

Security

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[0:00] So if you have a Bible, perhaps you want to turn back with me to John chapter 10 on page 1076.! We have concerns for home security and personal security.

The very word conjures up ideas of protection, safety, perhaps having a safeguard, a form of a guarantee.

It's always a relevant topic. I think it's really timely just now because we seem to be moving into a time of insecurity. Certainly globally, we think about the situation developing with Iran and there's the fear of it escalating, but nobody quite seems to know where that's going to go.

We're already beginning to anticipate, aren't we, the knock-on effects? What's it going to mean even for our energy supplies? What's it going to mean for our travel plans? What's the impact going to be on our finances, never mind thinking about what happens anywhere else?

Sometimes, though, that sense of insecurity might come because of a different factor. There's been a number of reports recently about the rapid rise of AI, and then the impact that that is having on job sectors.

[1:38] So that can spark a sense of insecurity. We've maybe seen the effect on our culture, our culture makers. Again, sense of insecurity.

What does it mean for my intellectual property or even for my identity? Perhaps we feel somewhat insecure if we're less tech savvy.

Will I be taken in by fake news or by scams developed by increasingly elaborate AI? Security functions often for us like our walls and our foundations.

And when those start to crack, we can feel somewhat exposed and unprotected, uncertain about our present and about the future.

And if we find ourselves in that place, and perhaps we do, perhaps we've been there recently, or if we know people in our lives who wrestle with anxiety and fears and uncertainty, then it's good for us to spend some time here.

[2:39] It's good for us to think together and to hear from the Bible, to hear from Jesus about the real and the lasting security that he offers. So we're going to ask ourselves some questions about this topic of security.

We're going to explore some of the ways that we find ourselves searching for security, some of the challenges and the weaknesses to our different approaches, and we'll turn to hear what Jesus says about himself and the promise of security that's found in him.

And as I said at the beginning, there'll be a chance for us to chat afterwards over tea and coffee if you have time to stick around. So the first question I suppose that we need to address is what is security for you?

Because I think it's fair to say there's no one-size-security-fits-all. There are different ways that we look to find security, different ways that we feel either secure or insecure.

I was thinking personally this week and recognizing that at different times and different phases of life, security looks different. So perhaps in sort of childhood and teenage years especially, security comes if I had a group of friends who were there and who liked me and who I could spend time with.

[3:54] Perhaps later it became, well, do I have enough money in the bank to make sure that all those bills get met? Sometimes it's finding security and having a family around.

What is security for you? Perhaps it's a freedom from fear. The fear of illness or failure.

The fear of losses. If we could live without those, then we'd feel secure. Perhaps security comes from reliable resources. It comes from having money in the bank.

The house that's getting paid up. The job that has a decent salary and a level of stability. Perhaps it's reserves in case there are those crashes that come.

For others of us, we may think about security in terms of the people in our lives. We may think about predictable relationships. Two of, I guess, the classic sitcoms of all times very much played on that.

[4:57] Friends theme tune, I'll be there for you. And cheers. You want to be where everybody knows your name. That idea of here is a group of people I can trust. They will show up when I need them.

Sometimes we can find security in our plans. The plans that we have after we finish school or after we finish university. Perhaps we find security if we feel that our retirement is well cared for.

Maybe we find security in just the idea of knowing a five-year plan. And so we find ourselves thinking and saying things like, if I just had that thing, then I'd be okay.

You know, if I get the right product or if I make the right investment, if I land the right job or achieve in my career, if I belong to the right group or raise the right family, or if I have the right work-life balance and I can control my environment and my schedule, then I'll have security.

So it's important from the outset to ask ourselves the question, what do we think security looks like? And that in part will take us to the second question, how do we try to fulfill the desire for security?

[6:14] This week I've been asking church members, in what way do we feel Jesus provides security? Because one of the things that we believe as Christians is that our faith offers us a unique power and stability.

We have a security both in the present, knowing God is with us and for us, but security eternally.

And it's been interesting to have those conversations and to hear themes reappearing, themes that actually very much link to this shepherd theme we've been considering.

That sense of, in everyday experience, well, I know God is present to protect me and guide me.

When I need help and wisdom, I know that I can pray.

And I sense his love. There's a real security in that. And then people are talking about, well, in times of difficulty, times when perhaps those foundations were shaken.

Still to know God is in control, to be able to rest in God keeps his promises, to have that reality that as we pray and connect with God, that brings a measure of peace.

