

My Sheep Know Me

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[0 : 00] Have you ever been asked that question? How do you know that Jesus is the one, the only? How do you know that Jesus is the Son of God?

How can you be sure? Well, this morning as we take up the words of Jesus, my hope and my prayer is that we'll come to something of an answer to that question. We're in the Gospel of John. If you have your Bible with you, please open it up to John chapter 10. Verse 14. John chapter 10, verse 14 and 15.

Jesus says this. He says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Sorry, that's verse 11.

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. You know, I've read these words of Jesus, I'm not sure how many times in the past year.

[1 : 11] And week after week as I've read them, there's just been a little something that's kept nagging me. What does Jesus mean when he says, I know my sheep and my sheep know me?

And beyond that, what does Jesus mean when he adds, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.

You know, what we tend to do when we come to these words of Jesus, we maybe scratch our heads a few times and say, hmm. And then just keep on reading until we get back to something that's clear and makes more sense.

If verses 14 down to verse 18 are like a swimming pool, I've been swimming in them for a good little while here and yet I still feel like I can't quite touch the bottom here.

These are deep waters. We could just skip over them and look for something that's more easy to understand. But I can't help but think that Jesus chose these words carefully for a reason.

[2 : 14] That God has something that he wants to say to us through these very words, as difficult to understand as they may be. I'm not saying that every time we struggle to understand something that we should necessarily have to do a full in-depth study.

But sometimes, after some prayer and meditation, we should dig in and study further to press in and understand what Jesus is saying, what God wants to say.

These are the words of Jesus, the Son of God. And I want to understand everything I can of what he said. So I'm not sure how much more clarity and certainty we will come to through this morning's message.

But perhaps we just need to go on the journey together of asking some questions and thinking about it and chewing on these words of Jesus a little bit. And my hope and prayer is that the Lord will lead us to a deeper understanding.

So let's go after this a little bit. What does Jesus mean when he says, I know my sheep and my sheep know me? Let's start by remembering how all this stuff that Jesus has been saying came up.

[3 : 33] Jesus healed a man who had been born blind. And after that man had been grilled by the Pharisees and then kicked out, Jesus went and found the man. He told this man that he was the Son of Man, the Messiah.

And then the man who had been blind said, I believe. And he began worshiping Jesus. Some Pharisees who were there were watching this. And Jesus has a little exchange with them.

And then he goes into a sort of parable or illustration about sheep and sheepfold. Shepherd and robbers and thieves. Wolves and hired hands.

And as we worked through that in the past weeks in our sermon series, we started to catch a little more of Jesus' meaning. He's been exposing the evil of the Pharisees with the robbers and thieves.

Perhaps even with the wolves. He's been declaring to them that he is the true shepherd. And that the sheep belong to him. And one of the things that Jesus has been making much of is this whole relationship between shepherd and sheep.

[4 : 40] This relationship that Jesus has with his followers. That's what these verses that we're looking at today are all about. I know my sheep.

And my sheep know me. There's something significant and special going on here between Jesus and the man who is right now bowing down on the ground and worshiping him.

There's something very significant and special going on here between Jesus and these men and women who have been following him all over Israel for the past couple years.

Men like Peter. James. John. Mary. And Martha. Women too. I know my sheep.

I know my sheep. And my sheep know me. Let's just rewind to the beginning of this little analogy and trace this theme through a little bit. Back to verse 3.

[5 : 39] I'm going to read 3 to 5. And then verse 8. The gatekeeper opens the gate for the shepherd, said Jesus. And the sheep listen to the shepherd's voice.

He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

But they will never follow a stranger. In fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice. Verse 8.

All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them.

And then we finally come to verse 14. I know my sheep and my sheep know me.

So Jesus has already said a lot about this. The way to know who the true shepherd is, the one to whom the sheep belong, is by whether or not the sheep know and recognize the shepherd.

[6 : 49] It's by whether or not they listen to his voice and follow him. Jesus is the true shepherd, the good shepherd. And those who are his know him, recognize him, listen to his voice, and follow him.

What Jesus says, his sheep listen to. What Jesus tells his followers about, they believe. What Jesus commands, his sheep obey.

And where Jesus leads, his sheep follow. Why? Because they know him. They have a special bond or relationship with him as their shepherd.

They recognize his voice in a way that they don't recognize the voice of anyone else. I know my sheep and my sheep know me.

My sheep know me, says Jesus. Let's come back to that question I asked at the beginning. How do you know that Jesus is the one?

[8 : 04] The only? How do you know that he really is the son of God? The Christ? The way?

The truth? The life? How do you know that Jesus is the one that the Bible says he is? How can you be sure? Or maybe you've been asked that question by some people.

