

Who is Jesus?

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[0 : 00] A holiday on the Isle of Wight. If you go there, you've got to cross the water somehow.! If you go on the ferry, while you're taking your seat, I know this sort of off by heart.

In the unlikely event of an emergency, please, there will be three something beeps on the siren. Make your way to one of the muster stations where the crew will issue you with life belts or something like that.

That's pretty much how it goes. There's the Isle of Wight ferry. Oh dear, the muster station didn't come out right, did it? But anyway, it's actually a matter of life and death if the Isle of Wight ferry sank.

I mean, God forbid. But actually the number of people who listen to that announcement is virtually zero because everybody's putting their things down, telling their kids to be quiet, wondering whether it's worth queuing up for coffee.

And nobody listens. And I want to say, please, this morning, we're talking about the words of Jesus. When he speaks, please, let's listen and let's do what he says.

[1 : 09] So we're going to think about who is Jesus. And I want to particularly focus upon what he said about being the good shepherd. So it's just that particular thing. He talks about having life in its fullest form.

We heard that earlier, didn't we? I came to bring life to the full. How to avoid death, ruin, shame, destruction, loss.

And Jesus says, I am the key to that. He himself is the key. And he's not just talking about being aligned with a Christian culture or a tradition or a group, you know, like saying I'm Roman Catholic or I'm a Protestant.

It's not about joining a group. It's about him. It's not about doing certain rituals like, you know, I was baptized as a child or I went to mass or I've been to communion or something like that.

It's not about that. It's about him. And it's not based on moral effort. It's not balancing our good deeds against our bad deeds or anything like that. It's about him.

[2 : 23] It's about Jesus and relating to him in a person-to-person way. So what I want to talk about this morning is to know who Jesus really is and how to relate to him personally.

That's the subject for today. Where do we find this Jesus? And I'm going to just assume we find him in the Bible.

There's a course called the Christianity Explored course, which I thoroughly recommend. And one of the things it says there is Jesus walks off or steps off the pages of the Bible.

And that's true. That's certainly my experience, that as you read the Bible, you find you're in touch with Jesus. That's where to find him. And he can be found. So if you've come along this morning wondering whether it's even possible to meet Jesus, I want to say the answer is yes, definitely he can be found.

And what sort of things do we find when we find Jesus? Well, he's a real person. He's really human. He's a miracle worker. He's a teacher.

[3 : 31] He's the one who died on the cross. He's the one who raised from the dead. He's the Son of God. And today we're going to look at this, that he says, I'm the Good Shepherd. That's what we read in that text.

I'm going to refer to it. If you've got a Bible or can look across at one, you might find that helpful. Jesus as the Good Shepherd. It's in John's Gospel. John's Gospel is like a book about Jesus, a biography, an account of Jesus.

We looked at John 10 verses 1 to 21 where Jesus talks about himself and how to relate to him. And he uses this idea of a sheep and a shepherd.

It's not a difficult idea, is it? He said that because all the people there would have known, oh, sheep, I know exactly what you mean by sheep. I know exactly what you mean by shepherd. And Jesus says, well, look at that and learn about me.

And if you wanted to, oh, there's a sheep in case you didn't know what one looked like. In the first six verses, well, yeah, I think that's reasonable. Gives you an idea, doesn't it?

[4 : 33] But the first six verses, he is talking about himself versus the thief and the robber. So in those first six verses, he says the thief and the robber climbs in the wrong way, but the shepherd comes in through the gate.

He talks about that. There's the thief and the robber. He's got a black mask on. And he's dragging off some poor sheep, which he's killed with his knife.

So there's the thief and the robber. And it says, when Jesus talked about that in verse six, he says he didn't understand what he was talking about. In verses seven to 10, he then says, I am the gate for the sheep.

So it's a little bit different. But he again says, the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life. If you have a gate, you go in and out.

Jesus says you go in and out and find pasture. I think it'd be great to have someone in our lives who enables us to go in and come out and find pasture.

[5 : 39] Someone who says, I'll look after you going in. I'll look after you coming out. I'll make sure you're fed and looked after. Anyway. And then in verses 11 to 19, he now introduces the wolf.

