

The pastor

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[0:00] Amen. Right, have we got any boys and girls? Because I do need your help this time, so don't! get too involved in other things, okay? I was looking at Jan to see whether she was a little boy or a little girl, but not actually no. Okay, right. Anybody hiding anywhere? Okay, good, good. So we're looking, we're going back to basics about the church, what the church is, how the church operates, and really asking ourselves, particularly for church members, where do we stand regarding the church? I suppose my back story is, in a larger church you can have passengers and people who just come along as consumers, but in a smaller church that really doesn't work. If you're in a smaller church you've really got to be contributing, you really got to be, you are an important part of it, and people need to understand that and respond to that. So that's what sort of is in the back of my mind here. And we want to look today at the matter of the pastor.

Okay, we're going to look at the matter of the pastor. And the pastor, the pastor is this person. He shepherds the church.

He feeds and looks after each of his flock. He protects them from every deadly enemy.

He knows his sheep. He knows exactly what is happening in their lives, including all their secret sins. He knows exactly where they are, exactly what they're doing, and exactly what they're thinking.

The pastor has a perfect plan for each of his sheep, and he knows each day exactly what they should do.

[2:04] The pastor has the right to direct his sheep, because they're his sheep. He directs them, even when they don't like it, even when it crosses them.

The good pastor lays down his life for the sheep. This is the pastor. Who do you think I'm talking about? I'm not talking about, yeah, exactly. I'm talking about Jesus.

The pastor is the savior of the church. And I'm talking about Jesus. So let's be quite clear. This is the pastor.

When the Bible talks about the pastor, the shepherd, the overseer, the Bible is referring to Jesus.

Very important that we realize that those things are the prerogative of Jesus.

There are under-shepherds, and they do some of those things in a way, but they never do any of them properly. And the real shepherd is Jesus.

[3:19] So before we talk about under-shepherds, which is elders and whatnot, I want to talk about the shepherd. The pastor. The great pastor.

And boys and girls, so I've got a picture here. So we're going to talk about shepherds. Of course, pastor and shepherd is the same word. It's just, we do it in some translations, they do it differently. So boys and girls, I've drawn a shepherd there. I'm going to ask you to help me to identify what's going on with some of these things. I think I've missed one out. Let me just go back and click again. Yeah. Did that work? Let me go back.

Sometimes the clicking is a bit odd. There we are. Right. You've got a shepherd's crook. Now, can you see on the picture a shepherd's crook? And a shepherd's stick? Can you see on the picture a shepherd's stick?

And we've got a shepherd's sling. Can you see on the picture a shepherd's sling? And we've got shepherd's hands. I didn't really do very much about hands. And shepherd's eyes. I didn't do any

eyes, but he would have eyes.

[4:28] And a shepherd's brain, or a shepherd's heart. And a shepherd's mission. So let's just talk about those for a little bit. It's just any old shepherd whatsoever.

And particularly seeing as Jesus is a shepherd. But let's just think about this. So it's shepherd's crook. Which is the crook on that picture? Do you know what a crook is? Do you know what a crook is?

Yes. Yes. Excellent. That's a really good answer.

It's a stick for pulling sheep out of deep holes. And there's a shepherd's crook. Now, I don't know whether shepherds in the Bible had crooks, but I think they tend to have crooks in our country. And it's got a curly bit at the end here. And that's for looping around the sheep's foot and pulling it. So the sheep might be saying, I want to go that way.

[5:28] But the shepherd puts his crook and says, no, you're going this way. Because that's home over there. Like that. So the shepherd's crook. Okay. Shepherd's stick. Is there a shepherd's stick on there? Because the crook in one hand, what is it?

Yeah, go on. Sorry? Stick. Yeah, I meant that to be the stick there. So that was my idea of a stick. Any idea why a shepherd might also have a stick? In Psalm 23, he had a rod and a staff. So he had two things. Why might he have a stick?

Yeah, Sam? Well done. Yeah, kill wolves or lions. So it's there to beat off enemies. Yeah, good.

Yes? Well done.

And shepherd's hands. What might the shepherd do with his hands? Yeah. Both of them.

[6:25] Yeah, hands are actually used for holding those things. Yeah, so he hasn't got hands folded or anything else, which is a correct answer. Yeah, well done. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, suppose the shepherd put one down. What might he do with his hands if he put one of those things down?

In Isaiah, he does this, actually. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Hold them or maybe I didn't catch the next bit. Keep them warm.

Yes, he might pick up the sheep and he might stroke the sheep. And in Isaiah, the Lord carries those that are with young and the needy ones and he carries them.

