

Jesus is the Good Shepherd

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[0:00] Have you ever encountered one of those things that you would just love to be able to fix, but for whatever reason you were unable.

! Maybe that thing was broken. Maybe that thing was abused in some way. And because of the way it was used, it got broken.

And because of being broken to the extent that it was broken, it's in a place of disrepair. This morning we're going to learn about something that was broken.

But because of the shepherd that came, and because of the heart that we see in that shepherd, he not only brought repair, he brought restoration.

There's a movie that our kids used to watch back in the day, going back several years. It's a movie called Astro Boy. I'm not sure you've watched this movie.

[1:03] But in this story, there's a boy named Toby. And this boy named Toby has a really special friendship with his father. His father is a scientist, and he brings his son with him to enjoy and see his experiments.

And some of the things that he's created. But in this story of him coming in the sea, where his father is working, he encounters this accident.

And an accident comes and actually claims the life of this little boy named Toby. His father, Dr. Tenma, is broken hearted, as you can imagine.

And there are things that cannot be broken. But Dr. Tenma believes that maybe he can find a way to recapture and reclaim his lost son.

And so his thought is that he will make this robot son, this robot boy named Astro, who will be a virtual replica, a carbon copy of his son in virtually every way.

[2:10] And so he sets himself to the task. He's able to build this robot boy named Astro. And Astro has not just the same kind of features, looks identical to his father.

He's able to speak like his father. He's able to do the things that he was always able to do as a little boy and even beyond. He even takes on some of the mannerisms of his father.

And his dad will place the memories of his lost son into this robot to, again, be like this carbon copy. But as we know, the one missing element cannot be recaptured.

And that is the life of his lost son. The heart of his lost son. Astro might be able to do amazing things, but he's not Toby.

He can repeat the words, but he cannot truly be the father's son in the way that the father really longs for. And because of this, the dad's grief, he wants this exact same boy back.

[3:15] And he sets these unreasonable expectations for Astro, this robot son. But we learn this lesson. You can build something that looks the same, sounds the same, does the same things, even has a lot of the same memories.

But without the life and without the heart, it is not the same. In our passage, for the last several weeks, we have learned something about a replica.

A different kind of replica. And if you have your Bibles with you, I would encourage you to turn with me to Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 to 3. And we begin to see the words that describe this replica.

But it's different from a replica of this Astro boy, this robot son. Because in our story, it's a story of a real son having a real life, expressing the real heart of God.

The Bible says that Jesus is the exact imprint of God. Notice this. In Hebrews chapter 1, verse 3, it says, He, speaking of Jesus, is the radiance of the glory of God.

[4 : 31] And then this. And the exact imprint of his nature. That means that when we meet Jesus, we're not meeting a replacement son. We're not meeting a robotic son.

We're not meeting a mechanical son. We're meeting the son in flesh and blood. God himself has come near. He's not just a functional version of God.

But he is the very son of God who functions in every way as God. And so, when we see Jesus, we see God. Jesus conveys the fullness of God's heart.

And that's why Jesus calls himself the good shepherd. And that's where we turn in our last segment of this Advent study to look and to see and to enjoy this exact replica.

God himself in the flesh through Jesus Christ who shows the very heart of God. Jesus as shepherd doesn't treat his sheep like machines.

[5 : 38] He knows them. He goes after them. He protects them. He loves them. We're going to see that heart of God through his son Jesus expressing itself to us as we observe his shepherding role.

Astro boy is an incomplete copy. But Jesus Christ is God in totality. Astro can't restore what death took.

But Jesus, Jesus came to defeat sin and death. So we can be brought back to God. Not with a copy of God. But with God himself.

This shepherd king living in the flesh. God came near. And so that's where we begin our study. We begin our study by looking at this one Jesus who reveals the very nature of God.

Let me just read these first few verses. We've been looking at them together week after week to see the fullness of what Jesus came to bring in his ministry to us. Notice the prophet, priest, and king.

[6 : 42] And then the shepherd. The shepherd that comes to us through the nature of God. Long ago, it says. And by the way, if you're using a pew Bible, it's on page about 1001 in your pew Bible.

