

# The Shepherd and His Sheep

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Date: 26 May 2024

Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good evening, brothers, sisters and friends. A joy to worship the Lord again this evening. Just one intimation. It's just a reminder that there's a fellowship in the church hall just there after the evening service.

Of course, you're all so welcome to come. It's a time of prayer, a time of singing. And really, this weekend is to mark 75 years since this church opened, really.

It was actually last year, it was the anniversary, but we got there in the end. Just to mark time together, a time around some food and some fellowship.

Again, thank you, as always, to the ones who work hard behind the scenes to make these things happen. We are so thankful to the Lord for you. Again, we sit for most of the service and we stand at times of singing.

And I read out the page numbers in our Bibles and our psalm books. As we go along. We're here to worship the Lord. First of all, singing from the Blue Psalm books in Psalm 23.

[ 1 : 0 4 ] Psalm 23 in the Scottish Psalter. That's on page 229. Psalm 23 on page 229.

Psalm 23, page 229. Psalm 23.

Psalm 23, verse 19.

Psalm 23, verse 19.

Psalm 23, verse 19.

[ 3 : 2 2 ] Psalm 23, verse 19.

Psalm 23, verse 19.

Psalm 23, verse 19.

Psalm 23, verse 19. Psalm 23, verse 19. Psalm 23, verse 19.

you are and hearing the reminder that through the finished work of Jesus that all are invited. All who are heavy, all who feel tired, all who feel as if life is too heavy, all who feel as if life is just too tiring for them. You invite all and any who come to you. You promise those who come to you, you promise us rest. Rest now but also rest forever. We thank you for the privilege we have of worshipping again this evening. We thank you for everyone here. We pray to you now especially Lord for our friends this evening who have joined with us, some after a few years and some perhaps the first time. We ask that they would know that we are so glad they are here but we ask more importantly than knowing that we welcome them, they would know you're welcome. As well as knowing our love and our care for them, they would know that you care for them. We ask that even this evening as we spend a short time reading the Bible and a short time listening to your word being explained to us, we ask that you would open up our ears and our heart and we'd be reminded perhaps again or hear for the first time perhaps the hope we have in Jesus. Although perhaps we might feel as if we're lost and abandoned, although we might feel perhaps as if we're wandering away, the Bible tells us and your word tells us that Jesus came to look and to seek, to find, to save, to take home those who are lost.

[ 7 : 03 ] Thank you Lord for this gathering. We pray just now once more for the great privilege we have of gathering like this. We pray also for our brothers and sisters who worship you next door. We thank you for them. We ask for them just now in their time of vacancy. We ask you to encourage them as we know times of vacancy can be so painful and can cause so many worries and stresses and strains for a congregation.

Although it seems to us so impossible, we ask it in your way and in your time you provide for them a leader who would lead them and be with them. We thank you for the privilege we have of living and serving in North Tulsa. We thank you once more that the gospel is heard here week after week.

We thank you for the privilege we have of being able to be salt and light in this place. We do pray just now for everyone who is heavy in our minds. We pray just now for friends and family, loved ones, those we've been praying for for years if not decades.

We bring them again before you just now. Loved ones who we would long to see come and know what it is to have freedom and to have life and to have rest in Jesus.

Help us, Lord, not to be dismayed. Help us to be steadfast in prayer, knowing as we pray and bring these things to you, we come to a God who is not distant, who is not far away, but we come praying to a Father who is our loving Father, the one who calls us his children. Help us this evening then, those of us here who know and who love Jesus, help us to have a renewed heart for this village.

[ 8 : 49 ] We pray for every single home represented here this evening and many homes not represented here. We pray for every home from the Glen to Gary that your word would be known, that your name would be praised, that every single home in this village will one day soon know what it is to have freedom and peace, to know what it is to be loved by and to love, to know and to be known by the creator and sustainer of the whole universe.

As we pray, Lord, for these things, these hopeful realities, these big realities, as we pray for the salvation of North Tulsa, we pray just now once more for ourselves.

We understand, we bring to this place this evening so many stresses and so many strains and worries, anxieties and burdens. We pray again for any here this evening who are suffering.

physical health worries and mental health worries who are feeling it just now, Lord. We ask you to be with them, those who are going through complicated days and long days.

We pray just now for those we know and those we care for who we are worried about, who are going through dark days and who are looking to worrying times ahead. Lord, you know the exact story and you know the exact detail of our situations.

[ 10 : 14 ] We pray just now for any here who are bringing to this place anxieties, heavy burdens, stresses and strains of life. We pray once more for family worries, financial worries, work worries.

