

I Am the Good Shepherd

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[0 : 01] Let's turn to John chapter 10. John chapter 10 reading at verse 14.

I am the good shepherd and 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 and I have other sheep that are not of this fold, I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice so there will be one flock, one shepherd.

For this reason the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord.

I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father. Especially the words in verses 14 and 15 that illustrate it by 16 following.

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.

[1 : 26] John 10 of course follows John 9 and you can't make sense of John 10 and its themes without understanding John 9.

John 9 is the healing of that blind man. At the beginning of John 9 of course he was just an object of discussion for the disciples. Rabbi who sinned.

This manner of his parents that he was born blind. But Jesus saw things very differently and he proceeded to heal him of his blindness.

He went, he washed, came back seeing having been commanded to do so by Jesus. I think this is the day that that man became a Christian.

And that first day of his Christian life was really very hard. The first day that I became a Christian it was brilliant. Going down the A9 and the A1 and the M1 and driving down to Lincoln from Invergordon it was brilliant.

[2 : 33] Singing in Gaelic, singing in English calling God my Father for the first time ever meaning it. It was brilliant. It was a great day.

But this man his first day it seems following the Lord was a day in which he grew in understanding undoubtedly because at the beginning he wasn't quite sure who it was who had healed him.

But by the time verse 35 comes Jesus had heard that they had cast him out and he says to him do you believe in the Son of Man? Who is he sir that I may believe in him?

Jesus said you have seen him it is he who is speaking to you. He said Lord I believe and he worshipped him. So here he is at the close of this day and he's clearly believing in the Lord having grown in understanding.

but meantime everybody that he had met with seemed to have been disappointed with him. All the leadership all those leading in the synagogue those who would be there as shepherds to welcome him in they were thrusting him out.

[3 : 46] Even those who were his parents who would have been there to support him even they were very lackluster in their support. nobody seemed to be giving him strength.

And this is his first day it seems following the Lord believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. And you'd have thought in that situation surely be enough for him to be disgusted and then just turn back to where he may just be like other people and disown this Christ.

But he doesn't. In fact he can't do it because he seems to have grown to know this Jesus. He seems to have come to trust him to appreciate him.

And that Jesus who was there at the beginning of the day for him left him on his own for much of the day which may to our minds seem a touch cruel but wasn't.

He there at the end looks for him when they had cast him out Jesus found him just as if he went looking for him found this person found this sheep and then brings him on into that place where he bows in worship.

[5 : 12] It's against that background that Jesus now gives this beautiful exposition of what a true shepherd should be like.

In verse 14 in the midst of it he says I am the good shepherd. I know my own. My own know me. Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.

Let's look at these four different things. He says I know my own sheep. Then he says my own sheep know me.

Then he says the Father knows me. And then he says I know the Father. These four things very simple.

First of all he says I am the good shepherd. I know my own sheep. I know literally just my own. But in the context it is my own sheep.

[6 : 16] See Jesus knew this person. Jesus knew about this person who had been born blind. He knew that this was somebody who had been set apart by God for him to heal to rescue and to save.

He knew exactly where this person was located. He knew the situation in which this person was found. He knew his character and what he could cope with.

He knows exactly everything that needs to be known about him. That's exactly what a good shepherd is isn't it? He's somebody that understands the sheep's location.

Understands their situation. Understands their character. He knows them so, so well. If you're a Christian here tonight I'm sure that's not lost on you.

You've got this amazing understanding of Jesus as somebody that knows you. He knows exactly where you are tonight.

[7 : 25] maybe where you are tonight is a mystery to you. Maybe you wonder how on earth did I end up here? Just like the blind man who had been healed.

He probably never thought that by the end of the day he'd be cast out of the synagogue despised by the leadership ignored by his parents.

This lonely, lonely man wondering how am I here? And yet the reality is Jesus knows exactly where he is. He goes looking for him and finds him.

He goes looking for the sheep because he knows that each one of these sheep matters. And the location in which you are tonight geographically is known to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can never get over this fact. He reigns over the whole universe today, tomorrow, next year, next century, next millennia.

[8 : 30] He reigns over the whole of his people for the whole of time in the whole of space. He knows exactly where his people are located.

Some of them may be in homes tonight and they're able to worship the Lord freely. Others may be in prison as we were saying at the midweek meeting and they may be really struggling there being persecuted.

Others may be in the hospital over at St. John's. Others may be weeping away because they've lost their loved one just like Rita will be and the family tonight.

There may be people as we said in prayer who are just fearful of what the future holds. See, the great thing about the shepherd and Jesus the one who sees it he says unashamedly he says I am the good shepherd.

