

The Good Shepherd

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[0 : 0 0] Well, last Sunday we started back into our series in the Gospel of John, and we've come to some of those very dear and precious words of Jesus about how he is our shepherd and we are his sheep.

John chapter 10. If you have your Bible, please open it up to John chapter 10. We heard last Sunday a little bit from this chapter already what Jesus said to the Pharisees.

It was kind of a veiled or concealed charge against them. He implied very discreetly that they were thieves and robbers who were only interested in taking from the people and using the people for their own advantage.

And again, very discreetly, Jesus reminded them that the sheep, the people, do not belong to them. They belong to the shepherd, the true shepherd.

They, he said, don't really care about the sheep except what they can get from them. But the true shepherd cares deeply for his sheep.

[1 : 0 7] And then we came to that moment in verse 11 when Jesus flat out says, I am the shepherd. I have come that they might have life and have it to the full.

Let's continue listening to Jesus and pick up his words in verse 10. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees a 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. I am the good shepherd.

[2 : 1 1] I know my sheep and my sheep know me. Just as the father knows me and I know the father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

So Jesus continues in this analogy or parable about shepherd and sheep. But now he sort of resets the characters and the setting of the story to highlight something different.

He introduces the hired hand and the wolf. Who is the hired hand? Well, Jesus makes it very clear. He is not the shepherd.

He says in verse 12, the sheep are not his own. They don't belong to him. He's merely there working for the shepherd. He's there to look after the sheep for pay.

And the sheep are not his. Personal ownership makes a big difference. You're going away on summer vacation for three weeks.

[3 : 1 8] And you need someone to look after your plants. Your garden. You've already invested countless hours into nurturing those plants.

From little seedlings. Watering them. Pruning them. Perhaps even fertilizing them. But now you're going away on a summer vacation for three weeks.

And the question arises. Who will I ask to look after my plants? My garden. Do I ask that 13-year-old boy who lives down the street?

And offer him a little something for his time? Or do I ask this person over here? I know she would do a great job. But, ah, she's so busy.

And I don't want to burden her. Okay, maybe I'll ask the 13-year-old. I'll give him a chance. But what will I come back to in three weeks?

[4 : 19] Well, one thing is certain. You probably won't. The 13-year-old boy probably won't take care of your plants the way that you would. With the same sense of urgency.

And the same careful attention. Why? Because the plants don't belong to him. He doesn't give a rip about how the fruits and the vegetables will taste at the end of all of this.

Because he won't be eating them. And so will you be surprised to find out that he came over to water just enough to keep them alive? Or whenever it suited him best?

Or that after missing four to five days, he saw that those tomatoes looked pretty dry. And so he just drenched them. And now all the tomatoes are split. But personal ownership makes a big difference.

Maybe something that you men can relate to a little bit more. You finally decide that the time is right to get your first brand new or almost brand new vehicle. For a lot of your life, you've driven well-used or hand-me-downs.

[5 : 23] But now you finally get something that's pretty much all yours right from the start of its life. And you think to yourself, I'm going to take good care of this thing. I want to keep it nice.

But then for one reason or another, someone else needs to drive. And maybe you're even sitting in the passenger seat with them. And you find yourself somewhat annoyed and bothered because they don't seem to be driving your vehicle with the same care and attention as you would.

Maybe it's your 15-year-old son. Maybe he thinks it's kind of fun to hit every one of those deep potholes here in town.

That's what the suspension is made for, right? Makes it a little more fun. Or maybe you're not in the car, but someone else is driving it.

And if you were driving it, you'd park over here away from all the other vehicles. Or make sure there's lots of space between other people's vehicles and yours. But someone else is driving your vehicle and they try to pull it right into that tight little spot.

[6 : 27] Where dings and dents are sure to happen when people are getting in and out. Personal ownership makes a big difference.

And so in Jesus' little parable, when the guy who has been hired to look after the sheep sees a wolf coming, what does he do?

He runs towards it with the staff ready to do battle, protect the sheep at all costs. No.

Jesus says he leaves the sheep. He abandons them. And runs away. You can almost hear his thoughts.

I'm not risking my neck for them. It's just a job. It's maybe hard for us to emotionally connect with the danger of a hungry wolf. It's not something that we see too often here in southern Saskatchewan.

[7 : 30] But let's remember that this is before the days of guns. Most shepherds were not wealthy landowners with huge fenced pastures. They had to keep moving the flock around the open hill country and valleys in order to find grass.

They didn't have the kinds of wells and water pumps that we had today. We're talking manual drawing or leading them down to the stream or the river. So they had to be out there with them a lot of the time just to make sure that they were fed, watered, protected, safe at night.

Most of those wolves that we've maybe seen today are probably lone wolves wandering about. Kind of docile looking things from the safety of our vehicles.

But wolves out in the wild can be very dangerous. They are fast. They are able to run up to 60 kilometers an hour. They are opportunistic.

They hunt in packs. Believe it or not, a handful of them can take down a buffalo. There are still human deaths that are reported from time to time because of wolf attacks.