Or had that conversation with someone. How do you answer that question? What would you say to someone who asked you those questions? Some of us might reach for that apologetics book on the bookshelf at home.

Or that evangelism book. That talks about how to make a good case for Christ. Or how to explain our faith. In Jesus. Others of us might have a more.

Let's look at the evidence. And start talking about the miracles that Jesus did. But what's interesting is that. Many people witnessed the miracles that Jesus did.

[9 : 13] And yet. Walked away. Not believing. In him. Not following him. Some of them ate the very bread that Jesus made in the wilderness.

And yet. They did not believe. There came that time where they didn't want to listen to what he had to say anymore. And they left him. How is it that some people accept.

And believe. And follow Jesus with the highest of loyalties. While others who see and look at the same things. Have the opposite conclusion about Jesus.

How do you know. Know. That Jesus really is. Who the Bible says he is. How can you be sure.

Some of us might say. I just don't know. How I know. But I know. I can't explain it. I just know in my heart of hearts.

[10 : 13] That he is. The one. I can't explain it. It's not that we haven't thought about it. Or that we don't know some things about Jesus.

But maybe. What we mean is. I just can't explain it in a way that I'm sure will convince you. To change your mind. Especially if that person you're talking to.

Is just continuously questioning. And questioning. Well how do you know this. And how do you know that. At the very bottom of it all. Maybe we all kind of come to that place. Where we say. Well I just know. I just know that Jesus is.

Who the Bible says he is. That he is the one. That he is the son of God. There's a faith. There's a trust. At the bottom. That some people just don't seem to have.

More than that. There's a knowing. There's a knowledge. There's a certainty. There's an assurance. That I have. That some don't have.

[11:14] However it works. Those of us who know Jesus. We just know. That he is. Our good shepherd. The Christ. The son of God.

We know that he is the light of the world. We know that he is all the things. That the Bible says he is. That he is the one. I know my sheep. And my sheep know me.

Said Jesus. Yes. We who belong to Christ. When we read these words. We say yes. That's true. Maybe if we.

We can't even explain. How or why. We know it's true. Let's look at the second. Piece of this verse for a moment. I know my sheep.

And my sheep. Know me. Just as the father knows me. And I know the father. What does that mean? This is what.

[12:15] Drew my attention to this verse. What is he saying? Maybe we could flip it around. Just as the father knows me. And I know the father. So too.

I know my sheep. And my sheep. Know me. Does that make any more sense? What does this mean?

Well we can rule out one possibility. I don't think Jesus is saying. That our relationship with him. Is identical to his relationship. With the father. How could it be?

Jesus and the father are divine. We are not. Jesus and the father. Go way back. To before the world was even created.

Eternity past. Our relationship with Jesus does not. Jesus and the father. Are one with each other. They have this special communion.

[13:15] And unity. With each other. In a deep and mysterious way. That we can barely comprehend. We don't have that same relationship with Jesus. As he has with the father.

Father. Well what is it then? It's a tough one. But let's take a moment to think about Jesus' relationship with his father.

It's something that's come up again and again in this gospel of John. There is something unique and special about Jesus' relationship with God the father.

We heard it as early as the first chapter. John chapter 1 verse 18. John chapter 3 verse 35. John chapter 5 verse 17.

[14:28] As Jesus makes his case to the Pharisees while they're trying to go after him. In his defense Jesus said to them. My father is always at work to this very day.

And I too am working. He went on in verse 19 to say this. Very truly I tell you. The son can do nothing by himself.

He can only do what he sees his father doing. Because whatever the father does. The son also does. For the father loves the son. And shows him all he does.

Yes. And he will show him even greater works than these. So that you will be amazed. Or we could look to John 6 45.

Jesus said. Everyone who has heard the father. And learned from him. Comes to me. No one has seen the father. Except the one who is from God.

[15:28] Only he has seen the father. John chapter 8 verse 16. It comes up again. Jesus says. But if I do judge.

My decisions are true. Because I am not alone. I stand with the father. Who sent me. Verse 19.

Then they asked him. Where is your father? Jesus said. You do not know me. Or my father. If you knew me.

You would know my father also. We touched on all these passages. Over the. Over the months. That we have been doing this series. And one thing that we have seen.

In all this. Is that Jesus relationship. With the father. Is so unique. So different. From what we are familiar with. It is really an. Out of this world.

[16:22] Kind of relationship. And if we have been listening. To what John has been saying. We will notice that. Often the people. Who Jesus said these things to. They didn't get.

What he was talking about either. They thought these things. Sounded strange. Some were pretty sure. That he was claiming. God is his own father. Like in John 5.18.

Others were still. Thinking like we just heard here. That maybe somehow. Jesus is still talking. About his earthly dad. Who is your dad? Where is he?

