Dear brothers and sisters, have you ever had trouble falling asleep and tried counting imaginary sheep? As fluffy sheep jump over a fence, you count: 1, 2, 3, . . . 245, 246, . . . 657, 658 . . .

In my case, counting sheep doesn’t make me sleepy. I worry about missing or losing one, and that keeps me awake.

With the shepherd boy who became a king, we declare:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

“He restoreth my soul.”

At this Easter season, we celebrate the Good Shepherd, who is also the Lamb of God. Of all His divine titles, no others are more tender or telling. We learn much from our Savior’s references to Himself as the Good Shepherd and from prophetic testimonies of Him as the Lamb of God. These roles and symbols are powerfully complementary—who better to succor each precious lamb than the Good Shepherd, and who better to be our Good Shepherd than the Lamb of God?

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,” and God’s Only Begotten Son laid down His life in willing obedience to His Father. Jesus testifies, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” Jesus had power to lay down His life and power to take it up again. United with His Father, our Savior uniquely blesses us, both as our Good Shepherd and as the Lamb of God.

As our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ calls us in His voice and His name. He seeks and gathers us. He teaches us how to minister in love.
to come to His gospel and ordinances, we are hearkening to His voice.

In our day, President Russell M. Nelson counsels us to call the restored Church by the name Jesus Christ revealed: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Lord said, “Whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name; and ye shall call upon the Father in my name that he will bless the church for my sake.”

Across the world, in our hearts and homes, we call upon the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. We are grateful for such generous blessing of our home-centered, Church-supported worship, gospel study, and wholesome family activities.

Second, our Good Shepherd seeks and gathers us into His one fold. He asks, “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?”

Our Savior reaches out to the one and to the ninety-and-nine, often at the same time. As we minister, we acknowledge the ninety-and-nine who are steadfast and immovable, even while we yearn after the one who has strayed. Our Lord seeks and delivers us “out of all places,” “from the four quarters of the earth.” He gathers us by holy covenant and His atoning blood.

Our Savior told His New Testament disciples, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.” In the Americas, the resurrected Lord testified to Lehi’s covenant children, “Ye are my sheep.” And Jesus said yet other sheep would hear His voice. What a blessing the Book of Mormon is as another testament witnessing the voice of Jesus Christ!

Jesus Christ invites the Church to receive all who hear His voice and keep His commandments. The doctrine of Christ includes baptism by water and by fire and the Holy Ghost. Nephi asks, “If the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water!”

Today our Savior desires that what we do and who we are becoming will invite others to come, follow Him. Come find love, healing, connection, and covenant belonging in Him, including in God’s holy temple, where sacred ordinances of salvation can bless all family members, thus gathering Israel on both sides of the veil.

Third, as the “Shepherd of Israel,” Jesus Christ exemplifies how shepherds in Israel minister in love. When our Lord asks if we love Him, as He did with Simon Peter, our Savior implores: “Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep. . . .” The Lord promises that when His shepherds feed His lambs and sheep, those in His fold “shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking.”

Our Good Shepherd cautions that shepherds in Israel must not slumber, nor scatter or cause the sheep to go astray, nor look our own way for our own gain. God’s shepherds are to strengthen, heal, bind up that which is broken, bring again that which was driven away, seek that which was lost.

The Lord also warns of hirelings, who “careth not for the sheep,” and “false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

Our Good Shepherd rejoices when we exercise individual moral agency with intention and faith. Those in His fold look to our Savior in gratitude.
for His atoning sacrifice. We covenant
to follow Him, not passively, blindly,
or “sheepishly,” but instead desiring
with all our hearts and minds to love
God and our neighbor, bearing one
another’s burdens and rejoicing in one
another’s joys. As Christ freely dedi-
cated His will to the will of the Father,
so we reverently take upon us His
name. We gladly seek to join His work
of gathering and ministering to all of
God’s children.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is
our perfect Good Shepherd. Because
He has laid down His life for us and is
now gloriously resurrected, Jesus Christ
is also the perfect Lamb of God.31

The sacrificial Lamb of God was
foreshadowed from the beginning.
The angel told Adam his sacrifice “is a
similitude of the sacrifice of the Only
Begotten of the Father,” which invites
us to “repent and call upon God in the
name of the Son forevermore.”32

Father Abraham, who established
covenant blessings for all the nations
of the earth, experienced what it meant to
offer his begotten son.

“And Isaac spake unto Abraham his
dad, and said, My father: and he said,
Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold
the fire and the wood: but where is the
lamb . . . ?

“And Abraham said, My son, God
will provide himself a lamb.”33

Apostles and prophets foresaw and
rejoiced in the foreordained mission
of the Lamb of God. John in the Old
World and Nephi in the New World
testified of “the Lamb of God,”34 “yea,
even the Son of the Eternal Father[.] . .
the Redeemer of the world.”35

Abinadi testified of Jesus Christ’s
atoning sacrifice: “All we, like sheep,
have gone astray; we have turned every
one to his own way; and the Lord hath
laid on him the [iniquity] of us all.”36
Alma called the great and last sacri-
fice of the Son of God the “one thing
which is of more importance than
they all.” Alma encouraged, “Have
faith on the Lamb of God”; “come and
fear not.”37

A dear friend shared how she
gained her precious testimony of the
Atonement of Jesus Christ. She grew
up believing sin always brought great
punishment, borne by us alone. She
pleaded to God to understand the
possibility of divine forgiveness. She
prayed to understand and know how
Jesus Christ can forgive those who
repent, how mercy can satisfy justice.

