



November 13, 2020

"I Am the Good Shepherd"—Jesus Christ Is Yahweh

Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, - (Ephesian 3:8)

In his letter to the Ephesian Christians, Paul spoke of "the boundless riches of Christ". At the center of these "riches" is Christ himself, for he is, in fact, that being of complete self-sufficiency we have been focusing upon. He is the Shepherd-LORD of the Twenty-Third Psalm, Yahweh in the flesh! In the apostle John's depiction of the events in the Garden of Gethsemane, as Judas arrives with the group of Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers who have come to arrest him, Jesus asks them who they are looking for. When they respond, "Jesus of Nazareth," his reply in the original language is powerful, literally, he says "I am." Their reaction to this self-revelation is telling: they draw back and fall to the ground (John 18:1-8). Jesus is signaling his identity as the great "I AM"—Yahweh, the eternal, self-sufficient creator of all things, and the covenant Lord of Israel.

That is why Jesus, in complete confidence, could just lay down his life. He said, "I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17-18). He was completely and totally without fear because he understood his relationship to his Father and the union he had with him. The Father was Jesus' Shepherd, just as Jesus is ours. As Jesus knew no fear, so can we.

To better understand this, and to see how a life without fear is possible, we need to look deeper into who Jesus is. We might as well just jump into the deep end of the theological pool and think briefly about the nature of God as triune. Why the Trinity? Simply put, God is a sweet society of Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as well as, a loving community of creative activity. This is why God created the heavens and populated them. What is in the heavens? Mostly persons—wonderful, glorious beings called "sons of God" (Job 1:6; 38:7) or "angels" (Heb. 1:13-14; Rev. 7:11).

Why did God create angels? Because he is a personality capable of understanding and of love, and love desires to share itself with others. So God created this grand, marvelous thing called "the heavens" and "the highest heavens" (Deut. 10:14 NIV) in which he dwells with his created angelic beings. Then out of that came his desire to create human beings as another dimension of the opportunity to develop love.

Practice: *God is personality. He creates other personalities and, out of the abundance of his being, he loves them. When you read the verses in 1 Corinthians 13 that speaks of love, what is your feeling about this description of divine love? Try it. Take a moment and reflect on Paul's description of agape, divine love, God's way of loving: Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. (1 Corinthians. 13:4-8)*