

John 10: 1-16 // Goodness of the Shepherd

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[0:00] Well, we're going to be in John chapter 10 today and talking about goodness.

! So if you want to tap and swipe your way there or open your Bibles, it doesn't matter how you get there. I was a youth pastor for many years.

One of the greatest experiences you can have is to pastor youth and be a minister with youth because they have such a wonderful truth meter.

They can see something that is untrue about 20 miles off and they're so honest about it and I absolutely loved it. And I had a 16-year-old friend that started to help me out with the ministry and he said something so profound that I'd never let go of it.

This was a lot of years ago. He said that it's better to be real than try and look good. And I struggled with that for a while because we want to present ourselves as good people.

[1:09] We want to look good. We want to feel that people are perceiving us as good people. But it's a struggle when we read something like John chapter 10 and we realize that there is a definition of good.

And that definition is God himself. And I hope I'm not bursting anybody's bubble this morning, but we're not God. If you're sitting here thinking that, I'd love to have a conversation with you later, but that's beside the point.

And so in the spirit of being real and trying to look good, I need to confess something this week where I absolutely blew it in this category. So I canceled the Wednesday night men's study and I did that fairly last minute.

I don't like last minute stuff like that. What happened was, you know, and I have a long history with ministry.

It's quite literally been about half my life, 26 years of doing ministry. And every now and then something happens that breaks you. And when I mean breaks you, I mean I'm not talking about just causes you emotional stress.

[2:17] I mean breaks you. And I've had several circumstances where I've had to deal with victims of abuse, not many. But in this one particular realm, there was a time where in Vancouver, in British Columbia, I was helping girls my daughter's age, about 11 to 12, get off the street.

Okay. And if you've ever been around that, you'll know that there's something that gnaws at your soul when you do that kind of work.

The police were amazing. I have all the respect in the world for law enforcement because they have to deal with this. But I was there and I was helping them in a very particular way. And you think you heal from something until you realize you haven't.

When something happens, you trigger something or a landmine happens in the road and you're all like, whoa. And that's what happened this last week. You know, something came into my office and it was triggering.

And instead of going to Wednesday night, broken and needing prayer, I thought, well, I can't lead a study like this. So I won't go. And I'll just cancel it.

[3:32] And of course, Mario's like, you know, well, shouldn't you have gone and gotten prayer from the guys? I'm like, yes. You're right. It would have been the right thing to do.

And you know what? It would have been the real thing to do. But instead, I was trying to look good. And I failed. And so I owed them an apology. And I want to make a public apology. I'm really sorry, guys.

I didn't practice what I preached this week. And so when I say it's better to be real and try and look good, I wish I could say that was the only time I've blown it. It's not. But that one was the most fresh. When we walk into this chapter, I want to just kind of keep everybody in mind that the previous chapter, John chapter 9, a man was healed.

And you'd think that the church would rally around us and say, this is amazing. This is a miracle. But they didn't. They actually were really harsh on the guy. And they were really harsh on Jesus. [4:32] And so Jesus comes into chapter 10 here, very clearly defining the fact that he is a good shepherd. Those who come into the sheepfold by another means, other than through him, he calls robbers and thieves.

The uncomfortable truth of this is that you have pastors today that are robbers and thieves. And I can say that freely because it's been like that throughout all time. It was like that in Jesus' day. It's like that today. How do we know the difference? How do we know the difference? Well, you absolutely have to listen to the shepherd's voice. Before I get too far on, let's go.

Jesus. Verses 1 to 2. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. Jesus is a good and faithful shepherd. And there are sadly many religious leaders that are not.

[5:41] How they get to their position is a good indicator if it's a red flag or not. And he does want to go into this. It had no gate, this sheepfold.

And if you're familiar with what it would look like from your own study in the Bible, then you'll know that it's just this enclosure with no gate.

It's not even particularly high. It's just that the sheep would be able to go in there. And there'd be sheep from many shepherds that would sometimes share a fold. So the sheep would go in and the shepherd would quite often lay down in the doorway at night, protecting the sheep from the wolves that might come in.

