* **Apostle’s Creed**
* **Series Slide**
* Norma Jeane Mortenson was 36 years old when she died.
* You probably recognize her by her stage name “Marilyn Monroe”.
* Her story ended tragically, largely because it started so tragically.
* Norma Jean was born into a fatherless home and grew up in the shadow of the Hollywood sign. Her mother was mentally ill and so very early, Norma Jean bounced back and forth between foster homes, an orphanage, and her mother’s homes with new boyfriends and husbands. She was sexually abused both by her step-father and by men in the foster homes.
* She felt alone and abandoned so she further withdrew from people.
* 3 weeks after her 16th birthday, she faced having to move back into the orphanage. To avoid that, she married her 21 year old next door neighbor.
* It would be her first of 3 marriages.
* To cope with life, very early on- Norma Jean watched movies and loved to pretend- to act. Here she is in an interview with Life Magazine in 1962- the year she died.
* **"When I was five I think, that's when I started wanting to be an actress [...] I didn't like the world around me because it was kind of grim, but I loved to play house. [...] When I heard that this was acting, I said that's what I want to be [...] Some of my foster families used to send me to the movies to get me out of the house and there I'd sit all day and way into the night. Up in front, there with the screen so big, a little kid all alone, and I loved it."**
* **—Marilyn Monroe**
* Through a series of serendipitous encounters, Norma Jean ended up in modeling, and by the time she was 20 year old, she had appeared on more than 30 magazine covers. She carefully cultivated a public persona that became America’s prototype for female sex appeal. She changed her hair from brunette to blonde. She changed her name from Norma Jean to Marilyn Monroe. She changed how she walked- to a hip-swinging waddle that is still imitated by women today. She invented the persona of the “dumb blonde”, seeking to offer to men the appearance of a woman that could be easily manipulated…when actually she was manipulating those men. It paid off…at least by Hollywood standards. From the late 1940s to the time of her death in 1962, she appeared in over 30 films. She was Hugh Hefner’s first centerfold, was married to Joe DiMaggio, one of the greatest baseball players of all time, and had the ear (and eyes) of the President.
* Marilyn Monroe learned how to use sex appeal as power. Power that she deeply felt she needed, because her life started with so little control, with people in authority that used and sexually abused her.
* Now, she could use sex to her advantage. She could feel desired, instead of rejected. She could control men, instead of being controlled by them.
* But at 36 years old, she was found dead in her Los Angeles residence…naked in her bed, a phone receiver in her hand. Suicide by overdose.
* Marilyn Monroe was not the first celebrity…or probably the last, to commit suicide in their prime, with seemingly everything the American script says will lead to happiness.
* In a biography of her life, author Barbara Leaming wrote, **“Against almost impossible personal and professional odds, she had created something brilliant and magical- ‘Marilyn Monroe’. Her creation had brought immense pleasure to millions of people, and would continue to do so long after she was gone. The world loved Marilyn. Yet in the end she felt utterly unloved and alone.”- Barbara Leaming**
* On the outside, Marilyn Monroe was powerful woman who used her sexual image to her advantage to gain control. But she was acting.

Internally, she was deeply hurting. Longing to be loved for who she was…Norma Jean, not Marilyn Monroe.

There is a tragic poetry to the way she died, naked with a phone in her hand.

She was completely vulnerable and exposed. And she was completely alone…in her time of deepest need…she had no one to call.

It was her worst fear come true. The truth is…its all of our worst fears.

Every single one of us wants to be deeply known. We want to stop pretending…stop acting…stop constantly trying to gain power over people. We want to stop being so vigilante and defensive. We want to feel with people the way we feel when we are in our safest places…a living room in the evening in your PJs with popcorn…or across the table- sharing a meal with a trusted friend...

…but we are afraid. If people really know us…if we stop acting…if we stop giving them what they want…if they see us not as the done-up centerfold…but as the broken mess we actually are…will they stay? Will they care? Will they love us?

Our greatest fear is that when people know the REAL ME…they won’t love me anymore.

