

A shepherd who cares

By [Robert Rimbo](#)

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This Sunday of words and songs about sheep and shepherds has always challenged me. For most of my preaching life I've been in or near a city. Now I live in New York City, where as far as I know even the Sheep Meadow in Central Park has no sheep.

Yet here is an enduring image from Jesus, an image captured perhaps millions of times in our art, our songs, our stories.

We don't like being led around by the nose. We might have a healthy respect for authority, but we can do without the dog nipping at our heels. And for some Christians, the bishop's crosier—shaped like a shepherd's crook—only brings to mind its original purpose: to keep the wayward in line and trip up those trying to stray.

So how does this image make sense for us today, for people who see sheep only on Christmas cards and have never known a shepherd? Today we are reminded that the shepherd beyond all shepherds is Jesus. What is the main characteristic of this Good Shepherd?

Care. Thank God for that. God could have left us to ourselves. Instead God took on our flesh, grew in it, faced temptation in it, and died in it—in the most unique act of love in human history.

This shepherd cares for all the flock, for you and me, for each unique and unrepeatable individual called to live in this shepherd's flock forever. This shepherd calls us by name, knows us more intimately than we know ourselves, knows that it's tough being a creature of flesh and blood and spirit and intelligence and freedom. And no matter how far we stray, this shepherd will track us down, cradle us and

gently bring us home.