The sheep would be able to rest and know that they're in a safe place, knowing that their shepherd is looking after them. But there was only one legitimate way into it.

And that was the door. And Jesus is saying that anybody who tries to hop that fence and not go to the shepherd, they don't have good intentions in mind. Their heart is not going to be in the right place.

[6:46] They're trying to take shortcuts. And we have a lot of voices in this world today. There are many, many voices out there in our social media age.

How do we distinguish between our good shepherd and all of these other hoaxers? Not everyone who pastors is to serve the Lord in an ordained way.

You know, it is a chilling thing for me to say that, because I'm not coming up here and saying that I'm the example. What I'm saying is that I'm held under the same microscope as the people I talk about right now.

I have raised up, I have ordained, and I have sent out church planters in the past. And every single time I have them in front of the church before they leave, I just whisper a simple, I'm really sorry. And I explain to them what that means. I'm really sorry. Because now you have an extra checklist to your name. You can't just go and see any movie.

[7:49] You can't just go and do any activity. Now you have to think, is this good for the body of Christ for you to do this? You can't just go and be anybody.

Now you are a shepherd of the flock. You have to go and live in such a way where you're an example. I'm really sorry. Because that is something that you will never be able to put down. You can't turn it off Tuesday evening at midnight. You are this called person for the rest of your life. It's a heavy thing. So I always whisper, I'm sorry.

And by the time we get there, we know that it's a little bit in jest. Because obviously, I think, you know, it's wonderful to go out there and be a messenger. And you're never alone. You should always have a stream of people that you're accountable to.

Men that you are attached to. And I'm part of the Calvary Chapel Network. So I can tell you right now, I literally have 1,800 guys in the United States that I can, you know, get out to.

[8:45] And I don't know them all. All right. But I do know the 20 that are most close to me here. And one of them is a dear friend in Oklahoma City that I've known for many years. So when you're accountable, you may trip, you may fall, you will.

But you have people to help pick you up. And there are a lot of pastors that don't want that accountability. And they're trying to get into the sheepfold over the sides. It's never good.

And Jesus likens them to thieves and robbers. You may think that those two words mean the same thing, but they actually don't. In the original language, a thief uses deception to get what he wants. A robber uses violence or manipulation. They're two different things. Okay. And so when Jesus says there's thieves and robbers, some of them are bullies.

They're brutes. Okay. And they'll use intimidation and manipulation to get their way. They don't care about the flock of God. They don't. Others will be thieves and they'll lie their way through it.

[9:51] And when they're questioned, they'll be like, no, no, I didn't do that. They won't take responsibility as a man should. Thieves and robbers. And the funny thing is, it's not actually that funny.

The interesting thing is, is that we're talking about, Jesus talked about situations in his day. And yet, I bet you we know hundreds of them in our day. This has been a part of the process, unfortunately. We need a legitimate shepherd. And I hope it's not bursting anybody's bubble for me to say that it's not me. It's Jesus. Jesus is our legitimate shepherd.

Jesus alone is the good shepherd. He's my good shepherd. I'm following him. But don't look to me as an example, as a good shepherd.

Look to him. Because nobody is good but God. And as I already said, I had a hard Wednesday that I could have received the love and prayer from my brothers over.

[10:51] And I chose not to. Dumb, dumb. I won't do that again, okay? I learned a lesson. But there's the thing. We have to be willing to admit that we're wrong.

We have to be willing to admit that we've made mistakes. That, I think, gets us closer to doing the right thing. Which is fellowship. Belonging.

Honesty. Authenticity. It's being real. This world doesn't want us to be real. And I pray that God puts around you spiritual leaders who follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Who sell their lives. Freely give all of their heart and soul and body and mind to Jesus. And I pray every day that I am one of them. But there are many in this church.

And we need to continue following our good shepherd. Because there are many leaders who do not care. They aren't compassionate. They care for the church only in as much as the people can serve them and their agenda.

[11:59] And I wish you would be sitting there saying, Oh, I don't know what you're talking about. But I bet you do. A good shepherd comes in through love, calling, care, and sacrificial service.

A good shepherd lays down in the doorway of the sheepfold and says, This is where it stops. I will lay down my life for the sheep. I will protect them at any cost.