Lord, you know the full scope of a worry in this place this evening. And we are once more, as we heard this morning, bring all these things to Jesus. One who tells us that if we cast our burdens onto him, he gives back to us that yoke that is easy, that burden that is light, to follow him, to serve him, to love him, to know him.

As we pray for ourselves in our security and our peace, we remember as always our persecuted brothers and sisters. As we prayed this morning for the church in central India, we also remember the ongoing situation in parts of China.

We pray once more for that early reign covenant church as they now face their 10th year of near constant persecution. Lord, be with them.

We pray, Lord, for the two pastors who are in prison in China, in prison for daring to do what we do freely just now, proclaim the good news of Jesus, proclaim the dangerous truth that he is the only Lord, that he is the only way to heaven.

- [ 11 : 41 ] And for that dangerous truth, for trying to give hope and life and peace, they are now in prison. Pray for our families who are suffering with the loss of two dads and two husbands. Pray just now, Lord, for the members, both male and female, who are still in prison too, as of recent weeks. Again, in prison for just meeting as we do week by week. In prison for singing together, for reading your word together. Call criminals because of their activity, of serving you. Lord, we ask you to bless your word. I'll give you praise as we hear the good news. But as a state in that great land, as a Chinese state seeks to suppress the gospel, we hear the good news and the encouraging news that your church just keeps growing, with many hundreds each week being added to the number. Give you praise for that. Help us, Lord, to be faithful in our day of small things here. We perhaps look around and we see much reason to be discouraged.
- [ 12 : 46 ] We give you praise for the many encouragements you give us. Pray especially this morning, as we saw so many new faces appear. Lord, we have prayed for this for many weeks and many months. But in your time and in your way, you bring people out to hear the good news. We are called to plant. We are called to water. Help us to be faithful in that task. Understanding you alone bring that new life. You alone bring that growth. As we come to think in a short while about what it is to be found by you, we pray just now, Lord, for those who are in our minds, perhaps, who have wandered far away from you. Lord, you would know that you are still with them. They would know that you care for them, that you love them. That those who you once saved, you have not abandoned them. You have not left them. You are, as it were, right where they left you. We thank you, Lord, for the truth of your word that tells us that you will lose not a single one of your own people. We pray just now for the great gift of your mercy.
- [ 13 : 55 ] We can come this evening. We confess sin. We confess wrongdoing. We confess things we have said and thought and done this past week and month and year. And know that whilst these things are against you, our holy God, we come just now confessing them, knowing that if we know and if we love our Saviour, that he has paid the price for us. He who came to seek and to save us, he saved us by his death on the cross, by hanging on that cross, by taking on himself the full wrath, by facing the full punishment of every sin, of every one of his people. That he became sin on the cross for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God, the perfection of God, the goodness of God. So we can be known as cleansed. So we can know that we can come before him just now and know that he calls us his friends, his brothers and sisters. We ask once more this evening, you would bless your word to us. Help us leave this place, not just having sat for an hour. Help us leave this place having grown, not just in understanding, but in love. Pray just now perhaps that some here would leave this place having heard the first time that there is hope for them, there is promise for them, there is new life for them.
- [ 15 : 17 ] If only he would come or come back to Jesus, who is a shepherd of his beloved sheep. Pray Lord for our fellowship, our time afterwards, time of discussion, time of just togetherness, around a cup of tea, thinking back over the last 75 years of your blessing in this place, as we share stories and share thoughts over these many years.

Thank you Lord for this gathering. We thank you for these 75 years. We thank you for the ministers and the members and all who have attended this place, the various many elders and deacons, all who are working publicly, but also behind the scenes to keep things going over these many years.

For we ask if it's your will, you would bless us whenever 75 years, not for our glory, not for the glory of this ministry, not for the glory of this congregation, but for your glory.

We ask once more, we'd see in these years, revival in North Tolstain, hearts which are now hearts of stone being turned to hearts of flesh, those who have no care about the gospel, coming to love and serve a saviour.

We ask these prayers knowing that we cannot make it happen, but we come to you, the one who can. Help us Lord then this new week to find great gospel encouragement in what we saw today, both this morning and this evening.

[ 16 : 41 ] You're a God who both hears and answers our prayers. Ask all these things, in and through and for Jesus, his precious name's sake. Amen.

Let's turn to read in the Bible, the New Testament, Luke chapter 15. Luke chapter 15, that's on page 821.

Page 821. Luke chapter 15, page 821.

There are three parables, three stories that Jesus tells in this chapter. Luke chapter 15.

Let's again hear the word of God. Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to him, that's Jesus, and the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled saying, this man receives sinners and eats with them.

[ 17 : 48 ] So he told them this parable. What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. When he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying to them, rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.

