## **毫無保留的愛**

## **Love Without Reserve**

## John 10:11-18 4/20/2025

Grace Rohrer

***11****“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.****12****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.****13****The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.****14****I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me,****15****just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.****16****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.****17****For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.****18****No one takes[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john%2010%3A%2011-18&version=NRSVUE#fen-NRSVUE-26489a)*] 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.”*

**Prayer for illumination**

Savior God, we need Your good news of the gospel; we need Your Holy Spirit’s reminder and challenge; we need this time of your Word and of worship. As we are about to listen to the Bible, help our minds and thoughts align with Your will and Your ways. Amen.

We all hope to be loved, and we like to feel the warmth, security, and tenderness that love brings. We often think that love is emotion, feelings, and sweet words. There is nothing wrong with these things—they can be part of love. However, for love to become real, it must become tangible: not only expressed through words and feelings, but also through actions.

1 John 3:18 says, “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

Easter is closely related to the Good Shepherd. That is when God’s love for humanity became tangible and visible—revealed through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. God created love.

John tells us: “By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us.” (1 John 3:16)

“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” I don’t know what you heard. What does this mean? Who is it about?

The obvious answer is that it’s the story of Jesus and His death on the cross. Yes, those answers are correct, but that understanding is too small, too literal, too simple.

The Lord’s intention is for you and me also to become good shepherds. This is what 1 John 3:16–24 says: “By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.”

To lay down one’s life is in fact to gain life; it is the ultimate expression of love.

How do we live out this kind of love today? What does such love require of us? What does it give us? Does it exist in your marriage, in parenting, in friendship? At work? Is it the lens through which you view the world and the people around you each day? Is it at the core of your conversations, actions, and decisions?

If so, what does it look like? How do you feel?

If not, why? What changes do you need to make to love in this way?

Why is love still such a problem in today’s world, still so difficult? Perhaps this is not a question that needs an answer, but one that needs our reflection.

Love is connected with laying down life. Perhaps this is the difference between the hired hand’s love and the good shepherd’s love. The hired hand is for himself, whereas the good shepherd is for others.

Today’s Scripture invites us to rethink the meaning of love and how to love. The love He delivers far surpasses sweet words, chocolates and flowers, attraction and compatibility, feelings and desires.

For the good shepherd, love is a choice, not a feeling. Love is an action, not a state of being. Love lies in the truth we do, not in what we say. Love is God’s way of dying and coming back to life.

The hired hand trades time for wages, does business, and cares nothing for the sheep. Yet the good shepherd lives for love, dies for love, and lays down his life for his sheep.

The good shepherd knows them, and they know him, just as the Father knows him and he knows the Father. The relationship between Jesus and His heavenly Father, and our relationship with Jesus, is the same. This knowing is a relationship of intimacy and love—between the Father and Jesus, and between Jesus and humanity. Jesus is the revealer of God’s life and love.

This intimate love is at the heart of resurrection and resurrected life. Resurrection is a love that lays down life. In today’s Gospel, Jesus mentions four times that He lays down His life. Four times He says to us, “I love you.” Four times He describes our way of life. John’s letter clearly speaks of this pattern: “He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for one another” (1 John 3:16).

Loving God and loving others is a choice; how we live is a choice. Making that choice comes from identifying with, having compassion for, and being willing to do something for the lives and needs of others—in our own family, our community, or across town.

No matter who it is, if we are unwilling to lay down our lives for others, we cannot claim to believe in Jesus. If we believe, we will love. If we do not love, then we do not believe.

True love cannot be separated from laying down one’s life for the beloved. It is not only about dying for someone we love. It is about how we give up a part of ourselves, even though we know we can never get it back, hoping it remains forever in another’s life and heart, and believing that the act of giving gives life.

Think of your best moments as a spouse, parent, friend, or person—weren’t they moments of giving? You gave yourself. You willingly did what you were called to do—investing yourself in another’s life, for their good and happiness.

Ask yourself: Who has loved you so deeply that you knew they would die for you? Have you ever loved someone so deeply that you were willing to die for them? What did that love look like? What did it give you? What did it ask of you? What did you have to let go of, and what did you have to accept?

Whatever your answer, you have described the love of a good shepherd. I don’t know who that person is in your heart, or what that love looks like, but that love changed both your lives. Your life and world expanded. You felt life stirred by the Holy Spirit. You felt yourself connected to something greater, beyond yourself—to God.

This is the life and love I want. This is what we long for in our marriages, in raising our children, in our friendships, and in our vocations—to risk everything for love.

1 John 3:17 says, “If anyone has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and refuses to help, how does God’s love abide in him?” For if I cannot in some way lay down my life for them, I will not lay down my life for my friends, my children, or my spouse.

This good shepherd kind of love is all or nothing. It is either for everyone or for no one. It is a cosmic love—always greater than we know, broader than the risks we are willing to take.

This is our lifelong devotion. We pour all of ourselves, everything we have, into this moment, this relationship, this person, this need, this world—without reservation. No holding back.

Jesus’ love and devotion go beyond our usual laying down life for a friend, a child, or a partner.

 In Jesus’ life, we witness His interactions with all kinds of people: the woman at the well, the blind man, Zacchaeus, Martha, the bent-over woman—a rather messy group. Especially, Jesus spent time talking with His close followers—His disciples.

We often see His words and deeds: picking grain on the Sabbath, calming the storm on the boat. Jesus built relationships with all kinds of people, especially His disciples… What about Judas and Jesus’ relationship? Why did Judas betray his teacher and friend?

Jesus’ relationships with the people He met in life make me start to think about my relationship with Jesus and with those around me. Perhaps my thoughts are universal. Why do we love others? Do we love others because we hope they will love us? Why do we love God?

Jesus shared our humanity, so He understands us. When Peter denied Jesus three times, Peter responded to grace and repented. We could spend hours guessing what was in Judas’ heart, why he never apologized to Jesus. After all, Jesus did not exclude Judas from their final supper. Jesus shared His last meal with Judas—what great love that was! We can infer Judas’ motives, but we can never know exactly what led him to betray such a good friend.

God’s love for us is infinite. Nothing can take away this unconditional love. All God asks is our affirmative response. The days of Holy Week give us the chance to re‑evaluate our response to God and to our friendships. In daily life with family, friends, coworkers, and people of different cultures, religions, and sexual orientations, are we faithful to Jesus, practicing mercy, the Beatitudes, and our Father’s will? Our nation is in political and economic turmoil. Can we pour out our worries and hopes before God? Do we, like Jesus, pray for guidance?

 I wonder—if Judas had realized that Jesus was the embodiment of hope, perhaps he would have abandoned his plan to betray. Let us continue in spiritual reflection, examining our response to the gift of hope. What can we do to contribute actively, support one another, and help create a better world together?