That's what a good shepherd does. That's what Jesus does. That is what he has done on the cross for us. So if you're in leadership, model that.

Lay down your life for those that are in your care. And I'm not talking about physically, though maybe you will be called to do that one day. But put others ahead of yourself.

Think of others more highly than yourself. Goodness, I think, begins there. But like I said, it only rests in God himself. Verses 3 to 6.

[13:02] To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes out before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. This figure of speech Jesus uses with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So Jesus says that there's a valid way to enter ministry. It's through him. It's through him. There's a valid way.

The door is open for those who know Jesus. And because you'd have sheep from several different flocks, there had to be a way where the shepherd would call out his sheep.

I was saying it in study earlier. You know, I've trained my two dogs to know this very particular whistle that I'll do. Okay? And they know to come to me when I whistle in that particular way.

[14:08] Most of the time it works. But they do. They hear it. They know it. And they'll come to me. They'll come running. And it's like they know, okay, that's my guy. Okay? And it's kind of like that with Jesus.

We know his voice. He knows our voice. And so when he calls, we answer. But I bet you there's some of us here, if you're like me, where you've had seasons where you haven't known his voice.

When he's called, you haven't answered. And as we were sharing earlier, too, it's like, you know, we have this thing with the summits. Like, you know, he left in 99. It's like I usually am the one moron that he went out to go find because I left.

And all of my distraction, all the things that I went out to go do were away from his plan. I'm usually that idiot. Okay? And so I've learned the hard way to listen to our master's voice.

But it only comes being steeped in his word. And I'll share another story of a failure. Just where it's actually his birthday today. One of my oldest friends, John, we've been in ministry together.

[15:18] He's been in it longer than I have for about a few years. But I've known him for about 30. And I was wishing him a happy birthday today. And I was remembering this situation where there was a time where I was like, John, I just don't get it.

I'm not hearing from God. He's so silent. It's frustrating to me. You know, I mean, I'm doing this stuff. I'm doing all of this. And I'm like listening off Christian resume and all that kind of thing. And he's looking at it.

And he's saying, okay, yeah. He said, so let me ask you this. When was the last time you read your Bible? I said, well, it was a couple months ago when I had to teach. And he went, well. He said, how are you going to hear anything new from God when you're not even listening to what he's already said?

Why would he tell you new information when you're not paying attention to all of the other stuff that he's already said? I was like, yeah, you're right. I started reading my Bible every day.

Okay. You want to know the shepherd's voice. Read his words. Hear his voice. Okay. The shepherd would have a distinctive call and the sheep that belonged to that shepherd would run because the sheep hear the shepherd's voice.

[16:29] I hope you know what it's like to have Jesus call your name. And I'm not talking audibly because that would be a whole other line of conversation.

I'm talking about in the heart. I hope you know what it's like for Jesus to call your name and you know what that is. Because the good shepherd knows you.

It's not an assembly line of believers. We are one body in this church. But you as an individual, the good shepherd knows your name. And I pray that you know what it's like to hear it called to your heart.

And if you don't, I'm going to be praying continually that you will. Because there is something that changes in our lives when the good shepherd, we know his voice and we follow him.

And maybe today is your chance for that. I hope you understand what it means for Jesus, the good shepherd, to take an individual interest in you. See, one of the things that would happen with the sheepfold, and I've tended sheep before, right?

[17:37] And so when I read stuff like this, I get excited. It's like, I remember some of this. You check the sheep all the time. A couple of times a day. When they come in and they go out and they check them and see, okay, are you limping?

Are you okay? Do you have a bite? You know, were you not on by something? I mean, you know, like you've lost some hair here. Are you, do you look sick? Are your eyes droopy? Are they watering? You know, you look at all of these things with the sheep and you'd want to see, are you okay?

Are you okay? The shepherd, our good shepherd Jesus knows you and me that way. And he's looking in our lives and he's like, you know, you're limping a bit.

You seem sad. Or you're bouncing off the walls because you're so happy. This is great. Our good shepherd knows you that well. Individually that well.

What this shows me is that Jesus doesn't work as a group. He works as an individual. He'll work on our church.

