

Acts 4:5-12
Psalm 23
1 John 3:16-24
John 10:11-18

Sermon April 25th 2021

Jesus' Self-Giving Love for Us

Whenever I come across John chapter 10, I find myself thinking about all the people in my life who have given so much of themselves to love me. So, that I can experience all that life has to offer. So, that I can experience greener pastures. From my parents to my grandparents. From my friends to my spouse. From my children to my colleagues. From my mentors to those I serve. From the stranger I meet to the people I encounter within the Interfaith community.

I think of my Mother working four jobs so I could have the same opportunities as my peers. Or my Father sitting with me at a table listening to me wrestle through my past wounds. Even though at times I could see how my wounds impacted his wounds.

Or my friend sitting with me night after night as I grieved from a broken heart **(Image)**. Knowing that he could be having a much better time hanging out at the party he was invited to.

Or my grandmother sharing of her resources so I could get a university education with less financial stress. Or my Uncle taking me to football games and golf courses to give me a break from the challenges I was facing at home.

Or my mentors who gave of their time and energy to help me through the growing pains that come with learning to be a Father, a husband, a pastor. Or the stranger who stops to check that I am okay when I have a major breakdown at a bus stop.

Or my Muslim friends who offer so much of themselves and their resources to make us feel welcome in their home. Or you, the people I serve, going above and beyond, to support each other and me through this pandemic. From the financial support to help us transition to online worship, to all the hours you put in to keep our church going.

Or my children who show me a lot of grace when my goofiness goes into overdrive. Or my spouse who gives so much of herself to me every day so that I can feel supported and loved as I face all the challenges and joys in my work as a pastor, and in the rest of my life as spouse, father, friend, child.

Like the people who at times in our lives love us in self-giving ways. Giving us opportunities to experience all that life has to offer. Jesus loves us in this way. Jesus gives of himself for us. So, that we too, can experience all that life has to offer. So, we can experience greener pastures **(Image)**.

In the gospels, we see that Jesus comes into our world and dedicates a lot of time, energy, and resources to get to know us. To genuinely listen to us. To welcome us. To teach us. To care for us. To heal us. To redeem us.

As Jesus shares with us in our gospel this morning, Jesus is our good shepherd. Jesus knows us, and we know Jesus. Because Jesus takes the time to get to know us. Jesus listens to our many prayers. Jesus walks with us in our joys and in our sufferings. Jesus stands with us when we face adversity. Jesus knows us, and leaves his story with the disciples so that throughout the generations we can know him too **(Image)**.

When we think about Jesus as our good shepherd, we come to see that Jesus' whole purpose is to establish an everlasting relationship with us. A relationship that is deep and meaningful. Connecting us to God in a way we never thought possible. A relationship where we feel lifted up. Where we feel like we are grazing in greener pastures. A relationship where we feel taken care of. Where we are led beside still waters. A relationship where we feel welcomed home. Where we will dwell forever. Jesus comes to establish a relationship with us. A friendship.

We see in his ministry a leader and friend who listens to us even when others won't. We see a leader and friend who teaches us how to live with love for others even when people try to silence us. We see a leader and friend who faces threats and judgement for reaching out a hand to heal us. We see a leader and friend who is willing to go the extra mile so that we can see that in pain comes healing. In mourning comes joy. In death comes life.

We see in his crucifixion a leader and friend who is willing to die to challenge those voices that try to oppress us. We see a friend and leader who dies so we can live in a world where reconciliation is possible. We see in his resurrection a leader and friend who breathes new life into us when we suffer.

Jesus gives everything of himself so that we can experience life everlasting. So, we can be in a reconciling relationship with God, and with one another.

As Peter, John, and others who chose to follow Jesus see, when they experience Christ's self-giving love, they are moved to love others in this same way. Giving others opportunities to experience Christ's healing and redemption. Giving others opportunities to experience everything that life has to offer. Giving others opportunities to experience greener pastures.

Like Peter, John, and others, when we experience this self-giving love, through Jesus and through the people we encounter, we are moved to love others with this same self-giving love.

Giving everyone opportunities to experience everything life has to offer. From the healing and redemption we experience from our pain to the joyous times we

experience with family and friends. From being witnesses of justice happening for the oppressed in our world **(Image)** to being in relationships with people that are meaningful and life giving. From having careers and callings that are fulfilling and transformative to enjoying all the little everyday moments that make us smile. From living in a community that is welcoming and loving to living in a world where God's hospitality, peace and love reign. Jesus is our good shepherd whose self-giving love transforms our lives and our world into greener pastures **(Image)**.

Let us pray, self-giving God, we give thanks for Your Son who reflects your self-giving love in our lives and in our world. Move us with this love, to love others in self-giving ways. Showing people all that life has to offer. **Amen.**

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