So all of us have this nagging question- when I’m at my worst…naked with nothing left to give… will I know who to call…or will I die with a phone in my hand.

* **Title Slide- “Good Bye, Norma Jean: Why the Good Shepherd Won’t Let You Die Naked & Alone”- John 10**
* Norma Jean responded to the litany of sexual abuses in her life, by using her sexuality to gain power. She saw her appearance as an opportunity: A door…A gate to a better life.
* But instead, it stole from her.
* Today, in John’s gospel Jesus says “I am the gate. The Door- the opportunity you’ve been waiting for.” And he says, “I am the good shepherd”…the authority figure who finally gives life instead of taking it.
* If only Norma Jean would have known how to call on that Good Shepherd.
* Today, I’m going to show you what Jesus says to people that abuse power…and I’m going to show you the opposite of dying naked and alone.
* Today, Jesus wants you to know…that he knows you…and he still deeply loves you.
* **John 10:1-18**
* **“Truly I tell you, anyone who doesn’t enter the sheep pen by the gate but climbs in some other way is a thief and a robber.**
* **2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 They will never follow a stranger; instead they will run away from him, because they don’t know the voice of strangers.” 6 Jesus gave them this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.**
* **7 Jesus said again, “Truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn’t listen to them. 9 I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.**
* **11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand, since he is not the shepherd and doesn’t own the sheep, leaves them and runs away when he sees a wolf coming. The wolf then snatches and scatters them. 13 This happens because he is a hired hand and doesn’t care about 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. I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 But I have other sheep that are not from this sheep pen; I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”**
* **John 10:24-33**
* **The Jews surrounded him and asked, “How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”**
* **25 “I did tell you and you don’t believe,” Jesus answered them.“The works that I do in my Father’s name testify about me. 26 But you don’t believe because you are not of my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. 30 I and the Father are one.”**
* **31 Again the Jews picked up rocks to stone him.**
* **32 Jesus replied, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these works are you stoning me? ”**
* **33 “We aren’t stoning you for a good work,” the Jews answered, “but for blasphemy, because you ​— ​being a man ​— ​make yourself God.”**
* Transition: Jesus addresses 2 things in this passage that I want to draw to your attention today. The first, is how people abuse power. The second is how he, the most powerful person in the history of the world… uses his power for our good. First, lets talk about bad authority…bad leadership…
* **1) Bad Shepherds take from the sheep… teaching them that’s the only way to survive.**
  + Often, when Xians think about what Jesus says in v 10 “A thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy.”- we think that Jesus is talking about the devil. But that is over-spiritualizing this text.
  + In Chapter 9, Jesus healed a blind man…and at the end of that chapter…because the blind man refused to say that Jesus was a demon-possessed blasphemer…the Religious leaders in the temple threw the formerly blind man out.
  + This blind man had lived his entire life dependent on the generosity of other people. He was the embodiment of weakness and vulnerability.
  + When Jesus healed him, he finally got his shot at being folded back into normal society…but then, barred from entering the temple, which put him back in a place of social isolation and weakness.
  + So Jesus comes to the man and says, “Do you believe that I’m the promised Messiah?” the man replies Yes…and Jesus says, “Then…you are one of God’s people.”
  + But he says to the Pharisees- the ones who used their power to shut this man out… Jesus told them “Your sin remains…and you will be judged for it.”
  + And then in Chapter 10- he starts talking about sheep and the good shepherd and thieves and wolves.
  + It's a story about who belongs in the sheep pen “The sheep and the Good Shepherd” and who doesn’t belong- the thieves and robbers.
  + So- Jesus is the Good Shepherd…the blind man (and folks like him are the sheep) and the thief is not the devil…the thieves are the leaders who abuse their power…who claim to speak for God, but are actually opposed to him.
  + Not only is that context important…its also to understand the Old Testament context.
  + When Jesus talks here to these Old Testament scholars about thieves who steal, kill and destroy sneaking into the sheep pen…he’s not just making the metaphor up off the cuff.
  + He’s referring back to the prophet Ezekiel. Take a look.
  + **Ezekiel 34:2-6**
