

The cost of care

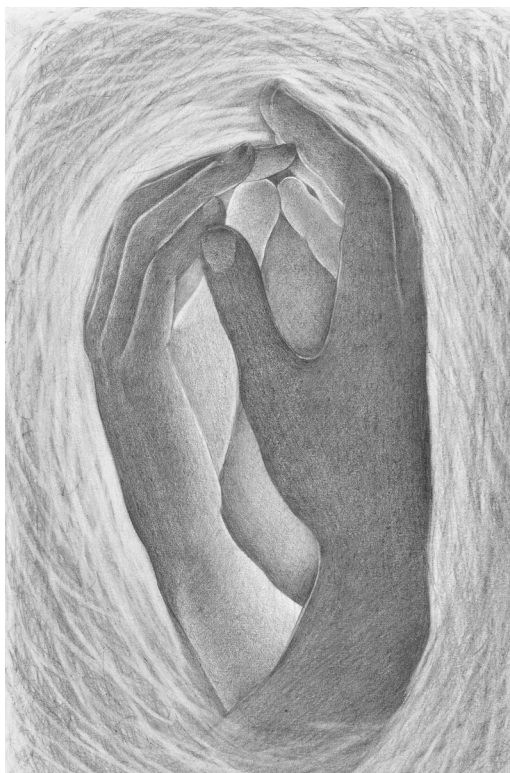
John 10.11-18

A 'monologue' where Jesus describes himself as a good shepherd. To explain how far his care for the sheep extends, he contrasts the way a good shepherd behaves with that of a hired hand, who when faced with danger like a wolf will run away and abandon the sheep to their fate. The good shepherd does not run away, rather he stays and faces the danger even when that costs him his life.

Now read **John 10.11-18** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

This is a striking image of God's powerful love for his children. The image of a shepherd reaches back into Old Testament metaphors for kingship, and by describing how the good shepherd would lay down his life for the sheep. The passage also describes the way the shepherd knows his sheep. How do you relate to this description?



Do you see Jesus as your shepherd? How does it feel to be known by the good shepherd?

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The good shepherd knows his sheep. Play a game to see if you can identify each other as sheep. Appoint one person to be the guesser and either blindfold them, or if you're on a video call, get them to turn away from the screen. Quietly move if you're in the same room so the guesser doesn't know who's sitting where. Everyone else should start making sheep noises. The idea is for the guesser to try and work out who is making which sheep noise. See how realistic you can sound!

WATCH

Enjoy watching a few episodes of *Shaun the Sheep* (on BBC iPlayer). Talk or think about how Shaun's life might be different if he had a good shepherd.

Or instead watch a short clip of a modern-day shepherd'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Coq_grSFIn.

Think about how this image relates to the one Jesus paints in the Gospel of John.



You will need: yogurt pots, wooden pegs (four per sheep), cotton wool balls, glue, black paper, scissors, black felt tips. (Alternatively, go on a walk and look at a real flock of sheep.)

Craft your own flock of sheep.

- Colour the tip of each peg black then use glue to attach four to an upside-down yogurt pot. These form the legs for your sheep, with the tips pointing downwards to look like four hooves.
- Put glue all over the pot (now the body of the sheep) and cover with cotton wool balls. Cut out some ears, a tail and a face from the black paper and stick them onto the body.

Use your sheep to reflect on the different 'sheep' in your family, church or community and how God cares for each of them.

CARE PACKAGE



By comparing himself to a good shepherd, Jesus is explaining to the disciples how much he cares for his followers. Make a care package for someone in need, containing food items and/or toiletries. Donate this to a friend, neighbour or through a local charity or Foodbank.

Pray



Devise four short prayers that start with the letters C, A, R, E and are about the need to look after others. Use your prayers during the week to think about what it means to care. Each morning, ask God to give you a chance to show care for someone else during the day.

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

Jesus began to explain how much he loved his followers and cared for their safety. How could he help them to understand? He began to talk about himself as a shepherd and his followers as sheep.

He said, 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd is even willing to give up his life to protect the sheep. A person who is paid to look after the sheep will not do this – when they see a wolf coming, they just run away and leave the sheep, with no one to protect them. This is because someone who is just paid to look after the sheep as a job is not truly the shepherd, and does not own the sheep.

'But I am the good shepherd and I know my sheep very well. My sheep also know me and hear my voice when I call them. I lay down my life for my sheep by standing between them and the wolf, so that they are safe. I have some other sheep that you have not met yet. I must call them, and they will listen to my voice, too. Then there will be one flock, with one shepherd.

'This is why the Father loves me – because I am ready to die for my sheep, but I am also ready to be raised to life again. No one takes my life from me; I choose to lay it down. I have the power to lay my life down, and I have the power to take it up again. This is God's plan and I am going to live it out.'

John 10.11-18



Did you know?

- Everyone in Jesus' day would have been very familiar with shepherds – a common job.

John 10.11-18 (NRSV)

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 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. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

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. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 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."