[8 : 35] And in Jesus' analogy, we're meant to, let's remember that we're meant to identify with both the hired hand and the sheep. To sheep, wolves are deadly.

A couple years back in Germany, there was a wolf that got into a farmer's flock. He went out there to find this. 40 sheep had been killed and more injured.

So in one sense, I don't blame the hired hand for leaving, for getting out of there. I'm not sure I'd want to hang around too long if I knew that there was a wolf lurking about in the dark.

Jesus says that after the hired hand leaves, the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters the flock. But, says Jesus, I am not like the hired hand.

I am the shepherd. The one to whom the sheep belong. And not just any old shepherd, but the good shepherd. How good?

[9 : 43] So good. He cares and has concern for his sheep so much that he will lay down his life for them. And this is where the analogy seems to be lost on us a little, maybe.

Jesus seems to rise above the analogy. Would a shepherd really give his life for his sheep? Even a good shepherd.

The closest thing we've got to shepherds in our church is Rod and Cindy. Not quite sheep, but buffalo. Would you guys lay down your lives for your buffalo?

I'm guessing not. I tried to think of a similar kind of situation. Maybe poachers are raiding your buffalo, and for some reason the law enforcement officers just keep turning a blind eye to it.

Would you risk your life for the buffalo? I doubt it. Fortunately for you guys, you can always fall back on the greenhouse. But maybe sometimes a shepherd would risk his life for his flock.

[10 : 58] King David, when he was a young man, did that. When the bear and the lion came around, he fought with the lion and the bear, and he killed them. Maybe there's a little bit more incentive to do something like that when this flock represents your entire livelihood.

The majority of your assets as a family. When this flock is the difference between you having something to eat next week and not. And maybe not just your family's sheep, but all your brothers and sisters' families and their children.

Maybe then you'd think about going toe-to-toe with that bear or that lion or that wolf. But probably most of us would just say, forget it. They're just animals.

They're just animals. Let the wolf, let the bear, whatever, have them. They're not worth losing your life over. They're just animals. But there's the rub.

This analogy of Jesus, this parable, is not about just animals, is it? It's about people. It's about the people whom God loves.

[12 : 13] It's about the chosen children of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. To the people whom God loves. To Jesus, the good shepherd.

That man who had been blind and is now sitting at his feet. And his disciples over here, Peter and James and John. They're not just animals. They're not just a means to an end.

He loves them. And he cares deeply about each one of them. It's about real, personal relationship with each one of them.

And Jesus says, I lay down my life for the sheep. Verse 14. I am the good shepherd.

Lord, I know my sheep. And my sheep know me. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

[13 : 13] I lay down my life for this man who had been blind and is now at my feet. I lay down my life for Peter.

For Mary. And Martha. And Lazarus. For James. John. Thomas. It's as if Jesus is saying, each one of you who are my sheep is precious to me.

And I will give my life for you. When the wolves come around. And that's exactly what Jesus will do. He will go to the cross.

And he will die for them. To rescue them from the greatest of dangers. The punishment they deserve for their sins. But even now, before Jesus goes to the cross and actually dies for them.

Can you hear how he loves his people? They're not just followers that he's rounded up to boost his popularity in the polls and carry him to the throne.

[14 : 24] No. It's a very different kind of relationship. Isn't it? It's an I will give my life for you kind of relationship.

Because I want you to have life and have it to the full kind of relationship. Because I love you. It's a very intimate and unique kind of relationship.

Unlike anything in our world today. It's a you are my sheep. You belong to me. And I am your shepherd.

Your master. Your leader. Kind of relationship. And it's not an unhappy situation in which the shepherd dominates his sheep ruthlessly.

And treats them like animals where they fearfully submit to him. Or else. No. We who belong to Jesus want to belong to Jesus.

[15 : 24] We want to have him as our shepherd. We want him to be in charge over us. And lead us. Why? Why? Because he is good. He is really truly good.

And because he loves us. Really truly loves us. Like no one else in this world ever has or ever can.

Let's go one more verse. Verse 16. Jesus says. I have other sheep that are not of the sheep pen. I must bring them also.

They too will listen to my voice. And there shall be one flock. And one shepherd. Well who are these other sheep that Jesus is referring to? Jesus doesn't say precisely.

But most interpreters see this as a reference to the Gentiles. To all the non-Jews who will come to faith in Jesus. From among the nations and be saved. So most would say this pen refers to Israel.

[16 : 34] Or even more specifically to those who are ethnically Jewish. And the other sheep who are not of this pen refers to those outside Israel.

Those who are not heirs of the promises or the covenants made by God to Israel. But what's interesting to me is what Jesus says. He says. They too will listen to my voice.

I must bring them also. So just picture Peter and James and John. The followers of Jesus. Standing around listening to this. Just like Peter and James and John.

And Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Heard his voice. And listened. And began to follow him. They too. The Gentiles.

They also will hear his voice. And come to follow him. He will bring them. They will come under his care.