Just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?

And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost. Just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

[ 18 : 53 ] And he said, it was a man who had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.

And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all that he had and took a journey into a far country. And there he squandered his property in reckless living.

When he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and they began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into the fields to feed pigs.

And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. For when he came to himself, he said, how many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger.

I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. And no longer were to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.

[ 20 : 00 ] And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him.

Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet and bring the fattened calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead and is alive again.

He was lost and is found. And they began to celebrate. Now his older son was in the field and as he came and drew near to the house he heard music and dancing.

And he called one of his servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, Your brother has come and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.

[ 21 : 00 ] But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him. But he answered his father, Look, these many years I have served you and I have never disobeyed your command yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends.

But when this son of yours came who has devoured your property with prostitutes you killed the fattened calf for him. And he said to him, Son, you are always with me and all that is mine is yours.

It was fitting to celebrate and be glad for this your brother was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found. Amen. And good praise to God for his holy and his perfect word.

Again singing, again Scottish Psalter, Psalm 121. Psalm 121. It's on page 416.

Psalm 121 on page 416. The psalm talks about our reliance on God and how he provides for his people.

[ 22 : 09 ] I to the hills will lift mine eyes. From whence do I have come my need? My safety cometh from the Lord who heaven and earth have made. Thy foot he'll not let slide nor will he slumber that thee keeps.

Behold, he that keeps Israel he slumbers not nor sleeps. Psalm 121. To God's praise. Amen. I do the hills will lift my eyes from which thou come I.

my name. My sin seeks from the hundred who did not birds occur.

healing by healing and life h■■■■ of afar Ball singing The Lord be ye, the Lord I share, all my life I must live.

The moon by night, he shall not smile, nor yet the sun by day.

[ 24 : 14 ] The Lord shall be thy soul, he shall be sent thee from all earth.

As for thy holy land, I shall not give you forever.

Let's turn back for a short time to the chapter that we had in the Bible there, Luke chapter 15. Luke chapter 15. We'll be looking mostly this evening at verses 1 down to verse 7.

We'll be looking at parts of the whole chapter, but focusing mostly on verses 1 down to verse 7. Luke chapter 15, verses 1 down to verse 7.

Okay, we said this whole chapter, Jesus is really telling what's called three parables. This is stories Jesus would tell. A parable would often, when Jesus used them, it's a story that uses something that people would have known.

[ 25 : 36 ] Sheep. They're farmers, they're crafters, they're shepherds. He talks about nets elsewhere and fishing and boats. He talks about things that people knew about. See here, sheep, lost coins, and sons and daughters who come back home again after a while away.

Normal things. And often we have to remind ourselves, when Jesus tells a story, a parable, that story often has one or two of the very most main points.

And he's telling a story. Like we might be telling stories next door in a wee while. And when you tell a story, you're going for one final point, usually.

But to get there, you tell bits and pieces, don't you? You add bits and pieces onto the story. You make it interesting. And sometimes we get so bogged down in all the extra details of the stories that Jesus tells, we often lose track as to the main point.

And for all these parables, there is one central point. If you've noticed, there's one theme to these three stories that Jesus tells. Joy.

[ 26 : 46 ] Joy before him. Joy before God. Joy before the whole of angels in heaven. Over what? Over one wandering sinner. Over one faraway person who comes home again.

That's our focus then this evening. In verses 1 down to verse 7. This story, this parable of the lost sheep. Now, we often say this to the congregation.

We often say this because, if we're honest, we are all prone to drifting off. Myself included. A half hour is a long time to listen for many of us. Some of us, not so much. But others of us, a half hour is a long time.

So, I will give the conclusion of the sermon at the start. That we have nothing else this evening. Let's remember the main point of our sermon. The main point of these verses is this.

Jesus is the good shepherd. Jesus is the one who comes to seek and to save. To rescue. To show kindness and love to those who are wandering away, perhaps.

[ 27 : 51 ] Those who are lost. He has come to find you. To grab you. To rescue you. And to show you. What it is to follow him.

Takes you to new pastures. To good pastures. To green grass. Jesus is the good shepherd. Who has come to seek and to save his people.

To help us understand then. This passage of a story. Just three points. And we can see the three characters in this story. We can see, first of all, the crowd.

Jesus is telling this story to. The sheep and the shepherd. So, the crowd, the sheep and the shepherd. First of all then, the crowd.

Verses 1 and verse 2. Now, the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to him. That is Jesus. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with him.

[ 28 : 51 ] So, this is the crowd. Jesus is here telling the story. And we're told here who's gathered around him. Who's listening to the stories. Two groups are mentioned here who are listening.

