

Safe As Sheep

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- [0 : 0 0] There was a little boy once in church with his father, and the minister did exactly what I'm doing just now. He took his watch off and he laid it on the pulpit, and the little boy nudged his father and said, Dad, what does it mean when he does that?
- Absolutely nothing, son. Absolutely nothing. So in that spirit, I lay my watch here. John chapter 10 is one of my favorite passages, particularly the first few verses there, and especially verse 28, and I'll explain that to you why as we come.
- But this is a passage about security. We like things to be secure, don't we? We like to feel safe. We don't like being out on a limb.
- We don't like the foundations under our feet being shaky. We like things safe, secure, nailed down. But life is not actually like that.
- I'm sure some of you will have heard of what they call the doomsday clock. Yeah? Blank faces. Anybody heard of the doomsday clock? Here's your homework, Wikipedia.
- [1 : 1 7] Go and read it when you go home, and it'll tell you about it. The doomsday clock was set up in 1947 in the nuclear age, and it's an indicator of how close we are as a planet, as a race, the human race, how close we are to catastrophe.
- At that point, their minds were focused on nuclear disaster. But all sorts of things can contribute to the doomsday clock. It's currently set.
- Midnight is the critical point. The doomsday clock is currently set at 90 seconds, a minute and a half to midnight.
- That's how close those who know about these things and understand about these things, that's how close they think we are to global war or global catastrophe.
- We've never been closer. It's the worst ever setting. There's an old lady in Lewis once said, it's worse with improving.
- [2 : 3 1] None of us are secure. We've all got problems. There's all things that we're dealing with in our lives that, on the whole, if it was left up to us, we'd rather not have to deal with or face.
- Family issues. Marriage issues. Work issues. And let's face it. Were all of us just a phone call, just a diagnosis away from personal catastrophe?
- You all feeling comfortable so far? We insure against catastrophe, don't we? We've got car insurance policies.
- We've got house insurance policies. We've got contents insurance policies. We've got life insurance policies. We have pension plans. Money that we're setting away for that day when we won't have to get up in the morning and shave and go to work.
- And everything will be secure and taken care of. We try and do all of these things, these strategies. We put them together to make ourselves secure.
- [3 : 4 1] But there's a better insurance provider. There's a man from Nazareth.
- And his name is Jesus. And if you believe in Jesus, if you trust and you follow Jesus, if you put your faith and your hope and you trust him not just with your life but also with your death, then you are 100% secure.

Because your safety then becomes, your security then becomes 100% God's work. And he underwrites it.

You know the way that insurers underwrite things? They have somebody who secures, who underwrites your insurance policy, who'll pay out on your insurance policy. God underwrites this in Christ's blood at Calvary.

So no matter how we feel this morning, no matter what we're going through, what we're facing, what the week ahead holds for us, no matter what that is, and for some of us, we need the strength that God gives.

[4 : 59] But we also need to remember that God's people are completely secure based on what God says, but also based on what God does.

Not how we feel. Not how we feel. So in our reading here in John chapter 10, it's winter. And Jesus is in Solomon's porch in the temple at Jerusalem.

And the picture I have in my head here of his meeting with these scribes and Pharisees is like something. As a teacher, I was a teacher for years. It's like you would see a fight brewing in the playground where you have some poor soul at the center and there's a crowd around him and they're just baiting him.

And they're just having a go. It's playground bullies in action here in the temple in Jerusalem. They're taunting him. They didn't like when he said that he was the good shepherd.

And it's almost like they're nudging each other and saying, look, come and listen to what this guy thinks about himself. You know? We push him far enough. Who knows what nonsense he'll come out with?

[6 : 13] And so they come and they surround Jesus and they get him and they're saying, right, if you are the Christ, if you are God's anointed, if you are the guy that we have been waiting for for thousands of years, don't keep it a secret.

Tell us. Let us know. And Jesus says, I have told you and you don't believe me. And I've done more than tell you.

I've showed you. I've proved to you by what I do that I am the Christ. Jesus never hid who he was. He showed who he was.