[17 : 36] And Jesus says. There shall be one flock. And one shepherd. In other words. The overarching goal of Jesus. The good shepherd. Is to bring the two together.

From Gentile. From Jew. Bring the two together. All of his sheep into one flock. One people of God. Under Christ.

Their one shepherd. Now you might be wondering. Well. How does that fit. With all the promises. And the prophecies. Made to Israel. Which are yet to be fulfilled.

How does that fit. With all the promises. And prophecies. Made about the church. The body of Christ. And then today. We've got the modern day church. With all of its various expressions.

Throughout the world. And we've got. Modern day Israel. How do all these things. Come together. When will we see. That one flock unity. That Jesus.

[18 : 34] Speaks about here. Some of you may have. Your own ideas. And answers to that already. I know I have some ideas. But I'm not sure. It's the easiest thing.

To figure out. From our Bibles. Paul wrote a whole chapter. About this. About the church. And Israel. Or Jew. And Gentile. And after trying.

To explain. What he knew. What God revealed to him. This is what he had to say. He said. Oh the depth. Of the riches. Of the wisdom. And knowledge of God.

How unsearchable. His judgments. And his paths. Beyond tracing out. Beyond tracing out.

Unsearchable. God alone knows. How he's going to bring this about. This unity. Of all of his people. All of his sheep. Worldwide.

[19 : 31] And make one flock. Out of all. Of them. Jesus. Will do it. He is the servant of the Lord.

And as the words. Of Isaiah. Say. Isaiah 44. Verse 26. God will carry out. The words of his servants.

And fulfills the predictions. Of his messengers. And yet. The verse just before. He often does that in a way. That overthrows the learning of the wise.

And turns it into nonsense. He has a way of being able to say. See. I declared it. From the beginning. And nobody else. Knew exactly how it was going to go.

So I'm not too worried about trying to figure it out. For myself. Somehow God will do it. There will be one flock. From Jew and Gentile. One people of God. And one shepherd over all of them.

[20 : 31] The Lord Jesus. And much more important than how. And when. Is whether. Whether you are in. The flock. Of Jesus. Whether you belong to him.

Or not. This. Blessed. And special relationship. That we've been talking about. Is between. Shepherd. And sheep. It's only they.

The sheep. Of Jesus. Who will have life. Eternal life. And have it to the full. It's only those.

Who listen to Jesus voice. And follow him. Who will have Jesus. As their good shepherd. And with him. Salvation. Protection. From all.

Which ultimately. Threatens. And so I want to ask you this morning. Do you have. That relationship. With Jesus. If you do not.

[21 : 31] Do you want. That relationship. With Jesus. The man who had been blind. And is sitting at Jesus feet. Right here. Right now.

As Jesus. Says these words. He just got. That kind of relationship. With Jesus. Today. Jesus found him. He told him.

That he was the son of man. A.K.A. I am. God's chosen Messiah. And king. And the man said. I believe. And fell at Jesus feet.

And worshiped him. Right there. He became. One of the flock. And just like he did.

If you have not done that already. You can too. I don't think we can say it too much. How to do this. But. It's as simple as.

[22 : 25] Acknowledging your sins to God. Asking for his forgiveness. And believing that Jesus. Is the one. Sent from heaven. To save us.

And so if you haven't done that. I want to ask. Will you surrender your life. To his. Good. Care. And to his love today.

If you haven't done that. I urge you to do it. Before it's too late. You can have Jesus.

As your. Good shepherd. I know. Many of you here. Most of you here. Have done this. I know you belong to Jesus.

And so. For you. Who do. I have a different question. This morning. Are you living. In the joy of heart. And peace of mind.

[23 : 21] That comes. With having a good shepherd. Like Jesus is. I'm going to ask it again.

Are you living. In the joy of heart. And peace of mind. That comes. With having a good shepherd. Like Jesus is. Are you trusting him.

Are you entrusting your worries. And your anxieties. And your concerns. About what's going on. In life. To him. Are you looking to him.

For your provisions. For. Wisdom. For strength. For guidance. Are you listening. To him.

Every day. To hear. What he has to say. To you. About how to live. In days. Like we live in. Are you actually.

[24 : 24] Following. And obeying. And doing the things. That Jesus. The good shepherd. Has commanded his sheep. To do. These are serious questions.

But my hope and prayer. Is that the Lord. Will speak to our hearts. Each one of us. Let's pray. And invite him. To do that. Lord Jesus.

We thank you. That you are. The good shepherd. And that you did. Lay your life down. For us. That we have life. Because of you.

We have hope. Because of you. And whether we feel it. Or realize it or not. Thank you. That you are looking. Over us. In our lives. And you care. For. I pray that we would live.

In that hope. That joy. That confidence. No matter what happens. Tomorrow. At the polls. Or later this week. No matter what happens. In the days ahead.

[25 : 19] With COVID. You are our shepherd. And we pray and ask. That you would lead us. That you would guide us. That you would. Give us that life. That you promised.

To your sheep. Life to the full. We ask in your name. And for your glory. Amen.