I know my own. I know exactly where they are located. But it's not just located. He knows the situation in that location.

[9 : 40] It's not that he knows where you are in the world of space and time. It's that he knows exactly your situation inside out.

He can see not only what's on the outside he's able to penetrate where no one else can travel. He can go right into the depths of your mind your thoughts your heart your fears your longings.

He can go so so deep deeper than anyone else can and he does it because he says I am the good shepherd. That's what the good shepherd does when he knows the sheep he actually penetrates right through so that he knows them intimately.

what do you think he sees in you when he penetrates? I mean he doesn't just see people sitting in pews he doesn't just see people sitting in pews at 11 o'clock and then 5 o'clock he actually sees much more than that.

He sees what you're like in that particular situation in which he has placed you. He knows the deep longings that you have. He knows the prayers you've prayed.

[11 : 06] He knows the prayers you ought to have prayed. He knows the things that you haven't been open about with anyone and maybe not even before him but he knows that you should have been.

He knows your situation. He knows where the edge is for you more than anyone else does. He knows your character.

He knows you differently from anyone else because he doesn't just see a group of sheep a flock of sheep and they're all just identical and Jesus just knows their number and when he's asked do you have a church do you have a church do you have a flock oh yes and here's the number of them no no no he says I know each one of them individually where they are what their situation is and what their individual character is.

See when Paul tells us that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear that's personal to each one of us personal to each one of us he knows where the edge is for every single one of you and he will never allow you to go through something that you are not able to bear he knows you he understands you better than your husband or your wife or your father or your mother or a sibling he knows you so well I mean this man in John 9 you look at it and it seems like a crazy story why didn't Jesus hang around why didn't Jesus stay close by to help him when he was going to be disowned by so many people where is Jesus in the midst of the story

Jesus knows when to be present and make his presence felt and he also knows when to withdraw so that you learn to develop so John Newton who said that learning to cope with the loss of a son that kind of disappointment he says you don't learn it all in one go he says you have to learn how to cope with a broken china cup first in other words you've got this piece of china and it drops I'm at the age where things don't hold in my hands so well so they drop so if you drop a china cup and you think that's really bad and you're so disappointed and you get angry you get irritated and the great thing is sometimes the way you learn to cope with these small disappointments prepares you for coping with a great disappointment that's the way it is in life and Jesus knew what this man could cope with he didn't come looking for him until he was outside of the synagogue disappointed with every shepherd whether it be his parents or the leaders of the synagogue he knew he could cope with that and he knows exactly what you can cope with the various extremities this good shepherd is great but he is not he is never too great to care he is never too great to care he knows the sheep's location he knows the situation he knows their individual character he does also know their number

[15 : 21] I like that I like that I'm into numbers I like maths I like the thought that the way in which God has everything in control this universe is filled with numbers and God's church is numerically set don't you love the way Jesus says here I know my own and in verse 16 he says I have other sheep that are not of this fold I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice there will be one flock one shepherd see one flock one shepherd but many sheep at that moment I don't know how many were in the flock Jesus knew certainly there would have been at least 11 of the apostles certainly there would have been some of the women there would have been others likewise who had been brought in by

Jesus and who had come to faith in him but the flock was relatively small but Jesus says I have other sheep and they're not of this fold not yet and what am I going to do he says I'm going to bring them also and they will listen to my voice Jesus is going to bring them he's going to build up the church of Jesus Christ he's going to bring the sheep into the flock he's going to bring them under his own shepherding love and power and care I must bring them do you know how beautiful these words are you know we're talking about the idea of reshaping livingstone church I prefer the idea of getting back to what we should always be doing reaching out with the gospel reaching out through little jewels reaching out through families reaching out through friends bringing people in to hear the gospel but ultimately we are only instruments in his hands

I must bring them they're my sheep I have responsibility for them I must bring them in they will listen to my voice don't get in the way of his voice make sure that the voice that they hear is the voice of Jesus the good shepherd don't parade yourself so that you are the one whom they remember above all others when I think of Kenny MacDonald people wanted sometimes to put Kenny on a pedestal and they wanted everybody to be like Kenny he was my colleague in Dingwall Presbytery and the Lord blessed that man's ministry but you know what ask him and he would have told you all I did was speak the gospel and he did he shared it in the pulpit he shared it unashamedly at the fireside