And they debated. Back and forth. About his parentage. But all along. We know. If we are following closely. That Jesus has not been talking. About Joseph.

He has been talking. About God. When he says. My father. His heavenly father. A relationship. That he. Has had with the father.

[17:18] Before he came down. To earth. This kind of an. Invisible. Unseen. Relationship. In which the father. And son. Commune. With each other.

In ways. And in moments. That we don't even understand. And we just get. These little glimpses. Of this communion. Like at Jesus baptism. When the father.

Speaks from heaven. About how he is pleased. With his son. And loves his son. Or. When we hear Jesus. Praying. To his father. In John chapter 17. Pouring out his heart.

So the way. That the father. Knows. The son. And the son. Knows the father. It's beyond our understanding. It's a spiritual.

Relationship. Maybe not so much. A physical. Flesh and blood. Kind of relationship. Like we're used to having. With one another. Maybe this is the point.

[18:14] That Jesus is making here. To the Pharisees. And even to us. The way I know. My sheep. And my sheep. Know me. Is like my relationship.

With the father. It's a deeper. Spiritual. Relationship. A kind of invisible. Unseen. Relationship. A kind of. Beyond our. Understanding.

Kind of relationship. But this relationship. This connection. Between me. And my sheep. It's as true. And real. As my relationship. With my father. In heaven.

Is true. And real. Let's see. If we can pick up. An example. Of this. Back in.

John chapter 6. John chapter 6. Jesus. Has said. Some words. That some of his followers.

[19:08] Found offensive. And some of them. Stopped following. Jesus. At that time. And left him. For good. John 6. 66. From this time.

Many of his disciples. Turned back. And no longer. Followed him. You do not want to leave too. Do you? Jesus asked the 12. Simon Peter answered him.

Lord. To whom shall we go? You have the words. Of eternal life. We have come to believe. We have come to believe. And. To know.

That you are the Holy One of God. You hear that? We have come to believe. And. To know. That you are the Holy One.

Of God. It's not just a. I believe. I hope so. Between Jesus. And his sheep. It's. And I know. There's assurance there.

[20:08] There's confidence there. There's certainty there. I know. My sheep. And my sheep. Know. Me. I'm not going to walk away from you.

Jesus. How could I? I've come to know the truth. About you. That you are the Holy One. Of God. God. Said Peter. Let me ask you something.

By way of illustration. How do you know. That the lights are on. In this room. You probably look at them. And think. Well. Look at it.

I can see. That they're on. The light is coming from them. But what if we had someone. In our building. Here. Who was blind.

What if he or she. Was to say to you. Well. How do you know. That the lights are on. In here. What would you say. To them. Well. How can you be so sure.

[21:05] I can't see it. Is that not. What's happening here. Between Jesus. And the people. How do you know. That he is the one. Well.

Look at him. There's light. Coming from him. As John said. At the very beginning. We have seen. We have seen his glory. Glory. As of the only.

Son. Who came from the father. Full of grace. And truth. Can't you see it. And yet people are saying.

I don't see it. Like in verse 10. Of John 1. Jesus was in the world. And though the world. Was made through him. The world did not.

Recognize him. Some recognized him. As we just saw. Peter. Recognized him.

[22 : 03] He knew him. Maybe you remember. Peter's declaration. Matthew 16. 16. He said to Jesus. You are the Messiah. The son.

Of the living God. And what did Jesus say. To him in response. He said. Blessed are you. Simon. Son of Jonah.

For this was not revealed. To you. By flesh and blood. But by my father. In heaven. It's God. The father. Who opens the eyes. Of our hearts. To see that Jesus. Is. His son. This knowledge. This confidence.

This assurance. This certainty. That we have about Jesus. It doesn't rest. On our own wisdom. It doesn't come. Because we're. We have really good. Investigative abilities.

[22 : 59] And we've done the research. It rests. On spiritual. Invisible. And incomprehensible. Realities. On the reality.

That. It is God. Who has revealed this. To you. That's something. That people can't see. And yet. It's something. That we feel. And we know. At the end of the day. Because God. Is the one. Who does this. Spiritual work.

In us. We know. Our shepherd. And he knows. Us. Just as truly. As the father. Knows his son. And the son. His father. Father. So these words.

Of Jesus. I know my sheep. And my sheep. Know me. They raise some big questions. But they speak. Of some very precious. Realities. Between us.

[23 : 56] And our savior. We may not always. Be able to explain. How we know. That Jesus is the one. One. But maybe. Part of that trouble. Is that.

It's not easy. To explain. This kind of a relationship. A spiritual. An invisible. Kind of relationship. An incomprehensible. Kind of relationship.