Because nowadays shepherding, we used to have somebody in the congregation who was a shepherd at one time. It was Kenny. He used to be a shepherd. And he says, you know, sheep are not as docile as you think.

They can give you a really nasty kick. But of course, being a shepherd is not a life-threatening task, I don't think, these days. In those days, it might have been lions, wolves.

Didn't David say that he'd killed a lion or was a mountain lion or something? And King David, I'm referring to.

So there is this fact of the wolf. So those are the characters and that's the sort of thing that Jesus was talking about. So let's look at it in two ways.

[6 : 40] Number one, we'll look at the shepherd as compared with the thief. And this is to do with the gift of life. There's the thief. And then we'll look at the shepherd as compared with the wolf.

And we're going to think about the cost of death. So we'll look at those two parts this morning. There's a wolf. So let's think first of all about the shepherd as compared with the thief and the robber.

Before I get too far into it, I should just say that as Jesus speaks about being a good shepherd, in that day, in that place, in the context of living in Israel, where the people are Jews, they've got what we now call the Old Testament.

They've got the Hebrew Scriptures. And they will, as soon as Jesus says shepherd, they'll start thinking about things in their Scriptures. And they'll remember that kings were called shepherds.

So King David was taken from looking after sheep to looking after Israel. He was the shepherd of Israel. So when Jesus says, I'm the good shepherd, then one of the things that goes off in people's minds is, are kings the shepherds?

[8 : 01] Is Jesus actually saying he's the king, like King David? The Messiah. The Savior. So there's that thing going off in people's heads.

And also, there's something in the Hebrew Scriptures, a psalm, a song, number 23. Anybody tell us what the first line of that is? The Lord is my shepherd.

The Lord. God himself is a shepherd. So, and it says, the Lord is my shepherd. I won't lack anything. If you've got a good shepherd, he makes sure you don't lack anything that you need.

So again, there's another little bell going off there. Is that what Jesus is saying? Is there a linkage here? And, you know, having a shepherd for your life, it's a big thing, isn't it?

Having somebody who shepherds you. Particularly, I mean, you have human shepherds. That's what church ministers are. But in a bigger sense, to have somebody who has, I say, I will follow you wherever you lead me, like saying that to a shepherd it's a big thing isn't it and I think Jesus is saying something rather big here he's sort of saying let me be God to you let me be the king of your life claiming to save care for look after me well let's contrast the thief and the robber with the good shepherd so here's one thing they have a different intention so what's the intention the thief and the

robber so this one in verse 1 he climbs in some other way and in verse 10 the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy that's what the thief does to steal and kill and destroy and Jesus says by contrast

[10:31] I have come that they may have life and life abundantly or in this translation life to the full it's a very different intention isn't it and in verse 9 he says he who enters through me will be saved he will come in and go out and find pasture I think that's a part of this life giving thing isn't it Jesus says I want to enrich I want to make you thrive I want to look after you so that you are not destitute you are not ruined you are not destroyed but given life there's a big lie about God and the lie says that God God's intention is to make my life more limited more unhappy more restricted and less fulfilling and that's a lie that is not what God wants to do that is not what Jesus wants to do