[18:43] He will work on our community, yes. But I think it starts with us in our hearts right here. It is better to be real than it is to try and look good. Come to church being real.

And it's our responsibility as a church to make it safe so that you can. One of the greatest compliments anybody has ever paid a church that I was involved with was this woman came to us. This was 2012. And she said, I feel like I could fall apart here and I'd be okay. You know? She never came back. But it was so sweet to hear that.

Just that that's exactly what we were hoping for. And so I want to say right now, I hope you know it's okay to come here and fall apart. And it'll be okay. And you know what's also okay?

Is to come in here and celebrate something wonderful that God has done. Let us celebrate with you. Let's be happy together. Let's celebrate in the successes of others.

[19:47] Because that's in others' first heart. I am always so excited when I hear that something has happened. The Lord has done something in someone's life. And even if I don't fully understand it, I will know that, hey, something really great is going on here.

Praise the Lord for what he does. That is our good shepherd. Verses 7 to 10. So Jesus again said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. If you want to get into his care, if you want to be protected, if you want to be loved and cared for by the good shepherd, you can only do it through Jesus Christ.

He is our good shepherd. There is no other. And unfortunately, there are bad, bad pastors and actors out there and ministers of religion that don't represent that.

[21:02] They want it to be about themselves. And I don't want to predict their outcome. That's way above my pay grade. But I will just simply say this. The good shepherd leads us to good places, good pastures, good water, through his good word.

So let's pay attention to that and focus on that. I've seen happy sheep. Like I said, I've tended them. And one of the things is, you can tell them.

You can tell when they don't have a care in the world. You really can't. They're kind of obvious in that way. They're okay to lay down. They won't lie down if they're stressed out. They're okay to eat, right?

They're okay to drink water. They're okay. They're okay. And you can tell when sheep are all right. It's like that in church too. When there's a lot of stress, when there's a lot of uncertainty, you know, I would love to say that sometimes we all just band together and we're one big happy family and community.

And most of the times, nine out of the times we are, and every now and then, it's like, you know, would you stop touching me? You're standing too close. He's breathing on me. And it starts to look like a long road trip with your parents, okay?

[22:10] Where all of a sudden, just little things start to get annoying, you know? And this is where the heart of goodness comes, where it's like our good shepherd will say, hey, hey, hey. Hey, hey, hey. We're all part of the same pen here.

All right? It's all trying to get along. We'll all be fit at the same time. Just relax. That's why we need Jesus as our good shepherd. They know when they're safe.

They know when they can lie down. They know when they're content. And Jesus says, that's what he gives to us, is that abundant contentedness. Now, how do we know?

How can we possibly say to a sheep to have abundant life? Well, I haven't seen too many sheep roll into a pasture with designer clothes, right?

Or, you know, money purses over and there's fat and, you know, it's making it rain because it's overblowing with money. Those things aren't bad, but they don't lead us to contentedness.

[23:10] And that's not what Jesus is talking about with the abundant life. He's talking about an abundant life with him, in his care, where he will lead us by still waters, by green pastures.

Well, he will keep us away from the wolves, where he will protect us. That is an abundant life in Christ. That is a beautifully abundant life. It doesn't mean we'll have everything we perceive we need.

It doesn't mean that we will have huge bank accounts. It doesn't mean we will always live in comfort. Abundant life is being abundant in him. And that leads us to the right places.

I think of discontented people. They're usually unhappy, very unhappy. They're empty, even though they seem to have everything. There's still an emptiness in there because they don't have Jesus fully in their heart.

So stay close to your shepherd and life will be filled with contentment because he's watching over you. verses 11 to 15. I am the good shepherd.

[24:16] The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees.

And the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

The religious leaders who treated someone poorly that was healed on the Sabbath, they insulted him. They attacked him. And when the shepherd sees a wolf coming, they deal with it.

It is one of the more unpleasant parts of ministry. But I will just say, I've chased away my wolves in my time. There have been situations where there has been true, true disunity and actually disruptive and abusive behavior.

And I have removed people from church before as a result. There was one time, and I won't share names, but it wasn't here, obviously. This one man, he was a pretty big personality.