[7:27] And even being able to keep going, knowing it's not in my strength, but it's God's strength. So there are remarkable resources within the Christian faith.

Some of you may have seen the interview of Ben Ganondoke, the Scottish footballer. He's returned back to his childhood faith. And it was a really interesting interview.

He's had a very prolonged and difficult injury recently. And he was reflecting on it saying setbacks, setbacks, they're part of God's plan. He spoke about relying heavily on God to keep him strong.

He said this, he said, when you have God on your side, you know he's never going to forget about you and he's not going to abandon you. There is strength and security in God.

And there seems to be common threads within Christian experience. And it's interesting to share our stories of how we see God provide security. But how do we search for security outside of and apart from God?

[8:31] I suspect it often involves one or a combination of these. And we probably find ourselves leaning into our possessions. There's a Bible proverb, I think it's in Proverbs 18, that says, the wealth of the rich is their fortified city.

They imagine it a wall too high to scale. So picture a city under siege, but the residents feeling secure because they have strong walls and high walls.

And the idea that money provides a safeguard, a protective wall from the shocks that might come. Another way that we search for security is in the people in our lives.

There's lots of studies that speak about the early years, developmental stages, and when there is strong investment in those early years, good support networks, stable family, good nursery provision, it tends towards more stable, more confident, more resilient children.

When we have people who love us, people we can trust, people we can rely on, that tends to bring an inner confidence and a security. It allows us perhaps to provide and build a stable identity.

[9:57] Or our family or our friends might become a form of an anchor when storms come so that we don't collapse under the pressure. There's a goodness, isn't there, when we have friends, when we have family, when we have a social group who stick by us.

The Bible tells us that community is God's good design. Family is God's good design. There's a verse that we maybe have heard at a wedding, Ecclesiastes 4, though one may be overpowered, two can resist.

Moreover, a cord of three strands is not easily broken. That sense of resilience from togetherness. So we might well find ourselves looking to people for security.

We may, on the other hand, turn towards performance. Because one way that we can seek to find security is in our doing, our achieving, in our abilities.

We might find job security knowing that we will, if we outperform others in our team or in our company.

[11:07] So long as we hit the right targets, if we perform, we can probably hope for security. Or maybe we imagine financial security if I have the wisdom and the prudence to make the right, careful investments.

And so we can gain a sense of security from ourselves and our own abilities. Now, each of these, you know, people, possessions, the ability to perform, those are good things.

Of course they are. But it's important for us to recognize there are limitations. That each of these can provide, they can provide at very least a temporary fix.

But it's fair to say that they cannot remove every threat that we experience to our security. People will still leave and contracts will still end and oil prices will still spike.

And more significantly than that, as we consider all the challenges that we face, none of these are able to offer any help when faced with the ultimate source of insecurity, which is our great enemy, death.

[12:19] And so as we're thinking about what gives us security, we need to think beyond, well, where do I look today to where do I hope will give me strength in that day?

A third question is this, how can some of our strategies produce unhelpful results?

Because it is important to recognize that in striving for security, sometimes that can lead us down unhelpful paths, unhelpful attitudes or patterns of behavior. For example, if I imagine that I will be secure if I have money, then that might tend towards my greed.

Perhaps I will hoard instead of being generous. Perhaps it means I will live to consume rather than recognizing life is about more than.

it may lead us to try and control and manipulate. If our performance is really important to our sense of security, then we might want to insist that everything and everyone around us is just so.

[13:27] And we can put a lot of pressure on other people demanding that everything be just right. there might be a pride that forms in our heart if security is found in my performance, striving to try and prove and justify myself compared to others.

On the flip side, there might be despair when we find our security fails, when all our best efforts come to nothing. It was striking to see after the last, I guess, big global economic crash in 2008, the number of bank executives, people within the financial industry who committed suicide.

Their security was gone. Their sense of identity was gone. We see it all too often as well with retired sports people when the fame is gone and they struggle.

Some of our strategies can produce even the unhelpful result of idolatry. It's a Bible idea that I think we can all recognize when I place my ultimate trust in someone or something for security rather than in the one true and living God.

So just to pause for a moment to take stock. I imagine each one of us here, we both value and we want security. We will all try and find it in different ways.

[15:02] But what I hope we're beginning to see is that when we try and do that ourselves without God, without Jesus, there are at least some times where we will find ourselves heading down the wrong roads.

