**Prayer Focus: John 10:10-11, 17-18**

*[Jesus said,]*

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*

*...The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.*

* Father, there’s so much I want to celebrate that I hardly know where to begin. I get excited reading about Jesus as the good shepherd and his role in Your plan and his victory over death and I don’t know how to get my words around Your majesty and faithfulness and kindness and abundance and it’s all I can do sometimes to bring You my flapping hands, my waving palms, and stand before You going “GAAAAAAAAAAAH! You’re so **GOOD**!”
* You’re bigger than my praise can handle. I don’t have arms to contain all the blessings You pour out. Thank You for, instead, holding *me*.
* Let me start *here*, today and every day: Your authority is stunning. It is Absolute, and it is stunning. I can’t fathom the authority to take up my own life again. All I can do is lay it down. You are the one who takes it up again and returns it to me through Jesus. Thank You.
* Jesus’ compassion is stunning. I can’t get over a shepherd who dies for *sheep*. SHEEP. How am I not interchangeable with billions of others? How can I possibly matter, dim-witted and bleating along in my daily routine? But I do. Jesus notices me. I’m worth his life to him.
* Let this humble me and motivate me, but don’t let this make me sheepish. Let me be as bold as Jesus, saying “my Father loves me.” No qualifiers, no hesitation, no apologies.
* I’m also astounded at this gift of life to the *full*. Everywhere I turn, I encounter thieves - distractions and misdirection that steal my focus, kill my joy, and destroy my hope. Even now, I’m in a tug-of-war with...
* Jesus doesn’t do any of that. He’s not a drain or a burden. Nothing good lessens with him. Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control - these all fill and fill through him. He’s SO good. This morning I can rejoice in life to the full because Jesus assures me... Thank You.
* I’d ask forgiveness for my small view of a full life, based largely in health and wealth, except You already know my weakness, and You aren’t angry about it. You know I only know this physical earth, this embodied life, and You reward every mustard seed of faith I have in something More. Thank You for permission to ask for things that matter to me, small and temporary as they are. Thank You for answering.
* Thank You for the treatment Dave Yeats is receiving. Please clear up his clots and give him spiritual as well as physical strength.
* Thank You for the gift of a transplant for Brett and the access he has to that surgery center. Please carry him through the procedure and recovery and let every breath he takes with his new lung be full of gratitude to You.
* Thank You for surrounding Dorothy Moore with people who care about her quality of life. Please restore her memory and speech so she can recount Your faithfulness throughout her tenure here.
* Thank You for arranging appointments and tests for Wayne in a stellar week at Mayo’s, and for the assurance that the body he’s using still has life and strength to spare. Thank You for the ways he uses that strength for Your kingdom work here at FACC.
* I live in a body, a vessel that carries around this divine spark, this bit of soul, and You use my tenacious grip on the life of this body to teach me how precious eternal life is. Because I love even this little shadow-life, the real life You offer grows even more precious. Thank You for the analogy.
* Let me land *here*, today and every day: it makes sense that Jesus is the hero in Your story because he fought Death and won. Thank You for this annual reminder of his tremendous *power* that lets me brag along with Paul, defiant and triumphant in 1 Corinthians 15:54-55:

*When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”*

*“Where, O death, is your victory?*

*Where, O death, is your sting?”*

In the name of the good shepherd who laid down his life to pick up mine, **Amen**.