One day her prayer was answered in
a spiritually transforming experience.
A desperate young man came running
out of a grocery store carrying two
bags of stolen food. He ran into a busy
street, chased by the store manager,
who caught him and began yelling and
fighting. Instead of feeling judgment
for the frightened young man as a
thief, my friend was unexpectedly
filled with great compassion for him.
Without fear or concern for her own
safety, she walked straight up to the
two quarreling men. She found herself
saying, “I will pay for the food. Please
let him go. Please let me pay for the
food.”

Prompted by the Holy Ghost and
filled with a love she had never felt
before, my friend said, “All I wanted
to do was to help and save the young
man.” My friend said she began to
understand Jesus Christ and His
Atonement—how and why with pure
and perfect love Jesus Christ would
willingly sacrifice to be her Savior and
Redeemer, and why she wanted Him
to be.38
No wonder we sing:

*See, the Good Shepherd is seeking,*
*Seeking the lambs that are lost,*
*Bringing them in with rejoicing,*
*Saved at such infinite cost.*

Brothers and sisters, our Good Shepherd calls us in His voice and in His name. He seeks, gathers, and comes to His people. Through His living prophet and each of us, He invites all to find peace, purpose, healing, and joy in the fulness of His restored gospel and on His covenant path. By example, He teaches the shepherds of Israel to minister in His love.

As Lamb of God, Jesus’s divine mission was foreordained and rejoiced in by apostles and prophets. His Atonement, infinite and eternal, is central to the plan of happiness and the purpose of creation. He assures us that He carries us next to His heart.

Dear brothers and sisters, may we desire to be “humble followers of God and the Lamb,” perhaps someday to have our names written in the Lamb’s book of life, to sing the song of the Lamb, to be invited to the supper of the Lamb. As Shepherd and Lamb, He calls, Come again “to the true knowledge . . . of [your] Redeemer, . . . [your] great and true shepherd.” He promises that “by his grace [we] may [become] perfect in Christ.”

At this Easter season, we praise Him: “Worthy is the Lamb!” I testify of Him, our perfect Good Shepherd, the perfect Lamb of God. He calls us by our name, in His name—even the sacred and holy name of Jesus Christ—amen.

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NOTES

1. A popular song suggests:
   *When I’m worried and I can’t sleep,
   I count my blessings instead of sheep.
   And I fall asleep counting my blessings.*
   (Irving Berlin, “Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep” [1952])

5. See John 10:15, 17–18.
7. Alma 5:38; see also Alma 5:37, 39, 59–60.
8. See Moroni 7:13; Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3.
10. 3 Nephi 27:7; emphasis added.
11. Luke 15:4; emphasis added; see also Doctrine and Covenants 18:15.
12. Ezekiel 34:12; see also Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 34:6, 11–14; Micah 5:8; Matthew 10:6, 15:24. These prophecies of scattering and the promises and promises of covenant gathering are a consistent theme of the prophets, including President Russell M. Nelson.
15. John 10:16; see also 3 Nephi 15:21; 16:1, 3; Doctrine and Covenants 10:59–60.
16. 3 Nephi 15:24; see also 3 Nephi 15:17, 21.
17. See 3 Nephi 16:1, 3; see also Doctrine and Covenants 10:59–60.
20. 2 Nephi 31:5; see also Alma 7:14.
23. John 21:15–17; see also the entire chapter.
26. See Jeremiah 23:1; 50:6, 44.
27. See Isaiah 56:11; Ezekiel 34:2–6.
30. 3 Nephi 14:15; see also Matthew 7:15; Alma 5:60.
31. See 2 Nephi 9:10–12. By conquering physical death and spiritual separation, the Lamb of God makes possible the gathering of all so there is, in time and eternity, one Shepherd.


33. Genesis 22:7–8; see also Jacob 4:5.


35. 1 Nephi 11:21, 27.

36. Mosiah 14:6; see also Isaiah 53:6.


39. “Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd,” Hymns, no. 221. Other hymns that highlight our Shepherd and His sheep include the following: “The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare,” Hymns, no. 109:

   The Lord my pasture will prepare
   And feed me with a shepherd’s care,
   His presence will my wants supply,
   And guard me with a watchful eye.
   My noonday walks he will attend
   And all my silent midnight hours defend.

   “Help Me Teach with Inspiration,” Hymns, no. 281:

   Help me find thy lambs who wander;
   Help me bring them to thy keep,
   Teach me, Lord, to be a shepherd;
   Father, help me feed thy sheep.

   “Come, All Ye Sons of God,” Hymns, no. 322:

   The latter-day work has begun,
   To gather scattered Israel in,
   And bring them back to Zion to praise the Lamb.
   Come, all ye scattered sheep, and listen to your Shepherd.

40. 1 Nephi 14:14; see also 1 Nephi 13:35, 37:

   “Plain and precious [writings shall] . . . come forth . . . by the gift and power of the Lamb . . . If [we] endure unto the end . . . [we] shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb.”

41. Isaiah 40:11.

42. Helaman 6:5.

43. See Revelation 21:27.

44. See Revelation 15:3; Doctrine and Covenants 133:56.

45. See Revelation 19:9; Doctrine and Covenants 58:11; see also Revelation 7:17:

   “For the Lamb . . . shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes”; Revelation 22:1: The “pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”


47. See Moroni 10:32–33.