  + **Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy, and say to them, ‘This is what the Lord God says to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel, who have been feeding themselves! Shouldn’t the shepherds feed their flock? 3 You eat the fat, wear the wool, and butcher the fattened animals, but you do not tend the flock. 4 You have not strengthened the weak, healed the sick, bandaged the injured, brought back the strays, or sought the lost. Instead, you have ruled them with violence and cruelty. 5 They were scattered for lack of a shepherd; they became food for all the wild animals when they were scattered. 6 My flock went astray on all the mountains and every high hill. My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and there was no one searching or seeking for them.**
  + **Ezekiel 34:10**
  + **This is what the Lord God says: Look, I am against the shepherds. I will demand my flock from them and prevent them from shepherding the flock. The shepherds will no longer feed themselves, for I will rescue my flock from their mouths so that they will not be food for them.**
  + God’s people had been led for a long time by leaders who were taking advantage of the weak with violence and cruelty…who were using the vulnerable to pad their pockets and make their own lives more comfortable.
  + But God said he was going to put a stop to that. That he himself will come and be their shepherd and no longer allow these predatory shepherds to lead.
* **Back to 1)**
  + Lets work out some implications of this.
  + First, lets talk about what you should expect from your pastors.
  + That’s what the word pastor means- Shepherd.
  + The word pastor comes from the idea that the shepherds are supposed to take the sheep out to the pasture to let them feed and graze and while doing this, the shepherd is to supposed to watch over them to be sure no thieves come to steal them or wolves come to eat them.
  + Because sheep are some of the weakest and most vulnerable animals alive.
  + SO the job of the pastors- on a basic level- is to both feed and protect the sheep.
  + That should be –again- on a basic level, what you should expect from the pastors of this church. We should see to it that this congregation is spiritually fed and protected.
  + BUT, the church has an ugly history of shepherds who come into lead who aren’t there to feed and protect…but instead, like these bad shepherds are only there to take from…not give to…the sheep.
  + Pastors have used the power that has been entrusted to them to sexually abuse women and children. Prosperity gospel pastors have fleeced money from the poor, promising that if they pad the pastors pockets- the poor will become prosperous. Pastors can ignore the spiritual needs of the sheep to build a congregation bigger and faster…even if it leaves many of the sheep malnourished or ignores their deeper issues.
  + In the past, and continuing today, there are a lot of entrepreneurs, bankers, CEO’s, Pimps, and Snake Oil Salesmen…none of whom came through the gate. They snuck in, dressed like a shepherd…and because they are friendly, or dynamic speakers, or have a seminary degree, or a good resume…they are called pastors.
  + But they aren’t there to feed and protect the sheep. They are there to use and take from them.
  + Lets expand this out a bit.
  + Any position or calling into power or authority is to be understood through the lens of the Good Shepherd.
  + Because God created us to image him…and God has always used his power to care for the weak and vulnerable… any position of leadership should be one where the powerful don’t use the weak…but serve them.
  + Unfortunately, humans have perpetuated the idea that possessing power means using it to your advantage.
  + That’s the thing about sheep. They follow. Which means, if they watch a shepherd teach them that the only way to win is to use and abuse people, they themselves become the users and the abusers.
  + Like Norma Jean became Marilyn Monroe, she was abused for sex…so she learned to use her body to be desired and wanted.
  + The metaphor breaks down a bit. Because, eventually the sheep grow up to be shepherds like Children grow up to be parents.
  + And without a better shepherd stepping in and saying “NO! This abuse of power and authority isn’t right. This is not how its done! This is not God’s way!”…often those abused sheep become thieves and robbers who think the only way to survive…is to repeat the offenses that were done to them.
* TRANSITION: Here in this passage, and through the incarnation of God himself...Jesus says “I’m the good shepherd here to intervene.”
* **2) The Good Shepherd gives his life for the sheep… teaching them that’s the only way to live.**
  + Norma Jean grew up understanding that fathers leave.
  + That foster fathers abuse you.
  + That husbands abuse you and don’t stay around.
  + So much of her acting…her career…her outward appearance was an attempt to find someone who loved her…and wouldn’t abuse or leave her.
  + She found a taste of it in adoring crowds and fans…but she knew they only loved her for the act she projected…Marilyn Monroe.
  + They didn’t know her intimately…as Norma Jean.
  + The acceptance of the crowd is never enough to fill the desire to be loved…because the crowd will never really know you.
  + Ultimately, she decided that no one would ever know her and love her…and so she ended her life, naked- with nothing to hide behind…and with no one to call.
  + But watch what Jesus says as the Good Shepherd.
  + **V 3 & 14**
  + He says that he knows his sheep…he calls them by name.
  + He says that his sheep recognize his voice and follow him.
  + There is a mutual knowing.
  + When you adored by the crowds like Marilyn Monroe was…o
  + …or like we try to be through Social Media…
