

Natalie W. Bell  
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***The Good Shepherd***  
***John 10:11-18***

*“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<sup>[a]</sup> 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.”*

I read something interesting,  
About how the British have a term for someone  
who *won't do any more* than the bare minimum that their job requires.  
That person is called a **jobsworth**.  
If you ask them to exert themselves,  
they'll refuse, and say something like,  
*'that's more than my job's worth!'*

David Heim, Living by the Word, Christian Century, March 28, 2018, pg. 25.

It's kind of like the person who says ***'that's not my job'***.

You can see how this kind of employee could cause a lot of pain and  
frustration around the office!

**Nobody** wants to work with a jobsworth.

In a perfect world, nobody would be one, but we all know ***they exist***.

A jobsworth is kind of like someone,  
***who looks good on paper, or in photos,***  
but the reality of their job performance is quite different.

We were talking in Bible study Wednesday night,  
 about how we live in this weird world,  
 where everyone has a **camera** in their phone,  
 and people take **pictures of absolutely everything** and everyone,  
 even US at inopportune times, right?

There is **no real privacy** once you leave your home  
 (or possibly IN your home if it's all wired up with Google or Alexa!),  
 and everything has potential to be posted to social media.  
**One little slip up on camera** and you can look like a complete fool.

On the flip side,  
 many people can use social media to create a **fake persona**—  
 a really, really good-looking life.  
 A **Facebook life** is what I call it.

They look **great on Facebook**,  
 their pictures have all the best 'filters' to 'photoshop' them,  
 they post outstanding accomplishments,  
 their families look perfect,  
 they look like the super-professional.

But, they could be '**Facebook jobsworth**'!  
**Not really what they portray** on the computer screen!

In John's Gospel the '**hired hand is a jobsworth**,  
 who is only tending the sheep for a **paycheck**,  
 and **runs away** at the first sign of danger.  
**Looks good from afar**, but inside he's not a shepherd at all.  
 Jesus says the hired hand is not a real shepherd,  
 he doesn't own the sheep,  
 and when the wolf comes he runs away,  
 because he doesn't really care for the sheep,  
 so when things get tough, he **runs**!.

**Jesus the Good Shepherd** is the exact opposite.  
 He **knows** the sheep, they are His own.  
 They listen to his **voice**,  
 and he **loves** them so much that he **lays down** His own life for them.

Unlike the jobsworth, who is only in it for the paycheck,  
 Jesus the Good Shepherd is ***all in***.  
 He cares for the sheep by going ***above and beyond***.  
 He is willing to ***sacrifice*** His own life for theirs.  
 He has ***solidarity*** with the sheep.  
 They do not represent just a paycheck,  
 they are ***his flock***, his fold.

So creates the ***difference*** between the jobsworth hired hand,  
 and the Good Shepherd?

It can all be boiled down to one word: ***LOVE***.  
 The Good Shepherd loves the sheep, the hired hand does not.

Our 1 John passage today talks about this love of Jesus—  
 It's known as ***agape*** love in Greek,  
 Which means it's an ***unconditional, sacrificial*** kind of love,  
 A love that is willing to die for another.

1 John 3:16 says this:

*We know love by this, that he (Jesus) laid down his life for us—and we ought to  
**lay down our lives** for one another. <sup>17</sup> How does God's love abide in anyone who  
 has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister <sup>18</sup> in need and yet refuses help?  
<sup>18</sup> Little children, **let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action...**  
<sup>23</sup> And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son  
 Jesus Christ and **love one another, just as he has commanded us.....***

**Love** is the ***key*** to being a Good Shepherd---  
 unconditional, sacrificial love.

1 John reminds us that ***God IS love***,  
 and love is the way God chose to ***reveal himself*** in this world—  
 in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.  
 It's good to be reminded of this, right?

It was ***love that led Jesus to the cross***,  
 not an angry God who demanded blood sacrifice.  
 It was a ***self-giving love***, just as Paul describes in ***Philippians 2***,

that made Jesus go all the way to death on a cross, for us.  
For all of us.

