

## The Flock at Waiola

*John 10:11-18*

In our passage today, Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd. The Greek word here, *kalos*, means good, but not in the sense of the opposite of bad. It means good as in something to be imitated, copied or followed, or something to use as a model. Perhaps Jesus is the Model Shepherd would be a more accurate translation. Jesus **is** the model shepherd, the one we should be like, the one who shows us the way. Now I want to be clear here, I am talking about Jesus being the model for us all. I model my faith life after Jesus just as you do. I do not think you are sheep and I am the shepherd. I think Jesus is the good shepherd and **all** of us are sheep.

To begin our study, let us join our hearts in prayer. “Wondrous God, maker of beautiful hill sides and all of the animals, creator of water and all of the fishes, we thank you for our Model Shepherd Jesus. Amen.”

The metaphor of the congregation of God’s people being called a flock of sheep has a long history in Hebrew Scripture. But there are no sheep grazing on our Maui hillsides, so what would be the local metaphor here? Perhaps the ancient tradition here of the fishponds, or loko i’a would be our best cultural comparison. The fish keeper or kia’i loko watches over and protects the fish, keeping them from harm and providing the needs of the fish. The fish gather whenever the kia’i loko comes to feed them, but the fish also gather when someone comes to harvest the fish. Fish and sheep are both habitual animals, and they must be protected to thrive.

But for us, today, in Lahaina, in the year 2015, what does this metaphor about Jesus being the Maika’i Kia’i Loko, or Good Fishpond Manager, mean? What dangers does Jesus protect us from in today’s world? What hazards lurk around Waiola that ask the Kia’i Loko to watch over and protect us? As I observe Hawai’i, aloha is being attacked as a way of life. The struggle on Mauna Kea is a metaphor for the struggle of the Hawaiian people against the power of money and greed ignoring the reverence of the land by the native Hawaiian people. Here at Waiola in Lahaina, we struggle in a place where housing is too expensive, good food is too costly, and good land and water is becoming precious and rare. Tourism, which provides the income that feeds all of us, could overwhelm the fragile land if we are not careful. Everywhere there is danger to the ‘aina, if we just stop and look. But the danger is not just physical. The precious spirituality of the land is threatened by development and greed. Here in this place of Waiola, we stand for the culture and language of Hawai’i, respecting our ali’i and kūpuna, and remembering that we are all one with the land. Here at Waiola, Jesus is our Good Shepherd and Maika’i Kia’i Loko. Here, we trust that the Shepherd will watch over and protect us, as we listen for the voice of our model shepherd speaking aloha and forgiveness to all. As with Christians always and everywhere, we need our Model Shepherd right now, and Jesus is always here watching over us, even when we try to escape or fall into a ravine, or are swept away by a rogue wave, or we mistakenly follow another voice away from Jesus’ flock.

How does Jesus as the Model Shepherd protect **you** here at Waiola? What makes **you** feel safe here? How is Jesus **your** Maika’i Kia’i Loko? Here, we can be God’s children, just as we are. Here, we know we are loved, just as we are. Here, we listen for Jesus’ voice and apply the Gospel of God’s unconditional love as we

welcome everyone and provide genuine hospitality, ho'okipa to all who come to our door. Our ministry to each other and our visitors of our fellowship meal every Sunday after worship is a wonderful example of our tradition of aloha, where we live aloha and pilialoha, fellowship and friendship with one another.

Another strong theme in our passage today is that of the false shepherd. The Book of Ezekiel in the Hebrew Scriptures talks about shepherds—and in chapter 34 it talks about the voice of the false shepherd leading the sheep astray. This was Ezekiel speaking to the false prophets that were in his land at that time, luring the people away from God's voice. There are false voices today speaking false prophecy in our land. How do we determine who is a false prophet? First, speak to our kūpuna. Our elders have spent their lives here, and they have the wisdom to help us see false prophets. Ask them whether the prophet speaks of aloha and love as the guiding principle. Ask whether **all** are included. Ask whether God's name is glorified, or if someone is taking false glory in God's name. They will tell you the true prophet and true gospel will always place God first with love as the guiding principle, and true prophets will raise Christ as the Good Shepherd, the Maiki'i Kia'i Loko. Other gospels that honor man first, or prophets who name riches first are not the true voice of the Model Shepherd. Test the message against the love of ke Akua in your heart.

In our passage Jesus also says something thought-provoking in verse 16. He says, "I have other sheep who do not belong to this fold, I will bring **them** also, and they will listen to my voice, so there will be one flock, one shepherd." This verse lets us know there will always be others that Jesus wants to come into our fold to listen to the Good Shepherd. This passage challenges us to spread Waiola aloha everywhere that we work or play. We are invited to let everyone in our lives know about the Model Shepherd and his beautiful flock here at Waiola. Here we include every kind of sheep; here, everyone is welcome because Jesus is the model shepherd who gathers this flock. Jesus is the shepherd who protects us here. Here, as children of God, we celebrate Jesus as our head, Jesus as our model shepherd, and we welcome anyone who wanders here and wonders what this place is all about. Here we celebrate the Model Shepherd, our Maika'i Kia'i Loko and we welcome every sheep, regardless of color or type or background. Just as we say at our communion table, Here God is the host and we are the guests, so here at Waiola, God is ke Akua, Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and we are the flock. Come join us here at Waiola, and be fed with the spiritual food of eternal unconditional aloha in our little fishpond of Waiola.

Mahalo nunui ke Akua! Amene.