

## Theme: Who is Your “Leader”?

### Text: Mark 6:30-34 (EHV)

<sup>30</sup> The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup> And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup> And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. <sup>33</sup> Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. <sup>34</sup> When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

I once read a quote regarding leadership that said this:

*“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.”* (John C. Maxwell)

I want you to think about that quote as you consider our sermon text for today. I want you to think about that quote as we consider the question that makes up the theme for our sermon: Who is Your “Leader”?

This is an important question to ask as we examine our life, isn't it? Whoever—or whatever—it is that is leading you, guiding you, directing you along your path of life had better know the right way to go, and had better be able to show you how to go that way as well. We can answer that question, Who is Your “Leader”?, in an infinite number of ways, but there really is only One right answer.

Now, the way we often live out the answer to the question Who is Your “Leader”?—who, or what, is it that is leading, guiding, and directing you—is usually summed up with one short word: ME! Me and my desires are usually what guides and directs my life, and therefore I am my own “**leader.**” This is how we human beings are by nature. We do what we think is best, what we want to do—and often for no better reason than that it “feels good,” or it makes me happy right now. We like to try and put ourselves in control of our lives; we like to think that we are the “captains of our own destinies,” we are the ones “steering our own ship.” But is that actually true? And is that really a good idea? How do we match up with that definition of a “**leader**” from the beginning of our sermon? Do we and our desires always “know the [right] way”? Do we always “go the [right] way”? And do we always “show the [right] way” to others? The answer is obviously *no!*

The problem is that we are broken and flawed people. Our desires are corrupted and sinful by nature. We do not, by nature, “know the way,” “go the way,” nor “show the way” that is right or best for us. Remember, the Bible calls us “sheep.” Sheep are very dependent animals. They need constant guidance. If they do not receive guidance from a good and caring “**leader**” they wander aimlessly and dangerously toward harm and even death. Sheep can be very foolish, are almost completely defenseless, and very self-destructive. Would you really want a sheep for your “**leader?**” Would you want a sheep “steering your ship;” guiding and directing your life?

Have you ever seen those bumper stickers or license plate frames that say, “God is my Co-pilot”? They were fairly popular back in the ‘80’s and ‘90’s. Well, I saw a bumper sticker a few years ago that was a good response to that. It said, “If God is your co-pilot, you need to switch seats!” Do we put Jesus in the “pilot’s” seat in our lives, or do we too often try and take the wheel?

Another mistake we often make is making someone or something else our “**leader.**” Sometimes we can do this without even really realizing it. Take a look at the people who were flocking to see Jesus in our text: “**When he [Jesus] went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them,**

**because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things” (v. 34).** These people were desperate for guidance, they needed direction, and many of them hoped to find it in Jesus.

Mark writes that these people **“were like sheep without a shepherd” (v. 34)**. The reality was that these people probably had many “shepherds.” Many of these people probably went to the synagogues on the Sabbath and were taught by the rabbis and teachers of the Law—the Pharisees and scribes, and other religious leaders. These “shepherds,” however, weren’t giving them the guidance or spiritual “food” that their souls needed. The people’s hearts and minds were being pointed, not to a Savior from sin, but to an earthly Messiah who would rule them in an earthly kingdom and bring them earthly blessings. That’s why when we read about the events that happened afterward in John’s Gospel account we see that many in this crowd were not Savior-seekers, but rather miracle-seekers who wished to make Jesus their earthly ‘bread’ king (**cf. John 6**). The religious leaders of Jesus’ day were much like the “shepherds” God spoke against in our Old Testament reading from Jeremiah, **“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” declares the Lord. <sup>2</sup> Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: “You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them” (Jeremiah 23:1-2).**

There are plenty of these “shepherds” around still today who leave God’s people **“scattered”** and directionless and do not supply the spiritual “food” of the Gospel of Christ that our souls need. Like the people of our text we too can follow one of these types of **“leaders”** without really even realizing it! Jesus warns us against them in Matthew chapter 7: **“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15).**