He said, I am the living bread come down from heaven. He said, I am the light of the world. He says, and he says in this passage, I and my father are one. He set it all out there.

He did not play his card right. He never said, no, sorry, you got the wrong guy. I'm just a joiner from Judea. Jesus told him, I'm the guy you've been waiting for for generations.

[7 : 25] Here's all the signs. And they never listened. The things that he did, think about the things that this man, Jesus, from Nazareth, did publicly.

Not hidden away, but for all to see. He fed thousands. He walked on water. He restored sight. He raised the dead.

These things that are the proof that Jesus is who he says he is. John's gospel, as I said last night, John's gospel is very different from the other gospels. John's gospel is not a narrative, although it does follow a timeline.

It's not a story. It's an argument where John argues that this man, Yeshua, the carpenter from Nazareth, that he is the son of God that people were waiting for.

And how do I know it's an argument? Because he provides specific evidence to support his conclusions. And that evidence is the signs, the miracles, the wonders that he did.

[8 : 29] It's all laid out there. You are not my sheep, is what he says to these Pharisees.

The Pharisees thought they were God's men. They thought they were the real deal. They had the right clothes, the right faces, the right attitudes.

Do you know what Jesus called the Pharisees? Whitewashed gravestones.

Beautiful. Stunning. On the outside. Cold. Hard. Dead. Inside.

They thought they were the men of God. And Jesus says, no. Jesus says, no.

[9 : 30] And back in verse 14, we didn't read it, but back in verse 14, he said, I am the good shepherd. My, I know my own. And my own know me.

These men taunting Jesus. These men having a go at Christ. They didn't know who it was. They knew what he said about himself, but they didn't accept that.

They didn't recognize him as the Messiah that they were looking for. You don't know me. You don't believe me, he says. You don't know me. Because you're not in my flock.

You're not my tribe. You're not my people. My sheep hear my voice. Look at verse 26. If you've got a Bible in front of you, look at verse 26. My sheep hear my voice.

Only Jesus' own children recognize Jesus' voice. Recognize Jesus' leading. Recognize Jesus' loving. They respond to his call.

[10 : 36] Those who will witness here today that they are Christ's, those who will take of the bread and the wine, they're testifying to that. They're saying, I heard Jesus. I heard the voice of Jesus say, come.

His sheep respond to his voice. Because the Holy Spirit is in their heart. Let me ask you a question this morning.

Audience participation. Have you heard his voice? Up in the gallery there, have you heard his voice? Down here in the body of the church, have you heard his voice?

And when you heard his voice, was it something sweet? Was it something attractive? Was it God's Spirit bringing you the good news of salvation?

salvation. We only understand good news when we realize the bad news that precedes it. The bad news is that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All.

[11 : 46] Our political leaders try to build an inclusive society. There's nothing more inclusive than that word all. Because nobody is left out. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

All of us, without exception. There's the bad news. The good news, God loved the world like this. That he gave his one and only son.

That whoever believed in him, and there's an inclusive word, whoever, would not perish but would have everlasting life.

Have you heard the good news of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone? And when you heard it, what did it do? Was it long ago?

Some of us, it's been 30, 40, 50 years, and it's still as fresh, and it's still as sweet as it once was.

[12 : 48] First time we heard it. He's still calling his flock today. He's still calling his sheep. There's still room.

There's still time. And if you hear his voice, if you feel that tug on your heart, don't turn him away. Don't turn your back, but listen and learn and love the Jesus who loves you enough to die for you.

And his call still, his call hasn't changed from what it was 2,000 years ago. Son, daughter, give me your heart.

He's still calling people to new life in himself. And he gives this new life. He gives this spiritual life.

and he gives it to ordinary folk like us. Common five-eighters like us.

[14 : 00] We hear our Savior's voice, we respond to that voice, and we live. Because Jesus says, my sheep hear my voice, and they follow me.

my sheep hear my voice, and they follow me. Look at verse 27. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

And I know them. Jesus knows you. Jesus knows you. Isn't that wonderful?