I remember him going into a pub in Inver Gordon sitting next to a guy whose wife had become a Christian and this man was an alcoholic and he shared the gospel with men ashamedly in the pub and the man was ashamed of himself and did come to know the Lord and now preaches that word but ultimately Kenny would say I am just sharing the gospel it's the good shepherd that is bringing in the sheep it's his voice we mustn't get in the way of the voice of Jesus the good shepherd I know my sheep I don't know who the other sheep are in total I'm glad I don't I'm at a stage in life where I'm grateful for what I know and I'm grateful for what I don't know

I don't want to know what tomorrow brings I don't want to know how many of my own loved ones will be in heaven with me I don't want to know the detail of every child or adult in this congregation tonight and where there will be in eternity I could never cope with that kind of knowledge but Jesus can I have other sheep they're not of this fold yet I must bring them and they will listen to my voice there will be one flock one shepherd so there's the first thing he says I know my own second thing is my own know me my own sheep know me I mean that's really quite something isn't it all of us who are

[21 : 16] Christians here tonight from the youngest to the oldest all of us have the same experience we know the shepherd now you may know much more about the shepherd than I do or I might know more than some of you about the shepherd but we're not talking here about knowing about him we're talking about knowing him and that's what's true of every Christian they know Jesus well enough to trust him as a good shepherd well enough to trust him I mean there was a day surely when you did not trust Jesus there was a day you'd have scarpered you'd have gone in another direction you didn't want to be in the church you didn't want to be where the word is proclaimed you didn't want to be in fellowship with other

Christians you weren't willing to put up with suffering when the Lord put it before you but a change has come you heard the gospel you heard the good news you came to a point where Jesus was no longer just somebody that your parents spoke of Jesus was somebody that meant something to you so much that you couldn't but trust in him it's as if he became somebody whom you knew greater than you would know your parents than you would know your siblings than you would know your friends he is somebody you know in such a way that you are able to trust him you trust him with all your burdens with all your sins with the whole of your life and with the prospect of your death it's as if you know that this one person

Jesus the Christ is able to handle everything that you can place upon him you know that he has shoulders to bear it all and that there is nothing that you need keep from him for you he is the good shepherd he is so good that you just cannot keep anything from him even your failures when you've messed up when you've broken so many promises and when time and again you seem to be just so loathing of yourself you still feel amazingly I know he still wants me I mean real isn't this true if you're a Christian isn't it true that you often see if people really knew me the way

I am they wouldn't for a moment have fellowship with me if they knew the thoughts that just went through my head and my heart they would never really want me or love me and yet Jesus knows them all and what do you do you actually keep coming you keep bowing you keep following you keep trusting it's as if Jesus has brought you to that place where you know him as he knows you you know him it's remarkable you've never seen him never seen him you've not been to heaven and back you've never seen him in his human frame you've never seen him in his divine spiritual nature you've never set eyes on

Jesus and yet he's more real to you tonight and many of the people that you see in this world you know him you heard his voice you heard his voice and when you heard his voice a change began to happen when you heard the word a change began to take place inside something happened on the inside there was a change taking place a new creation was happening it's as if it was a new genesis there was something really beautiful you would hear a sermon about Christ and you didn't just leave it at that saying I have learned something about Jesus you began to use language like I know him so well that

[26 : 46] I can trust him let me put it like this I think you would be able to make a distinction today between those who are following Jesus as the good shepherd and those who aren't and I think this is Jesus a stranger to you is he a stranger is he a hired hand is he somebody whom you think does not care or is he somebody that whom you know cares cares deeply cares personally and cares forever is he a stranger to you or is he somebody that you just say

I know him as the good shepherd he's the one person that you believe will never let you down others may you will let yourself down especially but him he will never let you down and even though you don't see him as Peter said to the disciples who are suffering whom you do not see you love I can't fathom that that I love my Lord Jesus though I have never seen him all I have is his voice all I have is this book all I have is people like yourselves who talk about him share about him preach him pray to him and the spirit of

God uses all of that and just makes him so very real to us the spirit leads us to know Jesus Christ I imagine that this man who had been healed in John 9 would be able to say I know him and I think in the weeks to come when that man in John 9 with eyes to see would be able to see the suffering Christ on the cross and I think he would be able to say I know him I know him not just that I see him with my eyes not just that he opened my eyes I see him so well that

I know him and I worship him and here he is laying down his life for me that leads us to the third thing Jesus says I am the good shepherd I know my own my own know me as the father knows me see that's the thing the father knows Jesus as the good shepherd the father knows him as the good shepherd you may think that that's rather ordinary it's actually the basis of the whole gospel the father had a people that he wanted to save he wanted to save you individually he had a people that he wanted to save and bring back to himself he wanted to rescue you from your sin he wanted to restore you to bring you back to himself completely fully and forever to whom could he entrust the salvation of his people to whom could he entrust the restoration of the lost to whom could he entrust this restoration of a people who would be back to himself in love and trust honoring him

