



Grain

“We are greater than, and greater for, the sum of us.” –Heather McGhee

Field

¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The 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. ¹³The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I 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. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes 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.” John 10:11-18

Thoughts by Reverend James Lynch, Town of Dunn, WI

The NFL draft is less than two weeks away. Every year, football fans work themselves into a frenzy, living in hope and expectations of the fresh and new, seeing better times or continued good times ahead for their favorite team, especially with the team’s top pick in the draft.

Sadly, more than half of those hopes and expectations aren’t realized. Only about a third of first round picks sign a second contract, meaning that in 4 or 5 years, they couldn’t prove their value to their team.

There are any number of reasons for this, from lack of ability, physical and / or mental, to being a bad fit for the team and or / the scheme, to being unable to locker room politics, and more. One big reason, though, one that is sometimes almost glossed over, is coaching. As in bad or stubborn coaching. The players aren’t put in the best position to succeed. In other words, in keeping with our John passage, they aren’t shepherded properly.

Does the coach make sure the player understands what is expected and is positioned to use the gifts he has to reach those expectations? For instance, is a quarterback who is very good at throwing over the middle but not so much to the sidelines, forced by the coach to throw to the sidelines anyway? Is a defensive back who is very good in coverage made to play close to the scrimmage line in order to stop the run? They don’t have a good shepherd on their side.

A good shepherd doesn’t just lead the flock, pushing it from field to watering hole. A good shepherd makes use of the flock’s gifts, helps it be the best it can be – both individually and collectively. A good shepherd does not expose the flock to outside, possibly dangerous forces, but does their very best to keep the flock on track and moving forward.

Just as a good coach does what he needs to put his players – all of his players not just first round picks – in a position to succeed, so a good shepherd takes the best possible care of his sheep. Only bad or indifferent shepherds think it is all about them. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Jim