He might stroke them, make them a little bit calmer. Yeah, shepherd's hands. Yeah. Shepherd's eyes. I didn't draw any eyes. What do you think a shepherd might use his eyes to do? Bethany? Sorry, hold on, because you've got some competition.

[7:25] I've got as far as look around and see. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Very good.

Yeah. Yeah. I think the first bit was to look for enemies and then to look out and see whether the sheep have wandered off. So the shepherd is looking out. And one of the words, one of the alternative words for a shepherd is an overseer.

So he's looking out with his eyes. Thank you very much. Yeah. Oh, that's it. Come on. And a shepherd's brain. What might the shepherd use his brain for? What might the shepherd use his brain for?

Yeah. Yes, that's right. Yeah, he might be thinking about the sheep, might he? He might be thinking, time to bring them in, or he might be thinking they're looking a bit hungry.

Yeah. So he'd be thinking about them and he'd be, what about the heart sort of thing? What do you think a shepherd's heart would be like? Yeah. Well, that's ever such a good answer.

[8:40] You're my sheep. I'll let nothing. Yeah, I care for you. Yeah, that's good. Yeah. The shepherd's heart is caring for the sheep. And I suppose that's what the shepherd's mission is.

I think if you press the analogy too far, you might get his ultimate job is to get the sheep shorn so as to make wool out of them or something like that.

But basically, as far as we're concerned, he's looking after the sheep. He's caring for them. Okay.

Well, that's the shepherd. And let's think about the other characters in the idea of a shepherd.

So I've drawn some there. And so the thing that makes a shepherd a shepherd is that he has... SH something something P.

That's really not difficult. Yes. Say it. Sheep. Yeah. Well done. Yes. Sheep. Because he didn't have any sheep. He wouldn't really be a shepherd, would he?

[9:43] And I put there... Do you know how it took me quite a while to draw a reasonable, recognizable sheep? That is a recognizable sheep, isn't it? Just to point out, that's the one that's meant to be sheep.

Yep. Okay. And so dangers. Things that you need a shepherd to look out for. Can any of you spot any dangers on that picture?

Any dangers? Yes? Predators. Wow. That's a good answer. Yeah. Predators. Yep. So I put a predator there.

Anybody like to do a telepathy question? What did I think I was drawing? A wolf is the correct answer. Well done. I thought I was drawing a wolf. Yes.

Yep. Okay. Any other dangers there? It could fall off the cliff. Yeah. I tried to draw a sheep that was almost falling off a cliff.

[10:39] I thought of drawing one that had fallen off, but I thought that would be too upsetting. But yes. So that's a good answer. The sheep can fall off cliffs. The sheep wander off and they think...

Or whatever they say. And they go to the edge of the cliff. No, no, no, no. We need to come back from the edge of the cliff. Okay. Any other dangers there?

Who said that? Did you say mountain? Yes. That's right. Good. Yes. In Ezekiel 34, the sheep wander off on the mountains and get lost.

Gero is away on mountains today. I hope he doesn't get lost. He's a bit more intelligent than a sheep. But I mean, if he was a sheep, he'd probably find some lost sheep up on those mountains. But mountains are dangerous places for sheep. So there's dangers there. So what have I put? I've got the predator. I never even thought of that word. Yeah, predator. Cliff edges, mountains, wandering, getting lost.

[11:49] So dangers for the sheep. And needs for the sheep. So there's dangers is one thing. The shepherd is looking out for the dangers. And then there's needs. I think...

Yeah. Okay. Any thoughts for what the sheep needs? If you were a sheep and you were going... Oh dear, that's not a very good word. A sheep, is it?

I don't think I'll bother trying that. Yes. If you were a sheep... What would you need? So right at this end?

Oh, you've got two there. Let's do the first one. Water. Okay. Yes. Water. They need to drink.

Bethany. Next one. Guidance.

Wow. Yeah. Guidance. Yes. This way, not that way. Well done. Yes. And then Gracie, have you got an answer? I shall... Grass?

[12:48] Grass. Yes. Well done. Grass. Grass to eat. And then this other one. SEC. I hope I've done the right number of stars there. But you're clever enough to work it out.

You're so good. Well done. Yes. She goes. You did well. That was a good answer. That was a good answer.

Security. Yes. So the needs for the sheep. Grass. Food, I think I put... No, that doesn't say food, does it? Anyway. Water.

Yeah, water. Security. I'm not even going to bother. Guidance. Yeah, those are the things that sheep needs. And so this is how sheep are.

And we're going to look in the Bible at two passages. Just simply, that's all we're going to do this morning. And see that what the Bible says about that. So we're going to turn to Psalm 23.