I'm going to put just some little tweaks on that God doesn't spoil us you know if kids say give me chocolates I don't want any proper breakfast I'd like chocolates for breakfast chocolates for lunch and chocolates for tea I know you might have a lot of sympathy with that but it's not a good thing and if we say to God oh give me this give me this give me this and God says it's not going to be good for you he doesn't give it to us he doesn't spoil us by giving everything we want immediately and I'm going to also say God intends us to grow as people long term and one of the major ways that he enables us to grow is to put us through difficulties so if you've been a Christian for any amount of time you will know that you pray an awful lot more when you feel trouble than when everything is going fine and God uses troubles and difficulties for our good to shape us long term but having said that his intention is to give us life to the full that's what it says so you might like to imagine the things in your life perhaps the most beautiful scene you've the most beautiful I've missed a word out there most beautiful place you've ever been the most beautiful picture you've ever seen most beautiful sunset or the most joy you've ever experienced the thing that's made you most happy or the best connections and relationships you've ever had and then multiply that by a thousand million and that's what God has in store for his people what he has in store for us is more than eye has seen more than tongue can tell that's what he has in store for his people so thinking long term I'm going to give you says Jesus the fullest most wonderful future that you can possibly imagine he comes to give us life that's what he comes to do and I think it means actually that Christians ought to be grateful people doesn't it we shouldn't be going around thinking oh God's just out to get me all the time he's just out to make me unhappy all the time it's not true we shouldn't live as if it were true we should be hopeful he's promised he's going to give us life and we should be thankful so there's a different intention regarding the thief and the good shepherd the good shepherd comes to give us life and life to the full and there's another difference between the thief and the good shepherd and this time I couldn't think of a good way of putting this so I've put a different rightness and I'm thinking about verse 1 where it says the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate but climbs in by some other way is a thief and a robber now the shepherd comes in the proper way the proper way to get at the sheep is through the gate and you go to the gate and the gatekeeper will say who are you and you'll say I own those sheep there and the gatekeeper might say have you got your have you got the app that proves that you're the shepherd have you got the you know the shepherd app and you look yeah okay come in they're your sheep if you see somebody jumping over the wall to try and take a few sheep that's not right is it the thief jumps over the wall cuts his way through the barbed wire to get at the sheep the good shepherd enters the proper way and also when the thief calls the sheep run away they don't recognize his voice the sheep run away from a stranger because they do not know his voice so Jesus the good shepherd here's another point of this he does things the right way and he does things the good way because he is the good shepherd Jesus does not force himself upon us he comes to us the right way he doesn't breach proper boundaries to get into our lives and the sheep know when he is speaking because they recognize the rightness of what he says and there are different voices that speak into our lives aren't there and some the voices which perhaps claim to give us life claim to solve our problems but they don't do it the right way a bit like the thief breaking in the wrong way not right not legitimate not good

[17:08] I mean there's all sorts of things that claim for human beings to sort out their lives but it's not right so alcohol might claim to solve problems but it doesn't really abuse of sex which claims to save us and make our lives right but ends up diminishing and spoiling in fact there's also any good thing even you know money success any good thing can take over beyond what it should do and diminish us rather than saving us and the sheep know this they know what's going on and if they

listen carefully they will say is this the shepherd's voice drawing me this way offering me this saying this is a good idea is it the shepherd's voice or is it some stranger and of course if it's the stranger's voice we're to run away aren't we we're not to follow the stranger we're to run away but if it's the shepherd we're to follow his voice we're to know the shepherd's voice and to follow him so there's something there two contrasts with the the thief and the robber different intention and a different way of doing things different rightness let's come secondly to the matter of the wolf now in those days as I've said already being a shepherd was not a safe easy job because there was shepherds needed to be tough so I'm just remembering the story of King David which you may remember back in the battle against Goliath

David said oh I use I don't use a sword I use a sling and I've killed animals I've killed predators as a shepherd I know how to kill predators risk life-threatening risk David knew about that and Jesus knew about it too and one of the strange things about Jesus Messiahship being the Christ is that he was teaching people that to be the Christ isn't just success power glory kingdom that his version of being Messiah is first death shame condemnation weakness and through death on the cross that's the way to the kingdom so his version of being a

Messiah wasn't safe and wasn't easy and people found it very hard to get their heads around that remember Peter saying when Jesus said the son of man must be handed over and be spat on and killed and Peter said no no no silly Jesus that's not right and then Jesus saying how dare you get behind me Satan you haven't got the you're just thinking in a very human way and that's not right a Christ who came to die a king who came to be a servant and as Jesus says in Mark's gospel I didn't come to be served and everybody make a fuss of me I came to serve and to give my life as a ransom a freedom payment a powerful freedom payment to set people free to set many free now this is the cost and so

I'm saying why was there a cost well this is what he says I'm the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep the hired hand is not the shepherd who owns 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's a hired hand and he cares nothing for the sheep I am the good shepherd I know my sheep my sheep know me just as the father knows me and I know the father and I lay down my life for the sheep the reason the 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 this command I have received from my father and the Jews said that's crazy why was there a cost answer because the shepherd cares cares the hired man doesn't care doesn't bother runs away that's their problem when the wolf comes the hired man runs away he was only in it for the money he didn't really care about the sheep

