people know your name, and the Good Shepherd knows each sheep by name.

He's not a cowboy and we aren't cattle. He doesn't brand us and we're not on our way to market. He guides us, feeds us and cares for us.

And if this morning you're tired of being at a place in life where Jesus the Great Shepherd of the Sheep would have to dig for your name, then maybe it's time for you to come in from the weeds and get to know your Shepherd.

You can start the conversation with Jesus this morning by simply recognizing how it is that you've been running your life, making choices that are always and only about you, and instead releasing the controls of your life to Jesus and let Him guide you to where He wants you to be.

Here at Grace we have a place that can help you, it's called First Steps and you can just write on your white communication card the words, "First Steps" and we'll be in touch with you.

So then what does all this talk about shepherds and sheep have to do with student ministries? Wow, am I glad you're wondering that, cause I was hoping you wanted to hear me talk some more.

You probably don't know this, and maybe don't even care, but did you know that it was this month, 8 years ago that I came to Grace? I think it was even close to this weekend