The king of the universe, the one who sits on the highest throne in existence, knows you. It's not just your name he knows. He's not just memorized lists. He knows you.

He knows everything about you. He knows the deepest, darkest secrets of your heart. He knows your hopes. He knows your fears. He knows your joys. He knows your dreams. And he loves you.

[15 : 06] The good shepherd knows his sheep more intimately and more honestly. than we know ourselves and more lovingly.

He knows you. Douglas Macmillan. Douglas Macmillan was a shepherd in Ardermarchan.

And he told a story of one of his fellow shepherds who had sold a flock of sheep. sheep. And they had gone down to farmland near Stirling for overwintering and fattening before going to market.

And this fellow was on the train heading for Edinburgh and they passed by Stirling and he told Douglas, he said, I looked out. I saw the field where my sheep were and he says, do you know Douglas? I recognized my own sheep.

I could tell my own sheep. See how close a shepherd is to his sheep. He knows his own sheep. I had an uncle, long gone, and he was sheep mad.

[16 : 17] And when he was 65, his wife said to him, now, don't you think you need to cut down the number of sheep? Do you not think that you should get rid of some of the sheep?

And he looked at my auntie with love in his eyes. And he said, I'd get rid of you first. Shepherd loves their sheep.

Shepherd loves their sheep. He knows you. He knows your name, but he knows you. That's his promise. That's his guarantee. That's your security.

Your name is written in the Lamb's book of life. It's been written there. Here's the thing. It's been written there since before the world began. And it's there because he chose you.

And he chose you. And the Bible tells us this, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless. It's your name in this book. Do you know that your name, if your name is in this book?

[17 : 27] How can you know if your name is in the book? The only way to be sure is to trust and follow Jesus. That's proof of life. Verse 27, they follow me.

The shepherd knows his sheep and the sheep love their shepherd. They follow him. They depend on him for everything. Jesus said, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

commandments. That's the bottom line for us as Christians. In programming, you have conditional statements.

If condition A is true, then do condition B. If you love Jesus, then follow my commandments. Because that obedience, it's not a slavish, unthinking obedience.

What it is, is proof of life. It's proof that you do love him. It's easy for us to say, well, I love Jesus. It's not so easy for us to be obedient.

[18 : 36] But that proves our love for Christ. That proves that the Holy Spirit is in us. And there's the fruit of love, joy, peace.

he paid for us with his blood. Think about that. That's what Calvary was. It was a transaction. He gave his blood for you so that he could have you.

If we're in his flock, we follow him and we obey him. And then we come to verse 28. And verse 28 is just such a beautiful verse.

It's the kind of verse that when you're reading a chapter, you stop and you go back and you'll read it again. And then just to make sure that you get it, you'll go back again and you'll read it again. What's the word?

It's epic. It's epic. Because he says, Jesus says here that he's behind it all. It's a powerful verse. Jesus is the one who gives his flock eternal life.

[19 : 44] He paid his blood at Calvary so that you and I, so that we can have eternal life. I give them eternal life. We know that the Bible tells us the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ.

That's grace. You know the acronym for grace? God's riches at Christ's expense. That's what it is. God gives you his riches, his eternal life, and it's Christ who pays for it in his blood.

God's riches at Christ's expense. That's the cross. God, the Father, put his great love for you on display. We're all sinners.

We all deserve the eternal death penalty because we're traitors to the high king, but Jesus frees us from that. And he doesn't just pay the deposit. This is the wonderful thing.

He doesn't just sort of put down a deposit on our eternal life and say, right, just to give you some incentive, I've paid this for you, you now take it, and you go forward with it, and you finish it.

[20 : 49] On you go. He pays it all. Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. My sin had left a crimson stain.

He washed it white as snow. See, eternal life is a gift, and it's free.

You can't buy a gift. I'm going to get a gift for myself. You can't. You're buying something for yourself.

If you don't pay for something for yourself, that's shoplifting. So don't do that. But you cannot buy a gift. You can't earn a gift.