[13:44] So the shepherd, meaning the Lord. Here I'm looking at the singular. Who is my shepherd?

And in Psalm 23, David says, the Lord is my shepherd. So Psalm 23 says, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be in want.

Meaning to say, he won't leave me in the lurch. He won't leave me that there's something I really need that he doesn't provide. He might not provide it quite when I want him to, but he knows best on these things.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. Pasture means grass. He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

[14:46] For you are with me, your rod and your staff. They comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil.

My cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. The last bit is a little bit different because it's about the Lord providing a lovely food.

And it seems to stop being about sheep and being about something else, being about hospitality. There's another big passage which I thought on reflection we won't even try and look at this morning.

It's Ezekiel 34. If you have some time this afternoon, you might like to look at Ezekiel 34. And if we have time this evening, we'll look at that. And the other passage is John 10.

And they're all about... On the screen. They're all about... Jesus. Yeah.

[15:50] Okay. So, boys and girls, can you come back and help us with this one? So, are you there? So, we looked at Psalm 23.

So, boys and girls, who is David Shepard? Who is David Shepard? I'm going to...

I mean, that is correct. That's not what he says in Psalm 23. What does he say in Psalm 23? God. God. Yeah.

I'm going to press it a little bit more. Exactly. Bethany. The Lord. So, when it says Lord here, it means the Lord God, which is right. And Jesus is the Lord.

But the way he puts it is that the Lord is his shepherd. This God, this great God who made everything. And he would say, this is my shepherd. Which is a brilliant thing to say, isn't it?

[16:45] And what does this make David? So, if the Lord is his shepherd, what does that make David? What is he?

If the Lord is his shepherd, what is he? Well done. Yeah. Well done. Yes. I think that deserves a round of applause. Yes. He is a sheep. David is saying, I'm a sheep.

The Lord is my shepherd. I'm a sheep. Now, let's just think what sheep are like. Okay. Because this is what David is saying about himself. And if the Lord is our shepherd, which I'm sure many of you are thinking, yes, I'm up for that as well.

What does this make us like? So, it makes David into a sheep. And what are sheep like? Okay. So, what are sheep like? Generally speaking. So, just be careful before you answer this.

Because you're now saying you're one of these. Stupid. Yes. Okay. So, yeah, absolutely right.

[17:48] Stupid. Sheep are somewhat stupid. I'm not a great expert on sheep. But I think the implication of this is that they, you know, you wouldn't put them on university challenge.

They're stupid animals. They go off in their own way. And we're saying, if you're saying the Lord is my shepherd, we're saying, actually, I'm quite stupid in a number of areas.

Spiritually speaking, I need somebody to tell me the better way. Because if it was just up to me, I'd make lots of stupid mistakes. Would you be up for that, being a sheep?

I'm saying that. And here's another thing about sheep. Anybody help us with this, boys and girls? They go off in their own something.

Did somebody say way? Well done. Yeah. They go off in their own way. In Isaiah 53, it says, now you might have to correct me on this, we all like sheep have gone astray.

[19:01] We have turned every one of us to our own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Sheep are stupid and they tend to go off their own way.

And that's what sin is. And that's us. As we need a shepherd, we tend to go off in our own way. We tend to think we know best.

We tend to think that we're in charge. We tend to think that what we have decided is what God ought to do is what God ought to do. And we all jolly well do it, even if that's not what God wants to do.

And we have, each of us, we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep. And the confession says we've followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. So that's what sheep are like. And when they're called, something about always want to come back. But I put another word in front of it.

[20:01] Any boys and girls with that one? Don't. Well done. Yeah. Shall we?

They don't always want to come back. And this is one of the things about the great shepherd, that he's prepared to go and get us, even if we come back kicking and struggling.

He leaves the 99 and goes and gets the lost sheep, doesn't he? He has a rod and a staff which comfort us.

I think we ought to be comforted by the fact that if we say to him, no, I don't want to, he will say, ah, but you're going to. And he can bring us round and get us out of danger, even if we're somewhat kicking and screaming about it.

Sheep are not able to something themselves, beginning with P-R-O. Sheep are not able to something themselves, beginning with P-R-O.

[21:13] Pro. Pro. Pro. Well done. Yes. Sheep are not able to protect themselves. Now, I don't actually know somebody did look after sheep.

And he said, actually, they're pretty, they can be pretty vicious. They can give you a nasty kick. But generally speaking, if you have wolf versus sheep, you know, wolf with fangs and everything and sheep with wool, the sheep is not able to protect itself.

And I think we're saying this about us, that we are vulnerable. In the spiritual battle that we're in, if we just go out all by ourselves, we're vulnerable.