How do we know whether the church we attend, the preacher we hear, or the book we read is “leading” us in the right direction, and that we’re not just following a “bad shepherd,” or worse yet a **“wolf”**? Jesus said, **“By their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:20)**. Look at what they are doing and look at what they are teaching. Who are they being led by? Is it Jesus? What is their focus? Is it on earthly prosperity and living a good life? Is it on you achieving your potential, or receiving some miraculous spiritual gifts? Or is their focus on Jesus and His Word? Is the focus on our “Good Shepherd,” our Savior from sin who **“gives up His life for the sheep” (John 10:11)**? If it isn’t, God says **“avoid them” (Romans 16:17)**!

If we place anyone or any thing else in the “driver’s seat” of our lives, we are misguided and headed in the wrong direction. Ourselves, our desires, our job, our spouse, our friends, our wealth, even our family—if any of these are in the #1 place in our life, leading us guiding us and directing us then, once again, we need to “switch seats!” Jesus says in His Word, **“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).**

By God’s grace we call Jesus our **“Leader,”** our **“Shepherd” (Psalm 23:1)**. Who else would we want leading, guiding, and directing our lives? Doesn’t Jesus fit the definition of a **“leader”** perfectly: “A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way”?

✠ Jesus not only “knows the way,” He is **“the Way” (John 14:6)**! He came from heaven as our **“Good Shepherd”** to give us heaven by His sacrifice. Jesus once said, **“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep” (John 10:10-11).**

✠ Jesus always “goes the way.” He always did—and still does—the right thing and the best thing for us and lived that perfect life in our place that we could not. In our text we see how tirelessly compassionate our **“Leader,”** our **“Good Shepherd”** is. He saw the great scattered multitude and we are told He **“had compassion on them” (v. 34a)**. Jesus also saw us in our “scattered,” “directionless” life and was **“moved with compassion”** for us and brought us into His flock.

† Jesus always “shows the way.” Our text tells us, “**He began to teach them** [the multitudes] **many things**” (v. 34). Luke’s account of this incident tells us what Jesus taught them: “**[He] spoke to them about the kingdom of God**” (Luke 9:11). In the same way Jesus came to us and chose to be our Shepherd and lead us through His Word. His Gospel message of life and salvation through His sacrifice for our sins raised our dead souls back to life and gave our lives real purpose and direction. That Gospel message brings us into the very kingdom of God itself!

Certainly Jesus has also blessed all of us by giving us various “shepherds” in our lives—pastors (which is a word that means, “shepherd,”), as well as teachers, or our Christian parents or other Christian mentors and friends—to lead us and guide us to Jesus. But these have all been “under-shepherds” of Christ, the “Good Shepherd.”

It has truly been a great blessing to be the “under-shepherd” that Christ has given you for the past 7 ½ years. It has been my desire and prayer that all that I do and say would lead you and point you to your “Good Shepherd.” Each worship service and Bible Study I strive to bring you His words, not my words. As you probably know, last Sunday I announced that I accepted the call to serve another “flock” of believers near Milwaukee, Wisconsin, beginning in mid-October. But I want to remind you that you will not be left without a “Shepherd.” Not only am I confident and praying daily that the Lord would bring you a faithful pastor (“shepherd”) that He has prepared for you to help lead and guide you in God’s Word, but I also want to remind you that your “Good Shepherd,” Jesus will *always* be here!

And so, I remind and encourage all of us to go directly to our “Good Shepherd” and hear His Words from His mouth [the Bible]. Let Him lead you to the spiritual “**green pastures**” and “**still waters**” that “**restore your soul**” (Psalm 23:2-3). Only when we *daily* and continually hear His voice can we truly be led by Him! May we always give Jesus the “driver’s seat” to lead us, in this life and the next! May we always answer the question Who is Your “Leader”? with the One correct answer: Jesus!