If you try earning a gift, it's not a gift, it's wages. He gives us eternal life as a gift. When does eternal life begin? When does eternal life begin?

[21 : 54] It begins the moment you believe. If you trust and believe in Jesus, your eternal life has begun. Has begun.

how long is eternal life? Not a trick question. Not a trick question. How long is eternal life?

It's eternal. It never ends. It's God's kind of life that has no end. I give them eternal life, says Jesus.

If Jesus gives you eternal life, it's yours forever. It's yours forever. Then look at the next thing. They will never perish.

In the original, in the Greek, it's stronger. It's more robust. It's they will not ever, ever perish.

[22 : 56] They will not ever cease to exist. but will remain and maintain this eternal life without end.

Let's be honest. We all sin, don't we? We all slip. We all stumble. We all stray. But we belong to the Good Shepherd. And the Good Shepherd is called the Good Shepherd not because of the quality of his flock.

Because when we have a look at ourselves, or when we have a look in the mirror, we see that we're a pretty motley bunch. We are certainly not best of breed, speaking personally first, of course. But he's the Good Shepherd.

And he's the Good Shepherd because of his track record as a shepherd. He has not lost a single one of all of his flock. Everything depends on the quality of the shepherd.

shepherd. Our safety, our security depends on the quality of the shepherd, not the sheep. And he is the Good Shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd.

[24 : 11] Let me give you an example of this. Remember the warning that Jesus gave to Peter the night that he was betrayed. He said to Peter, Satan has demanded permission that he will sift you all like wheat.

All of the disciples like wheat. But I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail. It was sift, not destroy, first of all.

But then Jesus prayed for Peter. And Jesus praying was more powerful than Satan sifting. Because after Peter fell, after he denied Jesus, Jesus restored, recommissioned him.

That beautiful scene of breakfast on the beach. And these questions, these questions that just break your heart, do you love me? Do you love me?

Do you love me? Feed my sheep. See, when we fall, he doesn't get rid of us. He doesn't send us away.

[25 : 25] He doesn't say, right, you're too much bothered. Cut you out of the flock, you're going for chops. He doesn't do that. But there is chastening.

There is bringing us back to his way, as Psalm 23 puts it. That's a phrase that covers a multitude of things. Sometimes we're brought back lovingly, gently, slowly, smoothly.

Sometimes we're brought back with a bang. When basically he gets a hold of his shepherd's crook and grabs us and pulls us back.

He brings us back to his way. Now the fact that he does bring us back to his way doesn't mean that we can live as Christians however we please. Because remember, obedience is what proves that we're alive in Christ.

But it does mean that Jesus sticks, the good shepherd sticks by his flock. Every one of us forever. Forever.

[26 : 29] No one will snatch them out of my hand, he says. A shepherd protects his sheep from attacks, from wild animals are being stolen. And no one can snatch them out of my hand. There's a violence behind that word.

The word snatch maybe to us kind of tames that down a bit, but it's a vicious thing. The good shepherd is powerful and not even the most vicious violent attack of Satan can tear us out of Jesus' hand.

Nobody, no thing can remove us from Jesus' hand. If you believe in Jesus, if you trust in Christ as your Savior, you are safe and secure. what we're looking for, right?

You are safe and secure in his hands. You are once saved, always saved. What if you don't trust Jesus? What if you're on the outside looking in?

What if you're a watcher rather than a seeker? What if you're facing all of life's troubles alone? Because it's not just Christians who have difficult times?

[27 : 43] C.S. Lewis was once asked, why do Christians suffer so much? And C.S. Lewis' answer was, well, why not? They're the only ones who can take it because Jesus is with us.

What if you're not with Jesus? Wouldn't you like this security, the safety, this protection, God's hands around you, safe in Jesus' everlasting arms, a lamb?

You ever seen anything more beautiful than a shepherd, than a crofter carrying a newborn lamb? That's the image of Jesus carrying us. There's nothing like it.