Jesus cares about the sheep and we are to understand this is a magnificent and amazing demonstration of the love of Jesus when the wolf comes he lays down his life for the sheep of course the thing is that people don't realise that there's a wolf coming they don't understand Jesus' love because they don't see that there's a danger coming there's a wolf coming for people now what does Jesus what is he referring to well I think he's referring to this there's a day of judgment up ahead people are not aware of that people say my life's fine my life's very comfortable and you know I don't really have big problems in my life I mean many people say that you might not be saying that but many people would say that but Jesus says there's still a wolf you know up ahead waiting for you is a day of life threatening judgment when God will say

[23 : 49] I know you didn't believe in me and I know you never tried to serve me but I am real and I demand an account for your life Jesus saves from that by giving his life so that we might not die so that on that day of judgment we will not be condemned but saved we will not have death eternally but life eternally he gives his life for the sheep what did his death achieve two things number one is the salvation of the sheep so verse 11 he says the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep verse 15 says I lay down my life for the sheep now if you think about it and I was thinking about this last night all these sort of parable things have some limits don't they when Jesus says he's the vine it doesn't mean that he's green and he's got leaves all these parables have limits and I was thinking this parable this idea of the sheep has a limit because normally speaking if the shepherd gets killed then the sheep would be got at by the wolf that would be the normal way it works wouldn't it but Jesus says in my parable if the shepherd gets killed that's the thing that saves the sheep it works differently doesn't it and that is what he's saying

I lay down my life and that saves the sheep if he had not laid down his life then the sheep would be scattered ravaged destroyed as it says in verse 12 the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it but because he lays down his life the wolf does not succeed the threat of death judgment ruin destruction is totally removed by the effective death of the shepherd I'll say that again because it's so important the threat of death judgment ruin destruction is totally removed by the death the effective death of the shepherd the power of the cross it is finished was his cry I've saved them nothing can undo that and when we think of it personally his death has for me personally done absolutely everything to deal with my sin so I always think of some hymns and things there's one that says my sin oh the bliss of this glorious thought my sin not in part not in part but the whole is nailed to his cross and I bear it no more praise the Lord praise the Lord oh my soul that's what Jesus is claiming his death in and of itself effectively totally deals with my sin I don't have to deal with it anymore I don't have to carry it anymore I don't have to feel guilty about it anymore because Jesus has done the whole thing amen there's another song no condemnation now I dread

Jesus and all in him is mine alive in him my living head and clothed in righteousness divine that's how much Jesus achieved when he died on the cross no condemnation free what did his death achieve the salvation of his people that's what his death achieved that's quite something isn't it he's rather special isn't he to put it mildly what else did his death achieve number two the enthusiastic approval of the father so I'm getting this from verse 17 where it says the reason my father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again and when you read that you thought I thought the father loved Jesus anyway thought he always lived in the love of the father and that's true surely but Jesus is saying something here isn't he he's saying that as he lays down his life the father in some particular way says that's my son what he's doing is so great

I can't help but love him I think there's something like that being said my mind always goes to when we had a gospel worker called Anthony Smith you remember Anthony he was fantastic on the keyboards he was an organ scholar and when he was here he did a masters and then he did a PhD if I remember correctly and there was a what do you call it what's called the awards day when you go and get your degree what's that called graduation that's right and his mum came down to see the graduation I wasn't there but I can just totally imagine this can't you that Anthony goes up on the stage with his mortar board and gown and coloured!