It says, Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. And he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty of God on high.

Did you see them? Prophet, priest, and king. In the heart of God, expressed through the nature of God Jesus. The exact imprint of God's nature.

As we move, as we move through this series, we've come to enjoy kind of the wonder of seeing Jesus in a whole new way. That when we hear about Jesus in this little baby in the manger, and we hear about this virgin named Mary and her husband named Joseph.

[8 : 01] They've traveled to this quiet town called Bethlehem. And we hear a little bit about this baby being born on the outskirts of town, sheltered in an enclosure, placed in a manger.

We hear about this little child wrapped in swaddling clothes. And we remember this time of year. We remember that God came here.

And we remember that the almighty God wrapped himself in humility. We begin to recognize the significance of seeing God's heart.

God's heart expressed to us through his son, Jesus. Who came as a little baby. And it's no coincidence. It's no coincidence that in this story, as we meet God in the flesh.

This word of God. Emmanuel who came near. It's no surprise then that this little one was welcomed by shepherds. It should be no surprise that to see the heart of God, the emergence of this prophet, king, and priest, now comes to us and is welcomed by shepherds.

[9 : 13] It should not be a surprise. This truth that God came near would echo through the early chapters of Luke. And then on the evening of this little baby's birth, this unexpected welcoming party would come, would be assembled.

In Luke chapter 2, verses 8 to 14, it says this. And in the same region there were shepherds out in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night.

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said, fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with an angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

[10 : 20] Of all the unsuspecting groups of strangers that were present there in Israel, to receive this unsuspecting word, it was to shepherds that God would come.

Shepherds would be the first humans to witness this message, this word from the angels, this heavenly message. A baby of distinction would be born.

Born in the town of Bethlehem, a humble little town. He would be Christ the Lord by name, a title of messiahship. This announcement of promise. What may have seemed random to the normal observer in the first century is part of God's grand design.

Shepherds would welcome this baby's birth because the good shepherd had come. And here, even in the fanfare, we begin to see the heart of this little shepherd.

This little shepherd baby that was born. A baby who came in humility. Wrapped in cloths. Lying in a feed trough.

[11 : 30] Announced by shepherds. The lowly individuals of that time. A baby. A story would continue to reveal. Who was this God in the flesh?

And as the triumphant scene begins to fade. As the angels would take their departure. And the night would come. It was the shepherds now alone on that quiet hill who would speak to one another.

And assemble and to make their way to Bethlehem. It would be the shepherds who would take this news. And would bring and make their way to Bethlehem to see what God had done.

In Luke chapter 2 verses 15 to 18. When the angels went away from them into heaven. The shepherds said to one another. Let us go to Bethlehem. And see this thing that has happened.

Which the Lord has made known to us. And they went with haste. And found Mary and Joseph. And the baby lying in the manger. And when they saw it. They made known the saying that had been told them.

[12:36] Concerning this child. And all who heard it. Wondered at what the shepherds. Had told them. These shepherds moved with haste.

They found the scene exactly as was described to them by the angels. And when they beheld that scene. They now become the mouthpiece.

The witness to others. Of what God had begun to do. And then this word. In verse 18. All who heard it. Wondered at what the shepherds had told them.

They wondered. What did this mean? Who was this little baby? What was the meaning of this promise? And this heavenly spectacle. Of the angels that came.

In their wondering. What would this baby do? What would this baby become? This scene that's marked by wonder. A scene that we've heard and read many times.

[13:40] A scene that perhaps captures our hearts. But also causes us to raise the same question. Who was this baby? And what did this little baby come to do?

To accomplish for us? It raises the question for us. Who is this child? Who is this one? Whom the shepherds came to speak to? And throughout this series.

We've come to understand. More and more of the wonder. Of this child's identity. That Jesus is more than just a little baby. That Jesus. Jesus. Will providentially fulfill specific roles.

Roles that we find going all the way back. To the beginning. Roles that will help us understand. The function. That Jesus himself would accomplish. For us.