Verse 29, we go into verse 29, my father who has given them to me is greater than all. Notice here, he doesn't say our father, he says my father. This is about him, the transaction, the business between the son and the father.

See, if you're a believer, the father chose you before the world began and he gave you to his son.

[28 : 57] Every believer is a gift from his father to the son. son, don't for one moment be tempted to think that Jesus will lose the most precious gift that his father has given him, especially when you remember what it cost.

You are the most precious gift the father gave to the son. He's not going to lose you. He's not going to leave you. He's not going to drop you. He's not going to forsake you.

You're his. You are bought with a price. All that the father gives me will come to me, says Jesus, and the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out.

Whoever comes to me I will certainly not cast out. All the work, all the heavy lifting in being saved has already been done by Jesus at the cross. And we believe in Jesus because the father gave us to the son.

We have eternal life because the father gave us to the son. All that's left for us to do is to take God at his word. No true believer can ever lose their salvation.

[30 : 18] No true believer can ever give, can even give their salvation away salvation away because it's Christ who provides it. No one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand.

This is like verse 28 but it goes further. Verse 28 says no one will snatch them, it won't happen. Verse 29 says no one can snatch them, it can't happen.

It's an impossibility. That's security. safety. That's safety in Jesus' arms where no one, no thing is powerful enough to rip us out of these nail-pierced hands that have such a tight grip on us.

As believers we love to think of ourselves holding on to Jesus. How are you doing? Well I'm holding on to Jesus. Well the most important thing is Jesus holding on to us.

I remember once speaking to a man who was in the mountain rescue team up north and he was saying do you know that when we come across somebody who's been lost and they're lying in the snow and they raise a hand for us to save them and to pick them up, he says we're taught to slap away that hand.

[31 : 35] And I said wow that's harsh. And he said yeah. We're then taught to take hold of them and the strength is in the rescuer not the rescued because you don't know if that's that last ounce of strength that that person lying in the snowdrift can muster simply to raise their hand.

There may be no strength there but it's the rescuer who's strong and who holds and who lifts and who saves and that's Jesus with us. The most important thing is him holding on to us.

no if you're a believer no wolf no thief no bandit not even the devil of hell can grab you can snatch you out of Jesus hand because as Paul says in Colossians 3 your life is hidden with Christ in God.

There's a double seal there. Somebody once said that the hand of Christ is beneath us the hand of God is above us as as God the father hands us over to God the son and there's two hands there clasped around us and neither of them let go.

Neither of them let go. Our lives are hidden with Christ in God. And then we come to verse 30. I and the father are one.

[32 : 58] Just very quickly. And here Jesus makes it clear to the Pharisees who are taunting him who are pointing who are jamming tell us tell us he makes it clear who he is.

I and the father are one. So our security comes from God's all powerful protection. Father, son, and holy spirit united together to safeguard our salvation.

God the father loved us gave us to God the son who died for us and God the holy spirit dwells in us leads us teaches us keeps us safe. It's a tripartite alliance all together looking after the sheep loving you.

I give them eternal life. They will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. There's real security. There's a real insurance policy to take to the bank.

no get out clause. No small print. There's a reason for joy, for hope, for assurance for every believer in Jesus Christ, for every single child of God.

[34 : 16] That's the promise, cast iron guarantee. Paul knew this. Paul wrote from a Roman prison awaiting execution.

I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he, that's the important thing, that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

He can see me through. He, not me, it's not I'll be a good Christian until the very last minute, but he will be a good Christ, he will be a good saviour, he holds me fast.

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, oh, what a foretaste of glory, divine air of salvation, purchase of God, born of his spirit, washed in his blood, perfect submission, all is at rest.

I and my saviour am happy and blessed, watching and waiting, looking above, filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

[35 : 19] love. As we sit at the table, as we take the bread and we take the wine, may we be lost in his love. The good shepherd, he gives us eternal life.

We will never perish. No one can, no one will snatch us out of his hands. Lord, bless your word to us this morning.

May we be comforted, secured, assured, and strengthened as we remember that he died for me.

For Jesus' sake, amen.