  + they don’t really know you. They know a projection of you.
  + And you certainly don’t know them. In a way, you are just using the crowd for a feeling of affirmation.
  + But Jesus says he knows the name of everyone of his sheep…and they intimately know his voice.
  + In other words, we are naked before God.
  + There is no hiding our past, our sins.
  + You can’t die your hair, change your name, and waddle your hips and hope to fool God.
  + Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd…and I know you.”
  + Can you feel the fear bubbling up in you?
  + Do you feel exposed knowing that God sees you…he saw what you did last year, last month, last week, and last night.
  + He sees every imperfection, every sin, every mistake…he sees the ways you have used and abused others. HE KNOWS YOU.
  + Yet, right at that moment Jesus says, “But I also deeply love you.”
  + **V 12-13**
  + Jesus says that the Bad Shepherds are like hired hands. They are only there for a paycheck…to get what they can for themselves. As soon as they see danger…as soon as they see that protecting and feeding the sheep is going to cost them something…they bolt. They leave the flock unprotected. They never really cared about the sheep.
  + **V 14-15**
  + But Jesus says, “I lay my life down for the sheep”.
  + When you feel like everyone else has left you, Norma Jean, I have not left you. I am waiting on the other end of the line. I’m there. Call me.
  + Jesus says, “when other shepherds leave you to protect themselves…I’m the shepherd that left the safety of heaven…to come and lay my life down to protect the ones I love.
  + **V 28**
  + Jesus says, “And I’m never leaving you. I have you in my hand. When I rescue you from the wolves…when I protect you…when I save you from your sins…I’m never letting you go. I am with you…forever.”
  + Not only that, Jesus lets you in on how he FEELS about his sheep.
  + **V 14-15 & 17**
  + Jesus says that the way God the Father knows and loves God the Son…so he is giving his life so that we can know and experience that love…that unity…that fellowship.
  + Do you see that?
  + This is everything that Norma Jean…and Marilyn Monroe…and you and I ever wanted. Its our deepest longing. For someone who has power to see us completely…to really know us…and then to love us perfectly…in a way that promises to never leave us.
  + And just like the Bad Shepherds taught their sheep that the only way to survive was to use and abuse people…so the Good Shepherd teaches his sheep (as they grow up to be shepherds themselves)…that giving your life away is the only truly beautiful and satisfying way to live.
  + **V 16**
  + Jesus said right in the middle of this that he has “other sheep” that are not in this sheep pen…and he is going to bring them in.
  + By that, Jesus means the Gentiles. Or the other nations that are not Israel.
  + So right in the middle of this talk that is deeply personal and intimate, Jesus is dropping mission. A vision for others.
  + Jesus is saying to the Pharisees, who were largely racist against other nations and thought them unworthy of God’s attention and love, Jesus comes in saying…I’m opening the door. I’m making the gate bigger. Anyone who will enter through me…the true gate…will be a part of my flock. And there will be only one flock, and one shepherd.
  + If you read on into the book of Acts and the rest of the New Testaments, you see that God makes his church the instrument for introducing all the nations of the world to the Good Shepherd.
  + See, when you have experienced being known and loved by the good shepherd…you learn that committing yourself to loving the weak and vulnerable…to sacrificing your own comfort and safety so that more people can know Jesus…that it's the only way to live. Living simply for yourself becomes very unsatisfying.
* **Back to 2)**
  + The fact is, that everybody, at some point realizes this.
  + Marilyn Monroe realized it…but didn’t know the good shepherd...so she ended her life.
  + Church, listen to me, please.
  + I hope that pastors of this church have been faithful to keep this Good Shepherd in front of you always.
  + And I hope that we all have learned together, that being a church that simply helps people check the box of having a nice, little, religious life while we make our money, enjoy our gadgets, and make plans for the weekend is not the church that Jesus wants us to be.
  + He knows us and loves us. We cannot lose. Nothing can snatch us from our Father’s hand. We have seen Jesus give his life for us and we know its beautiful. If the sheep hear his voice and follow him….then we must follow him to giving our lives away for the weak and vulnerable.
  + The abundant life he calls us to is one filled with purpose, meaning, deep love…it doesn’t mean pain free…but it does mean that every ounce of pain he calls us to will be for our good and that in the middle of it all…he never leaves us.
* **V 33**
  + At the end of this encounter, the Jewish leaders pick up rocks to stone Jesus.
  + And he asks them, “why are you seeking to kill me? I’ve only done what my Father says.”
  + And they reply- we’re killing you because you- being a man- make yourself out to be God.
  + Ironic isn’t it?
* **V15**
  + That is exactly what these bad shepherds.
  + They, mere men, have made themselves out to be God. The true shepherd.
  + While they have looked at God in the flesh and called him a demon.