We've come to see. This role of prophet. Priest. And king. And this morning. Shepherd. As prophet. Jesus would bring the word of God.

[14:40] As priest. We've spoken. And talked about. How as priest. Jesus would bring the presence of God. As king. He brings the rule.

Of God. And as shepherd. We're going to see that. Jesus brings the very. Heart. Of God. These essential rules. Roles. Are not random.

They're not haphazard. These are not arbitrary. But they're roving into the very. Fabric of human design. Human need. The building blocks.

Of what makes us. Image bearers of God. Made in his. Very image. And from the beginning of creation. God. Was pointing.

To himself. Creating dependence. Demonstrating to humanity. How true. Fulfillment. Could be understood. And could be enjoyed.

[15:36] True. Rest. True. Delight. And fellowship. Can only happen. Through. Him. And even from the beginning. This. The earliest.

Moments. Of history. God was establishing. All of the foundational. Questions. Of life. Could only. Be answered. In him. Where does God.

What does God. Expect. Of me. Can only be answered. By the. By the. By the word. Of God. This prophetic. Ministry. Of God. In speaking. His word. To us.

So that we know. What God expects. Of us. The question. Where is God. And how can I approach him. Can only be answered. By the. Priestly.

Ministry. Of God. Where God brings. His presence. He is the mediator. Who bridges. The gap. Between. Man. And God. And brings. Us near. Through the presence. Of his.

[16:30] Of his son. What does God. Demand. Of me. Can only be answered. By this. Kingly. Ministry. Where God. Brings his. Rule. And then.

What kind of God. Is he. What kind of God. Is he. What does he look like. Can only be answered. By this. Shepherding. Ministry. Of God. Who shows his heart.

We see his compassion. His tenderness. We get to understand. His nature. And how he relates. To his people. You see. From creation. To the cradle.

We ultimately. Get to understand. That humanity's. Biggest problems. Are only answered. In him. In Jesus Christ. And as prophet.

Priest. And king. We begin to understand. The specific roles. That he fulfills. And in his heart. The shepherding ministry. Of God. We get to see. How all of that.

[17 : 25] Comes together. Coming back to Hebrews. Chapter 1. Verse 3. Again. It says. He is the radiance. Of the glory. Of God. The exact imprint. Of his nature.

When we speak about. The nature of God. We're speaking about. His essence. When we see God. We're looking. We see Jesus. We're looking. At the very. Face of God.

Jesus. Makes. The invisible. Visible. He is the full disclosure. Of God. He is deity. His personhood.

And most of all. We see his heart. And then this essence. This essence. Of. Of his nature. Then spills into every role. That he fulfills.

In other words. It's through Jesus. His shepherding role. That we get to see. How every other role. That he. That he fulfills. Is meant. To be understood. How every other role.

[18 : 20] Is meant to function. When we look at Jesus. We see how God. Carries out. Every. Duty. That he fulfills. His prophetic role. Is not.

Devout. Of feeling. His speaking of words. Are not empty. Instructions. But they're full. Of heart. The heart of God. Who is. Beckoning. Beckoning us. To enjoy.

Relationship. With him. His priestly role. Is not simply. Going through the motions. Not simply. Making sacrifices. But in those sacrifices.

Seeking to lead us. And bridging the gap. Mediating a way. For us. To be. With God. In his kingly role. It's not just. Cold. Authority.

It's not just. Self. Serving. Tyranny. But in the authority. And rule. Of God. We see this heart. Of God. To lead us.

[19 : 16] As a shepherd. King. King. It's through. His shepherding. Ministry. That we come. To really. Understand. The heart. Of God. And through. His shepherding.

Role. That all the other. Roles. That Jesus. Fills. Are. Begin. To understand. They're bound. Together. So where. Does this shepherding. Role begin?

And what. Point. Does shepherding. Reflect. The heart. Of God. And that's. Where we turn. Now to Genesis. Chapter 4. We go all the way back to the beginning to see our need for a shepherd.

Why this role? Why the shepherding role? What is it? What does it accomplish? What do we expect to receive and to get from a God who will fill?