Paul says he humbled himself and become obedient, even to death on a cross,  
so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and tongue confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Jesus ***embodied love***.

It is ***agape love*** that we find in ***Psalms 23*** as well,  
as we hear what the Good Shepherd, our Loving God,  
does for each and every one of us.

These are some of the ***most beloved*** words in all the Bible (so feel free to say  
it in your head in the Bible version you learned!)

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*

<sup>2</sup> *He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;*<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *he restores my soul.*<sup>[b]</sup>

*He leads me in right paths*<sup>[c]</sup>  
*for his name's sake.*

<sup>4</sup> *Even though I walk through the darkest valley,*<sup>[d]</sup>  
*I fear no evil;*

*for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff—  
they comfort me.*

<sup>5</sup> *You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.*

<sup>6</sup> *Surely*<sup>[e]</sup> *goodness and mercy*<sup>[f]</sup> *shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
my whole life long.*<sup>[g]</sup>

Wow.

There's a reason people turn to this passage in times of trouble, right?  
It's so ***beautiful, so peaceful, so reassuring***.

It reminds us that we have a loving God,  
 who **meets our every need**,  
 who wants to give us rest, refreshment, nourishment, protection,  
 abundant goodness and mercy,  
 and a final resting place.  
 Who doesn't need all of that?

Our good and gracious God is the **Good Shepherd**,  
 The shepherd of Psalm 23, and John 10.

Did you know that a shepherd actually **walks before**,  
**and leads** the sheep in his care!  
 They don't herd them from behind, like cattle.  
 If you try to herd sheep they will apparently come behind you  
 And try to follow you!

Sheep need a **leader**,  
 Just like we need a leader,  
 and **Jesus is our leader—the one we are called to follow**.

Jesus the Good Shepherd is the one who calls us to the  
 Agape love---unconditional, sacrificial---**love for one another**,  
 The love He has for us.

Which is a **steep order**, right?  
**How** are we supposed to love one another unconditionally?  
 Isn't that almost against human nature?

Well, what if Jesus **gives us the ability** to show such love?  
 I'm believe that's what he's saying throughout his sermons, and his life.  
 In John 15 he says I am the vine, you are the branches.  
 Those who **abide in me** will bear much fruit.

What if we are the **branches**?  
 And our **true source** of love,  
 is **Jesus—the vine**?

In **John 13**, at his Last Supper,  
 Jesus assumes that we **CAN love** one another.

He tells his disciples that he is giving them a ***new commandment***:  
to love one another as he has loved them.

***Why would he say*** this if we couldn't do it?  
If he wasn't going to help us?

He says in John 13, by this ***everyone will know*** that we are His disciples,  
if we love one another.

He has already told them that the ***Greatest Commandment***  
is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength,  
and your neighbor as yourself.

But on that last night he ***adds*** something—  
love one another ***as I have loved you***.

And what's so powerful is that  
He says this as is ***washing*** their feet,  
As he is giving them the Passover bread and wine, as his ***own body and blood***,  
and as he is on his way to the ***cross***.  
In other words, ***he IS love in action***.

Which reminds us of our 1 John reading today, right?  
*"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech,  
but **with actions and in truth.**"*

This is the kind of God we have,  
the kind of Savior we have.  
We follow a Savior ***who IS love***,  
self-giving, self-sacrificing love.

At Bible study this past week one of my colleagues Jeff Cranton said,  
*'we know God best when we are serving others'.*  
I agree,  
and I think we can also say  
***we know God best when we are truly LOVING others.***

***Love*** makes all the ***difference***, doesn't it?  
And the love of God, the love of Jesus,  
is not just for those who love Jesus, you know?

It's for **everyone**.

John 3:17 says, *God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but to save the world.*

The **WHOLE world**.

Which means that the love we are called to share, is not just for those who love us, right?

It's **also for our enemies!**

Wow--That's not easy, is it?