And that’s the one thing we haven’t talked about yet. Exactly WHY Jesus HAD to lay down his life.

And it is for that very reason, that man made themselves out to be God.

At the beginning of the story of the world- God put man in a perfect garden…in a perfect relationship with him and with a perfect mission…to be fruitful and multiply the beauty of the Garden…and the beauty of their God out to the world. And in humanity’s most perfect state…

**Gen 2:25**

They were naked and unashamed.

In other words…they were perfectly known…and deeply loved.

But wolf…or a snake…snuck into the garden and told them that they could be Gods themselves. When they believed him, when they followed the Bad Shepherd…they broke.

**Gen 3:7 & 8b**

And then they were ashamed. They covered themselves up. They changed their hair color, they changed their names, and they changed their walk. They became Marilyn Monroe. They wanted to be loved by God, but they were afraid…so They hid themselves…from God and each other. They had no one to call.

**Back to 2)**

When we hide ourselves from each other and from God, its because we think he’s come to kill us. But it's the bad shepherds…the thieves and robbers…the wolves…the snakes that come to kill steal and destroy.

Jesus comes to give life…and give it abundantly.

And that's why he gave his life.

On the cross, Jesus took on himself the death we deserved for our blasphemy. So that as the Good Shepherd became a sacrificial lamb, the sheep would themselves become good shepherds leading people to Jesus by our own sacrificial love.

Jesus blood becomes for us a Robe of Righteousness…covering us and protecting us from judgment we deserve.

And he becomes the one for us who is always there…never leaving or forsaking us…always ready to pick up the phone not only in our darkest most desperate moments…but everyday in prayer.

* **John 10:18**

Jesus said he freely lays his life down…but he will also freely take it up again. He was talking about his resurrection.

And in his resurrection, for those sheep that hear his voice and follow him…we will be resurrected, too.

The abundant life is also eternal life.

Which means not even the scarier wolves, thieves, robbers or snakes scare us.

Because nothing can snatch us from our Father’s hands. We are known and loved. We are bled for, so we can bleed for others.

We have died with Christ, and so we are risen with him in resurrection.

How will you now live in that love and LIVE OUT of that love.

Foster Care meeting on Thursday