Fill this shepherding function. This need for a shepherd goes all the way back to the beginning. In our pursuit to find this first shepherd.

[20 : 14] We need to. To move all the way back from those. Those shepherds that were present on that day. In Luke chapter 2. In Bethlehem. And we need to. To rewind. And move our way back.

All the way to the beginning of history. Just after Adam and Eve will fall into sin. We get this picture. Of Adam and Eve's first children. Cain.

And Abel. And we get this glimpse of them in Genesis chapter 4 verses 1 and 2. It says this. Now Adam knew Eve his wife. And she conceived and bore Cain.

Saying. I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord. And again she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep.

And Cain was a worker of the ground. Did you catch that? Abel was a keeper of sheep. He was a shepherd. And providentially.

[21:09] The need for a shepherd. Emerges immediately after the fall. In the very first scene. God builds in a shepherding function.

A shepherding role. A manner of life. An occupation. A way to orient. God's people. And how they think about the world. We come to see.

In this first scene. In what mankind was meant to do. And it's not bound up in occupation. It's not bound up in function. But it's bound up in worship.

True. Cain was a worker of the ground. He was a farmer. And it's true. That Abel. Was. Was a shepherd. A tender of the flock.

But. But what. Was their role. What was their vocation. Meant to lead them to. And that's where we move. In the next few verses. Genesis. Chapter 4.

[22:05] Verses 3 to 5. In the course of time. Cain brought to the Lord. An offering. Of fruit. Of the ground. And Abel also brought. Of the firstborn. Of his flock.

And of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard. For Abel. In his offering. But for Cain. In his offering. He had no regard. So Cain. Was very angry.

And his face fell. Notice. They both bring. An offering. And they both bring. That offering. And present it. To the Lord. Right offering. Right time.

Presented to the. Right object. Of worship. But now. Everything goes wrong. While this offering. Is to the Lord. They both recognize.

The worthiness. Of God. Now. We come. To worship. But we read. That one offering. Was accepted. And the other offering. Was not. Was rejected.

[23:02] And here. In the opening pages. Of humanity. We begin. To understand. The significance. Of heart. We begin. To see. The right. Heart.

For God. We see. That the right. Worship. Demands. The right. Sacrifice. And we see. That the right. Worship. Demands.

The right. Heart. Abel's sacrifice. Was not. Arbitrary. It was not. Random. Notice. He brings. The first. Born. Of his flock.

And of its fat portions. The precision. And accuracy. Of his offering. Help us. To recognize. That while. The text. Might be silent. It's clear.

That Abel knows. Exactly. What he's supposed. To present. It's not. Guesswork. He brings. Not only. The right. Offering. But he brings it.

[23:55] With. The right. Heart. This shepherding. Heart. Again. Begins. To help us. Understand. And to see. This shepherding. Heart of God. And we know.

It's the. The right. Offering. Presented. In the right. Way. Because we find that. In Hebrews 11. 4. It says. By faith. Abel. Offered to God. A more acceptable. Sacrifice. Than Cain.

Through which he was commended. As righteous. God. Commending him. By accepting his gifts. And through his faith. Though he was. Though he died. He still.

Speaks. Right offering. Right heart. Means right. Worship. Cain's offering. However. Was not accepted. It was.

The wrong offering. Offered in the wrong way. He offers. The fruit of the ground. Rather than. An offering. Of blood. He makes. He makes. An offering. On his terms.

[24 : 49] Rather than. An offering. On God's terms. He makes. An offering. According to his. Perspective. Of what he believes. God should honor. And it's bound up. In occupation. It's according to his.

Perspective. It's according. Rather than. According to God's. Perspective. And it was. The wrong. Offering. But. But don't. Misunderstand. Abel. Or Cain. Was not working.

At a disadvantage. Just because. He is. A farmer. And. And. Not. A shepherd. Doesn't put him. At a disadvantage. Because. Because God. Comes. And confronts him.

And helps. To invite him. Into the right kind. Of worship. In Genesis. Chapter 4. Verses 6 and 7. The Lord says to Cain. Why are you angry? Why is your face fallen?