And the devil goes around like a roaring lion, seeing who he can devour. So we need a shepherd to protect us.

Not able to, I did get this one right, F something something, D themselves. Well done.

[22:30] Yes. Not able to feed themselves. Or in the sense, perhaps not able to know where to find food. And the shepherd, it says, he leads me in, what does it say?

He, he, he leads, he makes me lie down in green pastures. Yes, yes. And sheep don't know where they're, G, something, something, something, G.

Yeah, that's right, going. They don't know where they're going. They need somebody. Yeah, come on, yes. Well done. So this is something about sheep.

And I think Christians are going to say, yeah, I know all that about myself. And there's nothing new in this. That is absolutely how I am.

And that's why I need a shepherd. And I'm so pleased that Jesus is my shepherd. But maybe there might be somebody listening or watching who say, oh, I didn't realize that was me.

[23:41] But let me just press that a point. This is how we are by nature. We are lost sheep. That's one other way the Bible puts it. We get ourselves into trouble.

We can't get ourselves out. We're vulnerable. We don't realize how vulnerable. Our lives, we can easily ruin things by wandering off in our own way and causing ourselves huge amounts of problems.

And by nature, human beings need a shepherd. They need, they're being lost, need somebody to find them.

And there's a song by a guy who used to run slaving ships who says, I once was lost, but now I'm found. Was blind, but now I see.

I think many of us here this morning would say, I'm so grateful to the good shepherd because I was lost, but now I'm found. I was blind, but now I see.

[24:45] I was wandering off and he went and went to enormous trouble and brought me back. And I think we just say, thank you, Lord, for doing that. So about the sheep. That's what God thinks of us.

And I invite you to see how closely that fits us. Who is my shepherd? What does God do for David? So let's go back to the psalm.

So we thought about the sheep. Let's now think about the shepherd. So boys and girls, could you help us with this in verse one? I will not be what? I will not be. It's just going through what the words

say.

I will not be in verse one. Well done. I will not be in want. He won't leave me needing stuff.

And he makes me lie down in. Well done. Green pastures. And he leads me by. Quiet waters.

[25:44] Thank you. And what does he do to my soul? This is my inside thinking and feeling. What does he do to my soul? He restores my soul.

Thank you. I did look that word up. It's the word shub, which means turn. And I was thinking, I need to do a bit more thinking on that. I thought it was restoring like mending, where it says that they mended their nets.

When we get all torn and tattered by life and Jesus sort of stitches us back up again. That's not quite, as I understand it, what this word is saying. It says turn. So I wonder if he's saying, you know, my soul has gone one way and the Lord sort of turns things around for me.

And I was all under a cloud and everything and the Lord turns that around for me. Or I thought I was burdened and in a pickle and the Lord just turns that situation around for me.

I don't know. I'm still thinking about it. But it says, our translation says he restores my soul. And you've got refreshes, have you? Well, that's interesting. But it does say turn.

[26:55] But anyway, okay. He guides me in what sort of way? What sort of way does he guide me? Yeah. In paths of righteousness.

Yeah, that's right, isn't it? So he doesn't lead me into cheating. He doesn't lead me into solving problems in a wrong way.

He doesn't lead me into telling lies. He doesn't lead me into all sorts of things that are not righteous. But he leads me in righteous ways. And I think that's significant, isn't it? Because sometimes we get stuck in life. We say, well, how can I go forward? What is the right way?

And the Lord leads us in a right way. And that's what he does. And verse 5, where might I walk and what can I depend on?

[28:00] Do I mean verse 5? I think I mean verse 4. He guides me in what sort of way was verse 3. And this one is supposed to be verse 4. Where might I walk and what can I depend on?

Where might I find myself walking and what can I depend on? Anybody going to help us on this?

Where might I find myself walking and what can I depend on?

I'm going to go to my good buddy here. Yeah, go on. Yeah, and what can I depend on? They comfort me.

Yes, thank you very much. Yeah, you are with me. Your rod and staff comfort me. I think I deserve a round of applause because that's a good answer. And he says that when the Lord leads us...

Excuse me. So he talks about leading by streams of water, which sounds lovely. He talks about lying down in green pastures.

[29:12] I saw something once which said in a Middle Eastern context, green pastures aren't like Preston Park, just full of grass. In a Middle Eastern context, pastures might be a little blade of grass here, a little blade of grass here, a little blade of grass here.

But it's enough. So I don't know what the writer had in mind. But he leads me by food. He leads me to water. And here I go through a nasty place.