[25 : 32] And I'm not afraid of that. I've got a big personality, for better or for worse. But he took it upon himself, I would say, to aggressively pray with women from the church to the point where he would grab their arm, hold them in place.

Huge, huge, wrong. He would tower over them and keep them sitting so that he could pray over them. Now, I didn't see any of this, this one particular Sunday, but I heard about it in a phone call. I immediately phoned the guy, and I just said, hey, man, I've been hearing some weird stuff. What do you think about that? Now, somebody who had a right heart would say, oh, man, I'm so sorry. I've just got really enthusiastic. I'll make an apology. And if he had done that, I would have been satisfied trusting that he was going to make an apology and keep his distance and learn some etiquette and consent.

But he didn't respond that way. He responded of like, who do you think you are? And the conversation was difficult, went on for an hour. And I simply said, you're not allowed back at this church again until you can learn some humility and work with the leadership in this church.

[26 : 46] Because I'm telling you right now, you're being an abusive person, physically and emotionally and spiritually. I can't have that in the church. And he went on to say some things I won't repeat here. And it got to the point, I said, if you show up next Sunday, I'm calling the police.

He showed up next Sunday, and I called the police, and he was physically removed. I'm not afraid of shooting the wolves to save the sheep. Not one bit.

Because a shepherd doesn't care about politics or keeping people in seats and being unoffensive. A shepherd shoots the wolves and loves the sheep.

That may sound harsh, but step into my shoes for a minute and you'll see what I mean. You have to deal with some gross, difficult situations at times. And there's one way to deal with it. Love the sheep. Be protective.

But you have to be willing to look in the mirror every day and ask yourself, what if I'm wrong? And I did for a while after that situation. What if I made a mistake here? You know?

[27 : 52] It turned out later that that was the farthest thing from the truth because women came forward and made statements to the police more than I knew. And I realized that if anything, I was blind to a situation.

even though it only happened over two Sundays, I was blind to a situation that I should have paid more attention to. Okay? So you learn from your mistakes, but you never, as a shepherd, shy away from protecting the sheep, whatever it takes.

I went through about a year of smear campaign from this guy online for a while. It was nasty. It really was. But I have no regrets because I know it was the right thing to do.

Those women felt protected. They were able to continue coming to church. All right? So, all that being said, sometimes you've got to deal with the hard wolves out there.

And it's difficult. But a bad shepherd, a hireling, won't defend the sheep because he thinks the flock exists for his own benefit. And he'll run.

[28 : 59] I will just say, and I don't say this often, and maybe I should and maybe I shouldn't, 26 years of ministry, I've only been paid for six of them. You don't do this for the money.

You do this because you get paid in sand for it simply because God called you and you have no choice but to follow your master's call because it is the only real thing. And I will happily be in texoma being paid in sand if necessary.

Okay? Because this is a calling that I've responded to. So, come be called with me. Let's follow our good shepherd together because I'm not him.

But I also want to say I'm not a hireling. And I would rather follow the Lord's leading than bow to any public pressure. So please, come with me on that adventure and let us follow our good shepherd together because he is good.

The only one. He is our abundant life. I think I'm going to close there. I had in mind to go a little bit further but let me just leave it off with this.

[30 : 23] If the Lord has a calling on your life, whatever it may be, bring it to him. Read his word. Let it soak into your heart on a daily basis.

Don't let a day go by. It's not out of being religious. It's not out of, you know, and if you miss a day, don't be hard on yourself. That's normal, okay? But give it a shot of reading the word every day. And if you don't know where to start, pick a proverb for the day of the month. There's about as many proverbs as there is in a day in the average month. So, pick that. If you don't know where to start, just do it and pray through it.

And if you want a challenge, do what I used to do with the youth group and just say it's the John challenge. Read through the book of John. Pray through each chapter and then let's talk about it. If you already have a Bible reading plan, good job.

Keep going. Don't stop. Keep on pressing in. Let the good shepherd be the shepherd of your life that leads you abundantly by good waters, good food, and protection in his name.

[31 : 28] Let's pray. God bless you.