

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

The story of Laura Bell

Some years ago, a national magazine carried a story about an unusual girl named Laura Bell. After graduating from college, she took a job as a sheepherder in Wyoming. For the next three years, Laura was on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, tending to 2,000 sheep. All this time she was completely alone except for her horse, dog, and the sheep. Once a week, someone rode out to the distant hill country, where she pastured her sheep, to bring her food, mail, and rifle shells. Laura's job taught her a lot about herself.

The long hours alone gave her the time she needed to ponder her future, her doubts, & her dreams. They also gave her the time to clarify her values and to set her goals. But Laura's job did more than teach her a lot about herself. It also taught her a lot about Jesus. The Bible uses the image of a shepherd to describe Jesus. Laura experienced firsthand why the Bible uses that image. She learned firsthand what the qualities of a good shepherd are.

And what are those qualities?

First of all, a good shepherd is a totally committed person. A shepherd lives for the flock day after day, week after week, and month after month. Sheep herding isn't just another job, like working in an office or clerking in a store. Sheep herding isn't a job at all; it's a way of life. You don't shepherd sheep because it's a job to earn a living. You shepherd sheep because it's a job you love.

When Jesus called himself a good shepherd, he meant that he was committed to his flock 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. In other words, all of his energies and concerns were for the flock entrusted to his care. Every moment of his life was dedicated to it.

This brings us to the second quality a shepherd must have. Besides being deeply committed, a shepherd must be a deeply caring person. A shepherd's satisfaction is tied up with the welfare of the flock. When the flock is happy, the shepherd is happy. When the flock is in pain, the shepherd is in pain.

There's an old Jewish legend that explains why God chose Moses over all the other people on earth to shepherd his flock, Israel. One day, Moses was sheep herding some sheep that belonged to his father-in-law, Jethro. Suddenly he spotted a lamb darting off through the underbrush.

Moses dropped everything and pursued it, lest it be killed by a wild animal or become lost.

He finally caught up with the lamb at a tiny stream of water, where it began to drink feverishly. When it had finished, Moses scooped it up in his arms, saying, "Little one, I didn't know you ran away because you were so thirsty. Your tiny legs must be tired." With that, he placed the lamb on his shoulders and carried it back to the flock. When God saw how caring Moses was, he said to himself, "At last, I've found the special person I have been

searching for. I will make Moses the shepherd of my people, Israel."

It was this kind of person that Jesus was, gentle and caring about each member of his flock. And so Laura Bell's unusual job taught her a lot not only about herself, but also about Jesus. It taught her why the Bible gave Jesus the title of the Good Shepherd. It was because he had to a perfect degree two qualities every shepherd must have.

He was committed and caring. His sole concern was the flock his Father had entrusted to him.

It taught her why Jesus is a model for all parents, all teachers, and others who have people entrusted to their care.

I can promise you, that each time you follow the model of the Good Shepherd, even in the smallest way, you will know that.....

YOU ARE LOVED,

DEACON DAN

+Story shared from Fr. Mark Link