I mean after all this person whom he would ask to do this would be somebody who would be called upon not only to become man to share human nature but he would be called upon to live a life a human life and that's difficult then he would be called upon to lay down his life on the cross of his own accord willingly and then he would be called upon to rise from the grave as God and as man and to be God man forever and ever and ever and ever and as the father is thinking who will be willing to do this who can be the good shepherd who can lead my people who can save my people who will do all of this for them there is only one only one in the whole of existence that can do it and it's my son and

[33 : 20] Jesus says I am the good shepherd my father knows me he knows me I know that my father trusts me see Jesus knew that that his father trusted him that's why he sent him into the world we sang in psalm 40 about somebody he was willing to say lo here am I it's written of me in the book I'm ready to do your will there's Jesus coming into this world to live the perfect human life and he's so willing to do it so willing but not only that he lives that life he grows he grows in obedience he learns how to cope with difficulty he learns how to cope with disappointment you know God didn't send

Jesus as a 28 year old person and then told him to go and jump to the cross and die he says live a life live a life where you actually grow in obedience where you learn to trust where you learn to cope with disappointment where you learn to cope with a broken china cup before I ask you to lay down your life for my people Jesus was not super man he was like us in all things he had to be prepared even for the cross by living a life in a fallen world where there is suffering he had to cope with suffering before he suffered on the cross but he was willing to do it he talks here about being a good shepherd and of my own accord he says

I lay down my life I lay down I am so willing for the china cup to be broken I am so willing to lay down my life with all the suffering that will bring to me I'll do it father you can trust me I am the good shepherd but more than that you can trust me father I'll rise from the dead I'll continue to be God and man two distinct natures forever I will be willing to be given the whole authority as king as a good shepherd for an endless eternity I'll do it and the father says I know you will I trust you I trust you he's a good shepherd and then finally briefly

Jesus says and I know the father the good shepherd knows the father see the good shepherd knows the sheep the sheep know the good shepherd the father knows the good shepherd and the good shepherd knows the father what is it in brief that the good shepherd knows about the father well he trusts him Jesus knows that the father will never change his mind he will never change his plans he will never reconsider the gospel message as a way of salvation he will never break his promises he will never cease to love an ungodly world he will never change and

Jesus he came down to this world as a good shepherd he lived the life he died the death he rose in resurrection and he does it all because he actually trusts the father that the father will never change my father gave the sheep to me now what he says in john chapter 17 glorify your son that your son may glorify you since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given to him you gave a people to your son oh father you want every one of them to be given eternal life oh father and Jesus is saying and

[38 : 52] I know that you will never change that plan I know you see this is a beautiful relationship within the trinity between the father and the son in the spirit the spirit is not mentioned here but no no shepherd can know the sheep without the spirit no sheep can know the shepherd without the spirit no father can know the son without the spirit and no son can know the father without the spirit we can't prove that tonight but there are places in the new testament that teach so but the beautiful thing is this is the good shepherd and all I ask you tonight is isn't it brilliant those of you are Christians that you know him that he knows you that the father trusted him with your salvation and that he trusts the father never to break one of his promises if you're not yet a

Christian and I don't care whether you're a three year old a thirty year old a sixty year old or whatever if you're not yet a Christian this is the good news are you one of these other sheep do you want to be part of that flock do you want to come in do you want to worship I invite you in the name of the Lord the good shepherd to do so let us pray our heavenly father we bless you that you are a truly beautiful lovely loving God you are a lovely shepherd a good shepherd you are so unlike so many other leaders you are the one Lord who is faithful in knowing the sheep in laying down your life for the sheep in rising again for them you are a

God who never lets your people go Lord we love you and we seek to love you Lord in the midst of difficulty just like the man in John chapter 9 we seek to love you and to worship you even if we are alone outside the synagogue we know that we are part of the flock Lord enjoy enjoy salvation for your people enjoy you enjoyed the joy that was before you when you lay down your life on the cross and we know that there is that joy in bringing sinners to repentance Lord rejoice in your sheep we pray tonight and help us to rejoice in you with all that we are and all that we have we ask it in Christ Amen

Let's sing now from Psalm 110 Psalm 110 and the thing Psalms page 149 this is the good shepherd who is now at the right hand of God and to whose footstool we are brought Psalm 110 the Lord said to my Lord sit here at my right hand till I make your foes a stool on which your feet may stand verses 1 to 5 to God's praise