This is the valley of the shadow of death. And at some point or other, we'll all walk in that sort of valley, whether it's the bereavement and the loss and death of others, or whether it's, in the end, it's our own leaving of this world.

But he says that when we walk through the valley, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I don't have to be frightened. For you are with me.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. And the rod and the staff are protecting from predators and also making sure that I get nudged back into the right way if I'm going off beam.

[30:26] What can I depend on? Your presence. Why don't I fear? Because you are with me. So thank you, boys and girls, for helping with that.

We're just going to look at one other passage in one moment. But I'll just stop on this matter of the great shepherd for Christians to realize that we can say this just as much as David.

He said this in his testimony and we can, we don't have to be kings in that sense, but we can say as believers, this is true for me.

Let's realize that these things describe our situation. And so what a privilege to have the Lord as our shepherd. Do you agree with me? It's a privilege, isn't it, to have the Lord as our shepherd.

I guess sometimes we forget it, but we ought to be, we ought to remember it and this morning we're being reminded of it. It has implications for where I am now.

[31:28] Where I am now is somewhere that the good shepherd has in his wisdom either deliberately brought me to or allowed me to get to, but it's not outside his control.

I'm now somewhere under the guidance of the shepherd. So there is a path to safety. There is something of his mind and intention in this where I am now.

And how I can look to the future. Well, he has a purpose to lead me in paths of righteousness and he has a route for me. And I guess sometimes even if we can't see it, we've just got to believe that's what he says.

He, I can look to the future. And what I can understand about each day is that the Lord is with me each day. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.

There's no day in which the Lord doesn't extend to us his goodness and his, it's actually hesed, his steadfast love.

[32:39] That's a great comfort, isn't it? I think it's a great comfort. That it's on a day by day basis the Lord is our shepherd. And if you're not yet a Christian, then I just remind you that you are in the position, according to the Bible, of being a lost sheep.

And here's a wonderful shepherd who's saying, I can do all this for you. And I say, why not, why don't you say to him, I need, I need you to be the shepherd of my life.

And he will, he will say yes, but you need to talk to him about that. Let's go to John chapter 10. So we'll just have a quick look in this.

Because Jesus, as Sammy was saying, this is all about Jesus. So when in the Bible it says the Lord is my shepherd, the Lord God is my shepherd, Jesus picks this up and says, that's me.

And in John chapter 10, he says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd laid down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep.

[33:51] 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 doesn't care 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 sheep. I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen.

I must bring them also. So just finish off just thinking how specifically Jesus is this. So I am the good shepherd.

Simple question. Who said that? We don't know. I am the good shepherd. Who said that? Everybody? Jesus.

Right. And what is the danger in this passage that Jesus refers to? What's the danger? The wolf.

[34:50] Yes, the wolf coming. And unlike the hired man, the shepherd really something about the flock. The hired man doesn't do this so he runs away.

But the good shepherd cares about the flock. Yes. The good shepherd cares about the flock. And what does this shepherd do which is more than in Psalm 23?

What does the shepherd in John 10 do which the shepherd in Psalm 23 doesn't do? He lays down his life for the sheep. That's right. So here's sort of an extra dimension of not just being willing to lay down his life and risking in attacking the wolf, but actually laying down his life for the sheep.

And this is referring to his death on the cross, isn't it? And you might ponder, what's the wolf? And then you might say, I wonder whether the wolf is God the Father and his wrath.

Just have a think about that. You might think, well, it doesn't quite work. But it's worth thinking, isn't it? The danger for the sheep is ultimately that God will judge them.

[36:12] And Jesus says, I will take that judgment. I will lay down my life so that the sheep can go free. His death upon the cross.

And so we've had a look at the pastor. And the pastor is Jesus. He is the shepherd of the flock. And I think it's very important that before we start thinking about the service of human under-shepherds,

that we make sure that we put ourselves totally in the hands of the good shepherd. And try not to mix them up. I always think it's a little bit of an issue for churches to think so highly of the pastor or the pastors, that they begin to think that they can do what Jesus does. And they can't. It's only Jesus who can sort of solve every problem. It's only Jesus who really knows our hearts. It's only Jesus who died on the cross for us. It's only his spirit that really makes us new. So let's be grateful for the good shepherd, the Lord Jesus. The Lord is my shepherd, says David.

[37:26] I am the good shepherd, says Jesus. And I just want to say, he is great, isn't he? Don't you want Jesus to be your shepherd? Aren't you glad that he's your shepherd?

And you say, yeah, this is a good thing that we've thought about today. Well, let's stop and think. And we're going to sing a song which says, Jesus is my shepherd. How sweet the name of Jesus sounds.