That we may find ourselves pursuing solutions that don't satisfy and there may still be that nagging feeling that something is still missing. Where we can't really rest because there's no sense of permanent security.

And so it's important for us to have a chance to hear from Jesus. So turn with me to John chapter 10 to think about this image that he uses of himself as the shepherd as we ask ourselves one more question together.

And the question is this, how does Jesus promise to fulfill our longing for security? So we have Jesus in verse 11 saying, I am the good shepherd. Verse 14, I am the good shepherd.

That image was an image used by God in the Old Testament also. It contains within it that idea of a covenant commitment to rescue and to bring a people to himself.

[16:10] It's a picture that's applied to kings. Here is God, the powerful, loving king who is committed to restoring people and ruling for their good and Jesus comes along and says, I am the good shepherd.

So he's making a big claim about himself. He's claiming a title of God. And John is revealing to us that Jesus is none other than the son of God. And so as we listen in as Jesus speaks about himself and what he offers we need to recognize he's speaking to us not just as any old person, he's speaking to us as the son of God.

And in this little section that we've read we discover three qualities of Jesus the good shepherd that all connect with this idea of security. So we'll think briefly about the personal relationship with Jesus that he offers the sacrificial salvation that he came to bring and the safety of belonging.

So first of all to think about a personal relationship that Jesus offers a secure relationship that no one else in this world can match.

Look at our verses we'll see a few ways this is true. Verse 12 of John chapter 10 Jesus compares himself with a hired hand someone who works as a shepherd for pay but the sheep don't belong to him.

[17:34] The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep so when he sees the wolf coming he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.

The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. By contrast Jesus says I am the good shepherd and I lay down my life for the sheep.

So Jesus is committed to us compared to this hired hand. There is a deeper relationship there is a selfless service that Jesus is the kind who will not turn and run when the wolves come.

When the trials come rather Jesus will place himself in harm's way for the good of his sheep. He is committed to us and he knows us.

He continues in verse 14 I am the good shepherd I know my sheep and my sheep know me just as the father knows me and I know the father. And so there is another comparison here.

[18:41] So just as the father and the son within the eternal trinity they know one another and they love one another and they delight in each other and they can't be separated from each other and they're in the closest possible relationship to one another Jesus says the same is true between me and my people.

He's committed to us he knows us and in verse 16 he also calls us I have other sheep that are not of this sheepfold I must bring them also they too will listen to my voice and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

So there's another comparison Jesus compares himself with the strangers with thieves and robbers who would come along and want to take the sheep away but the sheep recognize that's not a voice to be trusted rather they will listen to the shepherd because this shepherd invites us into relationship he is the one who has our best interest at heart he is the one who will seek and save and call to bring into his flock and in that flock there is safety and there is this promise that Jesus voice is powerful and effective and he calls people into the security of relationship with himself and so in this whole section Jesus is announcing to us that he provides personal relational security the text is full of eyes

Jesus personal commitment as the shepherd to his people his sheep and that's the story that some of you have been sharing and it's the story that I imagine are the testimony of many of us who are Christians that we go into dark places and we know Jesus is with us and for us and he's actually been there first of feeling overwhelmed but then at the same time experiencing a sense of peace

and comfort from knowing Jesus is there even those stories of having wandered far away those times perhaps of wanting nothing to do with Jesus but still patiently persistently searching to bring us back and it's this Jesus who invites each one to trust him for security to find that one relationship that will never end that one relationship that cannot be broken even by death to place our lives in the hands of one who will never leave us or fail us there is security in a personal relationship with Jesus here is a second way that

Jesus promises to fulfill our longing for security it's in his sacrificial salvation Jesus offers to remove threats that no one else can three times in our verses we heard Jesus say I lay down my life for the sheep it's there in verse 11 it's there in verse 15 and it's there in verse 17 let me read it there in verse 17 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 and so we're invited to picture the scene with Jesus as he uses this image of sheep and a shepherd to picture flock on a hillside and they're being led by a shepherd perhaps they're feeding on good pasture but then from the rocky crags come the wolves and the wolves surround the sheep and while the hired hand will turn and run we have this picture that Jesus gives of himself the shepherd who makes his stand with club in hand perhaps with a short sword drawn here is a shepherd who will fight for his sheep and remarkably dying so his sheep would live this teaching is in the form of a parable and whenever