[29 : 37] and goes and whoever it is presents him with the award well done Dr. Smith thank you very much and Anthony's mum is down there thinking that's my son oh he's done so well oh bless him he's oh you know and her mother's heart is sort of filled with pride and love for her son on this special day and I'd like to suggest that's not such a bad thought for as Jesus dies on the cross the father says what courage what selflessness what how wonderful that he'd be prepared to pay for those rotten people that I've set my love on he's done that and the father's heart sort of as it were fills with love all over again for his son and Jesus says it doesn't he the reason my father loves me is that I lay down my life for the sheep only to take it up again so the second thing that this his death achieved then is the enthusiastic approval of the father he says the father loves me because I've done it the father gave me a command to do this verse 18 to lay down my life and to take it up again that was the father's program for Jesus and when he's done it he finished the father's work so it just reminds us that

Jesus doesn't die as it were as just on his own and he certainly doesn't die in opposition to the father it isn't as though the father's cruel and nasty and Jesus is nice and kind the father and the son are working totally together in this and Jesus has the father's total approval in what he's doing and Jesus does this obediently that's one thing and willingly and he goes to the cross and lays down his life for the sheep because he cares about them there's a story about after the first world war somebody walking in a village imagine Downton Abbey and he meets an ex soldier who has only got one arm and he says what happened to you and he said well this happened in the trenches and he said oh you lost your arm in the trenches and the soldier says no I gave my arm I gave because

I was fighting for my country and I willingly gave for my country and Jesus willingly gave his life for us he didn't have it taken from him he gave his life for us and I think isn't this a wonderful story of goodness and kindness I mean isn't it great to be in a room or perhaps a room and a half or two rooms where the subject of what we're thinking about is something as wonderful as this that we can think about Jesus and the love that he showed the cross on which he died the fact that he took his

life again because the father had commanded him to lay down his life and give it up and take it up again and he did that and he did that for us I mean what better theme could we have wherever you might be today I can't think of any better theme there could be than thinking about this as we're doing this morning it's glorious isn't it it's wonderful we think of the goodness and kindness of the good shepherd and when

Jesus says I'm the good shepherd I hope you agree with him he is a good shepherd isn't he I mean what wonderful goodness in what we're thinking about this morning so those are the two things we're going to look at and just to remind you we looked at the thief contrasting with the good shepherd the intentionality of it the thief comes to diminish and ruin lives but Jesus comes to give life to the full the shepherd who leads us safely through life makes sure we're fed along the way and we get to our final destination it is just the same as David said in the psalm the Lord is my shepherd I won't lack anything he leads me in paths of righteousness he leads me by still waters he restores my soul what's the bit about the green pastures he makes me lie down in green pastures that's the David writing the psalm in the Old Testament but he could just as well be describing the Christian's relationship to Jesus couldn't he even though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil for you are with me your rod and your staff they comfort me and he prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I'll dwell in the house of the Lord forever that's the Christian privilege isn't it he leads us through life and feeds us along the way and the thief you'll remember has a different rightness the thief doesn't do things legitimately and nicely he breaks into lives whereas Jesus gently calls us you could make the contrast really between a rapist and a wooer Jesus is the wooer who brings his love to our souls very gently and sweetly and patiently to win us willingly so that we would love him my sheep says [35 : 22] Jesus know my voice and they follow me and I'm just going to say have you heard the voice of Jesus have you heard him calling you have you begun to hear him calling you and if you have the right thing to do is to follow and whatever you've heard him say do it and you're going to get closer to him and and find him will you follow this shepherd and then the second thing we looked at was regarding the wolf facing the threat of the wolf Jesus cares enough to lay down his life and he saves his people through this he achieves complete salvation of these people who are listening to his voice and hearing him speak to them no condemnation no condemnation all washed away washed in the blood of the lamb he makes us clean and this is how we know his love while we were yet sinners says the apostle

Paul putting it theologically while we were yet sinners Christ died for us this is the love of God and Jesus receives the enthusiasm of the father the reason the father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again and we get this the same thing in Paul's letter to the Philippians he was obedient unto death therefore God highly exalted him gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the father and I hope you think you're thinking inside amen to that yeah so I invite us to think how great Jesus is have you got a sense the idea of worshipping him something you say absolutely yeah the father loves this Jesus and if that's good enough for the father I hope it's good enough for us that we would say

I love him too I think he's great we began with that safety announcement to save your life on the Isle of White Ferry and here's an even bigger announcement from Jesus listening to the good shepherd will save your life listen to him and follow him Amen