But **it's the Gospel** of Jesus Christ for sure—Jesus calls us in Matthew 5:

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,**<sup>45</sup> ....For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> what more are you doing than others?*

It's easy for us say we are not a jobsworth—

but in reality it's **easier to be a jobsworth**

when it comes to **loving beyond our circle** of friends and family, you know?

Doesn't loving our enemies **sound like MORE than our job** as a Christian is worth in this world?

Sometimes it feels that way!

It's one thing to love those who are lovable.

Its another thing to **love those who hurt us**, who curse us, who make our lives miserable again and again, right?

Now, **I'm not saying, and I don't think Jesus is either— that we should stay with those who abuse us or anyone else.**

I'm not saying we should be abused. Neither is Jesus.

Part of true love is having **good boundaries**, and getting away from an abuser.

We are to love our neighbor **as we love ourselves**, we have to love ourselves enough to care for our own welfare, and our families.

What I'm talking about are **those difficult folks** in our lives,  
 the **porcupine** folks who are just **harder to love**,  
 harder to serve, harder to imagine laying down your life for.  
 We all know them, right?  
 Yet we are still called to love them, because Jesus loves them.

And we all want to sit back and say, **I am not a jobsworth**.  
 That's what I was thinking when I read the article in Christian Century that  
 described that phrase—after all,  
 I don't like it when people say “that's not my job”  
 because I was taught that everything is potentially your job,  
 no matter who you are.

But when I think about my job as a Christian,  
 called to love everyone—well, that's difficult.  
**It's not so easy to say 'I'm not a jobsworth'**,  
 because well, it's just hard to love some people.  
 Especially people who are bent on making your life difficult—  
 you know what I mean?

And yet, we are called to **share Christ's love, even with them**.  
 Perhaps **especially** with them.

In John 10, Jesus specifically says that he has come as the Good Shepherd  
 for **ALL the sheep, even those of a different flock**.

In fact, he wants to bring ALL the sheep into **ONE fold**:

*<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**.*

In other words, **our love extends**,  
 beyond our circle of friends and family,  
 beyond our church, beyond our community,  
**beyond what is comfortable** to us.  
 Our call to love extends to **everyone**.

Which is really amazing when you think about it.  
 It's easy to see Christians loving each other.  
 It's something else to see enemies love one another.  
 It's **shocking—surprising—amazing!**



We were reading this week in 1 Samuel 24,  
 about **how David could have killed Saul**, the man who had hunted him down,  
 and instead he spared his life, out of respect for God's love for Saul.  
 Talk about **surprising King Saul**—  
 he didn't know what to think about this act of grace.

We often don't know what to think ourselves.  
 It's **amazing to hear stories** of love and forgiveness,  
 and even more amazing when we **are** the story.  
 True love of neighbor is **transformative**.

I was reading a sermon on Day 1 by the Rev. Shari Rates, about an  
 extraordinary story.  
 In February of 1993, **Mary Johnson's 20-year-old son**  
 was shot in the head by Oshea Israel, a 16 year old,  
 after an argument at a party in Minneapolis.  
 Originally wanting to see justice, she turned her anger into compassion.  
 Now she and Israel are next-door neighbors.  
 Today, she counsels mothers of murdered children,  
 while he visits prisons and churches,  
 and shares about forgiveness and reconciliation.  
 Rev. Shari L. Rates, "What's Love Got to Do With It?", *Day 1.com*, April 29, 2012

**Can you imagine such love?**  
 Where is it **needed in our lives**, today?  
 Where do we have the **opportunity** to love others—  
 especially those who are difficult to love?

Friends, hear the **Good News of the Gospel** for us today:  
 Jesus loves us so much he died for us, and **showed us how** to love one another.  
 It is his **Holy Spirit** who gives us the power to love like he loves.  
**And that kind of love—changes lives.**  
 That love—**draws people together**,  
 just like the one fold Jesus desires.

Our **Good Shepherd is leading us down the pathway of love.**  
 May we **follow in his footsteps. Amen.**