If you do well. Will you not. Be accepted? And if you do not do well. Sin. Is crouching. At the door. Its desire. Is contrary. To you.

[25 : 47] But you. Must rule. Over it. Cain. Do well. Follow my standard. And you will be accepted. Show. A heart. Of faith.

By showing. A desire. For obedience. Follow the standard. Show this heart. Of worship. And this story. Will become. The object. Listen.

To the rest. Of humanity. The test. By which. Every other. Expression. Of worship. Will be measured. And so.

From the opening pages. Of scripture. We recognize. That every. True. Worship. Acceptable. Worship. Will be. Offered. In the. Right way. With the right heart.

And. Will come. With the right offering. Will come. According to God's. Standards. And directives. And shepherd. It becomes. An essential component. From this point on.

[26 : 42] And. And. And. And. And. It demonstrates. The. The realities. Of. Why shepherding. Is so important. And there are four. Ways. I just want to point to briefly.

First. Shepherding is important. Because it's important. Practically. Practically. Shepherds. Are necessary. Because sheep. Simply. Cannot survive. In general terms.

Cannot survive. Without a shepherd. Ceremonially. It becomes important. Because. Shepherds. Are necessary. Because. Sin. Demands. A sacrifice.

And not an arbitrary sacrifice. It demands. The. The blood. Of a lamb. It's important. Symbolically. Because shepherds. Represent.

The heart of God. For his people. And we'll see that more. As we go. Redemptively. Shepherds. Are necessary. Because. God. Would ascribe. This role. To himself.

[27 : 37] God. Would stand. As humanity's. Perfect. Good. Shepherd. And we see. This ongoing pattern. Of shepherding. Through the rest. Of the scripture.

This need. For a shepherd. Is where we turn to next. Or is what we saw. And now. This role. Of a shepherd. What is this role. Of a shepherd. We understand. That we need one.

Now. What was the. Role. That the shepherd. Would play. How did these shepherds. Begin to. To help. Set an illustration. A portrait. Of. The God. That we serve.

We move our way. Through the scriptures. And we. We recognize. That. That they were a picture. Of God's. Shepherding. Care. We move. Through this series.

We saw that God. Reiterates this mosaic law. We saw that. That as the people. Are beginning to. To move. Into the promised land. They're on the. The verge.

[28 : 32] Of moving back. Into the promised land. And God reminds. These people. Of his standard. And he's. He's careful. To reiterate. His commands. To these specific groups.

To judges. He reminds them. In Deuteronomy. Chapter 16. What their. Function. And role. Should be. To kings. In Deuteronomy 17. To priests. In Deuteronomy 18.

In. To prophets. In Deuteronomy 18. In the latter parts. Of the chapter. God moves. Systematically. Through every. Single role. And function. To help us people.

Understand. His expectation. And right. Down the line. God gives. These explicit. Instructions. To each group. But as Israel's story. Moves on.

From Moses. The role of judges. Seems to fade. What has happened. To judges. What was their function. What purpose. Did they serve.

[29 : 26] We find an answer. To that. As God will speak. To David. About this. Shepherding function. In 2nd Samuel. Chapter 7. Verse 7.

God is speaking. To David. David is. If you remember. He's asked. To build. The. The temple. And God will. Will speak. To David. This way. He says. In all the places.

Where I have moved. With the people. Of Israel. Did I speak. A word. With any of the judges. Of Israel. Whom I commanded. To shepherd. My people. Israel. Saying.

Why have you not. Build me. A house of cedar. Notice. That judges. Were meant. To give us. A picture. Of God's. Shepherding. Care.

God had raised. Up judges. For the express. Purpose. Of demonstrating. God's. Shepherding. Heart. So when you. See the word. Shepherd. Throughout the old testament. Insert the word.

[30 : 21] Excuse me. When you see the word. Judges. Insert the word. Shepherd. That was their function. That was their role. And clearly there were specific judges that God raised up. God raised up.