[23:09] Jesus tells a parable a story and you find a surprising detail you know this is where the meaning lies and so Jesus wants us to take us beyond the metaphor of here's a shepherd here's a sheep to think about Jesus own mission to think about his mission of coming to sacrifice himself in order to save others that Jesus uses this parable actually to speak to us about the cross think about those words in verse 17 the father Jesus says he loves me because what does Jesus do the father loves the son because the son lays down his life and so all of a sudden we're discovering something about the eternal love of God the eternal plan of God that God the father will send the son and that God the son will come in order to suffer and die in order to save his sheep to save sinners to provide eternal security the father loves this son who with all authority gladly lovingly lays down his life for the good of others it's a remarkable statement and within verse 17 there's another remarkable statement there's a massive claim that Jesus has authority to lay down his life only to take it up again so we find ourselves on the way to Easter and Jesus here is taking us to the events of

Easter reminding us that he will die on that Roman cross but he will walk free of the tomb on Easter Sunday and as we put those two truths together the twin truths of Jesus death and resurrection we can see that there is power in Jesus to remove some of those ultimate threats against us one of those things is the guilt that we experience whenever we find ourselves recognizing that there is a God with whom we have to deal and we know that we have done things that are wrong and that we have broken his command then we become aware of our guilt and the wonderful news about Jesus is that he has come to be the answer to our guilt because when Jesus dies and it's here in the image he does so as a sacrifice and just as the sacrifices offered in the Old Testament were a way to cover over guilt and shame and sin so Jesus ultimate sacrifice on the cross covers our guilt and shame and sin because he does it not for his sin but for ours and he does it as a substitute Jesus the judge is judged in our place so that when our trust is in Jesus God's verdict on our life must be a positive verdict because Jesus has secured that positive verdict through his death and his resurrection so when we trust in Jesus we can know today that we will not be condemned that we will be welcomed and accepted into heaven that we are as loved as Jesus is loved there is real security in that there is security from Jesus death and resurrection from the fear of death isn't this the ultimate storm that shakes our foundations isn't this the great wolf that would destroy all our great plans and securities it's the last enemy how is it that Jesus is able to give security even as we consider our own death because he has conquered death and the grave and his resurrection stands for us as proof and now where Jesus is resurrected to new life and ascended to the glory of heaven where he where he

Jesus is his people will follow he is the shepherd who won't lose any of his flock he will make sure that we are safely brought into pasture as it were from here until eternity there is security a few chapters later in John chapter 14 Jesus speaks to his friends and his disciples he says don't let your hearts be troubled he knows that they know that Jesus is about to die and they're troubled about what that means for Jesus and for them don't be troubled and he tells them that his journey will take him from the cross to the resurrection and back to his father's home and he says listen I'm going back to my father's home and I'm preparing a place for you and I'll come back and take you to be with me that you may be where I am and so the bible allows us to face death with a sense of honest confidence we are honest death is a horrible reality it is a great enemy but for a Christian there is that wonderful security from Jesus that he will take us home to be with himself that truly for the believer death is the last enemy there is a promise of life after death that will be perfect that will be without enemies that will be joyful and secure and with Jesus forever and so thirdly and finally we come to understand from Jesus words and from the bible that there is a safety a security that comes from belonging to Jesus I think it's part of the beauty of the shepherd image you know we can recognize by ourselves how prone we are to be like sheep we can feel weakness we can feel foolish we can be prone to wander sometimes we will follow the flock and we will head for danger but with Jesus as good shepherd we know that he will always lead us towards life that we will always experience

[29:31] God's love that we will be part of his family forever that nothing can separate us from God's love or God's goodness or God's mercy when we know Jesus as our good shepherd and so he invites us to swap our anxiety and our insecurity to lay down our consuming our striving our attempts to control and manage our environment to forge a security for ourselves and to replace that with a simple reliance and dependence on Jesus to turn our back on those self made attempts at security from trusting in other things to save us and instead to trust in the one who died to save us to believe that Jesus really is the son of God he really is the promised saviour he really is a good shepherd and that in

Jesus there is present security and there is the eternal security that we all long for and it's found in life with Jesus let's pray to He really is a good shepherd to God He really is a good shepherd He really is a good shepherd He really is of God and He really is a good shepherd and He really is and He really is and He really is of God and He really is a good shepherd of God a good shepherd of God and He really is!
of God and He really is