To someone. Who is spiritually blind. But this relationship. That we. Who are the sheep of Jesus. Have with our shepherd. Is as true.

And real. As Jesus relationship. Is with his father. Even though it's hard. To describe. Or explain. I want to encourage us. This morning.

Not to grow discouraged. Or give up. Trying to explain. And invite. And call people. To this kind of relationship. With Christ. A sheep. And good shepherd.

[24 : 51] Relationship. God is the one. Who opens.

The blind. The eyes of the blind. He is the one. Who does the revealing. He is the one. Who does the drawing. And the enabling. The convicting. And we are simply tasked.

With sharing the truth. About our shepherd. About Jesus. Think with me. For a moment. About someone. Who is blind. And can't see.

Someone who has been blind. Since birth. How many times. Did they have to be told. What something. Looked like. Before they finally. Just accepted.

Well. That must be the way it is. Even though I have no way. Of verifying it. This is what red. Looks like. This is what the roof. Of a house. Looks like.

[25 : 47] This is what the stars. In the sky. Look like. To that person. It's like you're speaking. A different language. One that they simply. Don't have the capability.

Of fully understanding. The way that you do. This is what it feels like. Often. To have a conversation. With people. Who don't know Jesus. They don't have that same. Knowledge that we do.

But the good news is. That God. And his son Jesus. Can open the eyes. Of the blind. So that they can see. He did this.

For each one of us. Do you remember that day? And if he can do it for us. If he can do it for this blind man.

The man who was blind. Now at Jesus feet. He can do it for anyone. And so we have to keep on patiently. And kindly. Offering the name of Christ. And the message of Christ.

[26 : 43] To those who don't yet know him. And do it without being. Worried or ashamed. If they don't seem to appreciate it. Maybe God knows.

In his wisdom. That it will take 13 times. Of hearing about Jesus. Before they finally. Accept him. And put their trust in him.

Maybe. The person. That you know. In your life right now. Who doesn't know Jesus. Has heard it 12 times already. And every one of those times.

God has been at work. And convicting them. In their heart. And maybe your next conversation. With them about Jesus. Is the 13th time.

We like these words of Jesus. About how he is our good shepherd. How he lays down his life for us. How he came to give us. A full life. These words are precious.

[27 : 42] They're special. All about us and Jesus. Sheep and shepherd. But if we stop to think about. Who Jesus is saying.

All of this to. Jesus is talking. To the Pharisees. These words are not just so that.

We can know about our relationship. With Jesus. And how wonderful it is. They are about that. It is for that. But these words are also. So that they. The Pharisees. Might know about how good. And precious. A relationship. They could have. With him. Is. Such amazing compassion. And mercy.

Even to his opponents. Even to the people. Who are trying to get him killed. And whether some or all. Or none of them. Will listen. And believe. And accept.

[28 : 37] Jesus is there. Taking the time. To patiently. And carefully. Explain how it is. Between God. And his people. Between him.

And his followers. He's giving them the words. That will lead them to life. We need to do the same. Can you think of a few people.

In your life today. Who you would love to see. Have this kind of relationship. With Jesus. Sheep. To good shepherd. Will you ask them.

Where they're at. With God. With Jesus. Will you bring up. The conversation again. And look for an opportunity.

To tell them about. Your good shepherd. Finally. As we celebrate. Thanksgiving today. And tomorrow.

[29 : 37] I want to encourage you. To reflect. On just how good. It has been. To belong to Jesus. And to have him. As your shepherd. Think back.

Over your life. Think back. Over how it was. Before you came. To Christ. Think of what it's been like. All these years.

For some of you. It's something. We can so easily. Take for granted. And yet. As Charles was saying earlier. It's the difference. Between life and death.

Heaven and hell. Those of us. Who belong to Jesus. We have a good. And glorious. Shepherd. And we belong to him.

Forever. Forever. We can't even begin. To count the blessings. That come. With that relationship.

[30 : 32] With knowing him. But my hope. And my prayer. Is that. Today and tomorrow. We would at least. Get started a little bit. And think about. Some of those things. And express those things.

In thankfulness to God. Let's pray. Father in heaven.

It's amazing. What you have done for us. We can barely understand. What you have done. How your spirit. Lives in us. Who believe.

How you give us life. How we can have fellowship. And communion with you. How we are. United to Christ. Christ. And through that. How we are saved. How we are empowered.

To live in this world. It's so much. Beyond our understanding. And we just want to say. Thank you. For the gift of Jesus. The gift of your Holy Spirit.

[31 : 33] In us. I pray that you would. Deepen our understanding. And deepen our love for you. And I pray that you would.

Give us those opportunities. To make much of you. Even as we have conversations. In the week ahead. We ask this in Jesus name.

Amen.