



Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father."

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for this opportunity to be with you in prayer. My heart is ready to listen to your words of eternal life so that I may choose to follow you more closely on the path of true love.

Petition: Lord, may I be faithful to your will in my life.

1. I Lay It Down: The Father entrusted Christ with a mission. Christ was to bring about our salvation through a life of unlimited self-giving, even to the point of giving his own life. Being God, he could repay the Father for our sins; being man he could identify with our fallen humanity and raise its dignity so that we might become the Father's children. Christ was the perfect bridge between fallen man and an infinitely holy God. His mission of bridging this chasm came about through freely accepting the will of the Father. Our Lord would receive nothing in return, and yet he was faithful even to the point of death.

2. On My Own: Jesus was not ordered to give himself for our sins. He offered himself. Freedom is best used when it willingly embraces God's will, whatever the cost might be. We have to remember that Jesus knew what lay beyond his preaching and his miracles: the road to Calvary. He spent many nights in prayer on the Mount of Olives in preparation for his hour. He foretold his fate to his disciples and continued forward towards this end despite their misunderstanding. And in the end, when the hour came, he proved faithful. When the hour of darkness sought him, he stepped forward to say, "I am he." Christ never flinched in front of God's will. He felt its weight. Sorrow flooded his heart. An easier path tugged at his humanity. But he proved that love is stronger than death, that true freedom can defeat sin and master it.

3. A Life of Love: Perhaps offering ourselves to God frightens us. What will he ask? What will I have to leave behind? Will I be able to do it? However, fear vanishes when we live out of love, like Christ. We need to remember that the Father asked him to die for us, and then look at the fruits this bore! Taking on our humanity, he left behind the splendor of his divinity and raised us to a new level. He did the impossible by bearing the weight of all our sins. He trusted in the Father to give him strength. Today we might be asked to die more to our self-love, to leave behind a vice we have been struggling with or to trust that with grace we can live a truly Christian life in a world hostile to Christianity. In the end, if we love Christ, we will not be frightened because he has already shown us the way — and he has already conquered.

Conversation with Christ: Lord, give me the courage to be a faithful Christian at all times and in all places, with whomever I meet and in whatever I say. Help me to give testimony to who you are.

Resolution: I will offer one concrete act of self-mastery for love of Christ today.