Gideon. And Jephthah. And Samson. But. But. As we look through the old testament. We recognize that. That there's a. A larger group of judges. That are unnamed.

And that comes to us for a reason. Because. See. Judges also illustrate. The nearness of God. They were a picture. Of God's nearness. As the people would grow in number.

And God would deliver them from Egypt. This role of. Shepherding. Would take on this new dimension. Not just. Shepherding. Lambs. Or sheep. But. But shepherding people. And their hearts.

Moses will appoint. A judging. Structure. In the book of. Of Exodus. We find this. Exodus 18. 21 and 22. It says. Moses says. Moreover. Look for able men.

[31 : 19] From all the people. Men who fear God. Who are trustworthy. And hate a bribe. And place such men. Over the people. As chiefs. Of thousands.

Of hundreds. Of fifties. Of tens. And let them judge the people. At all times. Every great matter. They shall bring to you. But any small matter.

They shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you. And they will bear the burden. With you. Notice the structure. That God begins. To put in place.

Notice the. The important. Role. Of nearness. That these. Shepherd. Judges. Will perform. Notice how they're organized.

In thousands. In hundreds. In fifties. In tens. From among the people. Not by heredity. No tribe requirement. This decentralized.

[32 : 14] In local leadership. Which was meant. To express. The nearness. Of God. And of course. We can appreciate. That God. With us.

Is. Is. Is. Is being echoed. Through. The role. Of judges. These shepherd. Judges. Who were. Near. The people. Do you know.

That your good. Shepherd. Is near. Do you realize. That. That God. Has. Given us. This picture. Of shepherds. That he's placed. Even at the very beginning.

Of this old covenant. For the purpose. Of helping us. Recognize. That the nearness. And the heart. Of your God. Who wants to enjoy. Relationship with you.

Not distance. But nearness. His heart. Is close. And present. Judges. Were also. A picture. Of justice.

[33 : 08] These shepherds. Were meant to. To demonstrate. Justice. As we see. In Deuteronomy. 16. Verses 18. To 20. You shall appoint. Judges. And officers. In all your towns. That the Lord.

Your God. Is giving to you. According to your tribes. And they shall judge. The people. With righteous. Judgment. You shall not. Pervert justice. You shall not. Show partiality.

You shall not. Accept a bribe. For a bribe. Blinds the eyes. Of the wise. And subverts. The cause. Of the righteous. Justice. And only justice. You shall follow. That you may live.

And inherit. The land. The Lord. Your God. Is giving to you. God set. These judges. These shepherds. Over his people. To uphold. Justice. For his people.

And your good. Shepherd. Is impartial. Your good. Shepherd. Delights. In justice. Your good. Shepherd. Sees. The injustice.

[34 : 05] That you experience. And. And he understands. That. And will deal with that. Because. Vengeance. Is his. He will repay. Says the Lord.

He is. The good shepherd. Who is just. These judges. These shepherds. Were also a picture. Of deliverance. We find. In judges.

Two. Sixteen to eighteen. The Lord raised up. Judges. Who saved them. Out of the hand. Of those who plundered them. Yet they did not. Listen to their judges. For they.

Went after. Other gods. And bowed down. To them. They soon. Turned aside. From the way. In which their fathers. Had walked. Who had obeyed. In the commandments. Of the Lord. And they did not.

Do so. Whenever the Lord. Raised up judges. For them. The Lord. Was with the judge. And he saved them. From the hand. Of their enemies. And all the days. Of the judge.

[34 : 57] For the Lord. Was moved. To pity. By the groaning. Because of those. Who afflicted. And oppressed them. You see. Your good shepherd. Delivers. Because your good shepherd.

Is a. Is a shepherd. Of pity. A shepherd. Of compassion. He acts. On behalf. Of his people. He listens. To their cry. His heart.

Is tender. To save. Your good shepherd. Does not leave. His people. Your good shepherd. Is with. His people. And delights. Delights. To draw them in.

Then we turn. To the promise. Of this good shepherd. This promise. Of the good shepherd. That we see.

Throughout. The scriptures. As you may be aware. The elders. And judges. Of Israel. Tended. To follow. The general pattern. Of the people. And so as the people.

[35 : 52] Would follow. After. The things. Of the nations. So the judges. Would follow. In suit. We find that. In judges. Chapter 21. Verse 25.

It says. In those days. There was no king. In Israel. Everyone did. What was right. In his own eyes. And so while. God would raise. Up judges. The. This moral decline.

Would take place. And the judges. Would drift. Just along. With the people. This time. Of moral. Bankruptcy. And God would raise up. A king. As you know.

The king. David. Who would be. This shepherd king. And he would rule. As this shepherd king. Over the people. But after his reign. The country would soon.

Fall again. Into moral. Decay. So that the end. Of the monarchy. Which was some 400 years. After the time. Of David. The people of Israel.

[36 : 47] Would experience again. This moral decline. And the prophets. Who spoke the word. Of the Lord. Would pass their judgment. On these corrupt. Leaders.

Ezekiel 34. Gives us. Probably the most. Potent example. Of God's condemnation. Of these.

Of these. Leaders. He says. The word of the Lord. Came to me. Son of man. Prophesy. Against the shepherds. Of Israel. Prophesy. And say to them. Even to the shepherds.

Thus says. The Lord God. Ah. Shepherds of Israel. Who have been feeding. Yourselves. Should not shepherds. Feed the sheep. We find.

That these shepherds. Of Israel. While they should have. Cared for the flock. Here they are. Using their position. Of leadership. To feed themselves. It moves on.

[37 : 45] In verses. Four and five. Where the indictment. Continues. It says. The weak. You have not strengthened. The sick. You have not healed. The injured. You have not bound up. The strayed.

You have not brought back. The lost. You have not sought. And with force. And harshness. You have ruled them. So they were scattered. Because there was no shepherd. And they became food.

For all the wild beasts. My sheep. Were scattered. And so. In verse 10. We find. God's word. Thus says the Lord God. I am against.

The shepherds. And I will require. My sheep. At their hand. And put a stop. To their feeding. The sheep. No longer. Will the shepherds. Feed themselves. I will rescue.

My sheep. From their mouths. That they may not. Be food. For them. And as. As the passage. Continues. As we find. And see. This heart of God.

[38 : 40] Who comes. To do. These shepherds. This heart of God. Who comes. And steps in. To intercept. And to perform. This ministry. For his people.

That the leaders. That have been raised up. Would not do. In verses 11. To 22. It says this. For thus. Says the Lord. Behold. I. Myself.

Will search. For my sheep. And will seek. Them out. I will rescue. Them. I will bring. Them out. From the peoples. I will bring. Them into their own land.

And I will feed. Them on the mountains. Of Israel. I will feed. Them with good. Pasture. I myself. Will be the shepherd. Of my sheep.

And I. Myself. Will make them. Lie down. Declares. The Lord God. I will seek. The lost. And I will bring. Back the strayed. And I will bind.

[39 : 34] Up the injured. And I will strengthen. The weak. And the strong. I will destroy. I will feed. Them in justice. I myself. Will judge. Between. The fat sheep.

And the lean sheep. I will rescue. My flock. And I. Will set. Over them. One. Shepherd. My servant.

David. And he shall feed them. He shall feed them. And be their shepherd. And I. The Lord. Will be their God. And my. Servant. David. Shall be prince.

Among them. I. Am the Lord. I. Have spoken. God. Will become. The shepherd king. God. Will fill.

This role. Of showing his heart. To his people. And what the shepherds. Of Israel. Were unable. And unwilling. To do. God. Will intervene.

[40 : 26] This promise. Of a shepherd. And finally. The coming. Of a good shepherd. This coming. Of a good shepherd. That we find. In John. Chapter 10. And I want to just.

Read this. For you. And I want to encourage you. If you have your bibles. Just turn there. With me. So you can see. This description. Of this good shepherd. By the way. Your good shepherd.

What your good shepherd. Not just promises. To do. But desires. To do. For all of those. Who are willing. And notice.

The characteristics. The features. Of this good shepherd. What does he bring? What does he. Make available. To you. And I'll close. With this. This is the heart.

Of your good shepherd. Truly. Truly. I say to you. He who does not. Enter the sheep. Folded by the door. But climbs in. By another way. That man is a thief.

[41:21] And a robber. But he who enters. By the door. Is the shepherd. Of the sheep. To him. The gatekeeper. Opens. The sheep. Hear.

His voice. And he calls out. His own sheep. By name. And leads them out. When he has brought. Out all his own. He goes before them.

And the sheep. Follow him. For he knows. 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 a stranger. This figure. This figure of speech. Jesus used with them. But he did not. They did not understand. What he was saying. To them. So Jesus again. Says to them.

Truly. Truly. I say to you. I am the door. Of the sheep. All who come before me. Are thieves. And robbers. But the sheep. Did not listen to them. I am the door.

[42:15] 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 to kill. And destroy. I came.

That they. May have life. And have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd. Lays down his life. For his sheep. He was 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. That is your good shepherd.

The portrait. Of a shepherd. Who has come. The portrait. Of a shepherd. Who has come. Near. Who is present. And his nearness. Is available. This heart. Of a shepherd.

[43:11] His tenderness. To care for the flock. To the extent. That he lays down. His own life. For the sheep. For you. For me. So that we can enjoy. The benefits.

Of this good shepherd's ministry. Of welcoming us. Into relationship. Of forgiving us. Of our sin. And then this ministry. Of this good shepherd. Now expresses.

The heart of God. Into every. Function. And role. That he plays. As prophet. He speaks. This word to you. And to me. To help us understand.

What it means. To enjoy. This command. Of God. This. Clear instruction. Of God. To point out to us. The character. Of God. But not to turn us away.

But to draw us in. And Jesus. As this priest. The mediator. Who invites us. To enjoy this. This relationship. With God. He is a mediator.

[44:05] Between God and man. He can represent. Sinful man. To a holy God. And as a priest. He has made a way. Through his atoning sacrifice. His precious blood.

Has made a way. For you. And I. To enjoy. Forgiveness. And as this king. As this king. He has come. To rule. And his rule.

Is a rule. That is demanded. Because every. Knee. Will bow. And every tongue. Will confess. That Jesus Christ. Is Lord. To the glory. Of God the Father.

Are you one. Who has bowed the knee. To your. Shepherd king. You enjoyed. The benefits. Of his ministry. Of redeeming.

And forgiving. His ministry. Of mediator. And high priest. That he has come. To make a way. For us. To enjoy. The presence of God.

[45 : 00] Through forgiveness. Of his son. This is your. Good shepherd. Do you know him? Have you come. To enjoy him. And not just. In a. In a superficial way.

That every. So often. When you come. To church. Or every. So often. When you. When you think. About him. That you. You imagine.

The wonders. Of what Christ. Has accomplished. For you. But that it's. Something that happens. In a. Continual way. As much as that's possible.

Remembering. Christ. Through. Not only. The Christmas season. But day. By day. we recall the wonder of his ministry to us that makes the presence of God real and near.

God who's come in the flesh, the word of God who's come near. Oh, Father, I pray that you would help us as your people not only to know the truths about you, but to marvel at this gracious gift of this little baby who came as the word of God in the flesh, came to make a way for us to enjoy forgiveness of sins, came to express the very heart of God by being a shepherd, a shepherd to these lost sheep.

[46 : 26] And you, even as the perfect lamb of God, has come to take our sin away. And I pray, Lord, this morning, if there's anyone who does not know you as their personal Lord and Savior, that even in these moments, they would turn their heart over to your rule and to your reign, trusting in the perfect ministry of your son Jesus as the high priest who can sympathize with their situation and has made a way through your death and resurrection for us to enjoy cleansing and forgiveness in relationship with you.

And Lord, I pray that through this Christmas season that you would help us not to take this gift for granted and that even through these next several days that we would capitalize on opportunities to make much of you wherever we are.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. God bless you. Have a great Christmas. God bless you.