Tax collectors and sinners. And scribes and Pharisees. So, first of all, the tax collectors and sinners. Tax collectors. We could say, in other words, Jesus is here with the normal people of the day.

Outcasts. Those who are less than liked. Tax collectors. For some, perhaps you've heard this before. Others of us, it's good to remind ourselves. Why are tax collectors mentioned?

What's so bad about tax collectors? You think, well, perhaps today we're particularly keen on taxes. No one particularly enjoys, I'm sure, paying taxes. And if someone came to your door tax collecting, you wouldn't be too keen on it.

But for this time, when Jesus was on the earth, tax collectors weren't just there like the tax man is today. They were worse. So much worse.

[ 29 : 59 ] The tax collectors of Jesus' day, they worked for Romans. In short, they were Roman-employed Jews. They were locals to the area. They were grown up in the area.

They're from the area. They're from the village. They're from the town. And the Romans would hire them. They would work for the Romans. And that's bad enough. Of course, bear in mind, Rome at this point is the invading army.

So right now, they're being traitors to their people. They're working for the army that's invaded the land. Bad enough. It gets even worse, though. They weren't just doing what the Romans told them to do.

They would collect more and more tax. Now, we know this not just from the Bible. We know this from history. There are plenty of tax collectors who were attacked and killed by the towns they're from because of this very fact.

They were men who would extort the poorest of their family and their neighbours, traitors to their country, and then extorting their own people.

[ 31 : 06 ] Safe to say they were not liked. They were despised. We also know from history that often they were so despised, they would have sort of a bodyguard of sorts, at least for a few hours a day, walking home kind of thing, and walking to work to the tax office of the day.

They'd often be accompanied, at least by a low-ranking Roman soldier because they were being killed and attacked left, right, and centre. So these are hated men.

Tax collectors, and who else do we see you mentioned here? Tax collectors and sinners. This is the collective term used of the day to describe everyone else.

All the outcasts, all the black sheep of the family, prostitutes, outcasts, beggars, poor souls, the full range of everyone else. That's them.

And here they are. Where are they? For drawing close to Jesus. Drawing close to Jesus. Those who think they are the best of society, the scribes and the Pharisees, those who think they've got it all sorted, those who are the upper class in terms of religious reasons, those who are the leaders of the church of the day, they think they're sorted.

[ 32 : 30 ] And see what they think. They can't believe that Jesus is talking, quite honestly, to these scum, to women, prostitutes, tax collectors, sinners.

If Jesus is saying he's the son of God, then why on earth is he wasting his time talking to these people? They wouldn't go near these people.

They didn't go near these people. But note what the Bible tells us. Again, nothing in the Bible is but accident. Every part of it is important. The tax collectors, the sinners, were what?

Were all drawing near to Jesus. The world hated them. Their communities hated them. They felt out of place where they were, they drew close to Jesus.

Jesus had time for them. Jesus cared for them. Friends, Jesus is not distant.

[ 33 : 32 ] He is not uncaring. We said that this morning. I'll say it again just now. Jesus is not distant and uncaring. And you might think he wants nothing to do with you. You might think, well, perhaps you aren't as bad as the tax collectors and sinners of his day.

But you might think, maybe I've gone too far away from him. I've had a life that's just too complicated. I've made too much of a mess of things. And I've lost and missed out on so many chances before.

He wants nothing to do with me. Well, if the worst of the worst of this society, as we read about here, can draw close to him, my friend, you can too.

Murderers draw close to him. Those who are traitors to their nation draw close to him. Those who are brokenhearted, who are lost, who are heavy, who are anxious.

They all draw close to Jesus. And wherever you are in that spectrum this evening, from the worst of the worst of sinners, to someone who feels lost and abandoned and on their own, wherever you are there, you can draw close to him right now.

[ 34 : 43 ] That is the promise we have. Even the first verse of our chapter here. So there's tax collectors and sinners drawing close to Jesus. Then we see the second group in verse 2.

And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, this man receives sinners and eats with them. As we said, the scribes and the Pharisees, they are the so-called religious leaders of the day.

They maintained the religious order. Also, interestingly, they also maintained the local political order. They were like the elders of the churches also running the council, for example.

They ran politically. They ran socially. They ran religious parts of society. They were the upper class. You would revere them. We said before, often they were very well off.

Their families would be well off. They were the it people of society. Those who the Lord had clearly blessed and who the Lord, in their minds, clearly loved.

[ 35 : 50 ] And many of these men meant well. They were incredibly educated. We know that for a fact. Think of Paul the Apostle. Educated. A lawyer.

Many of these men start when they're 12 and are in constant education, really, until they're 30. They could quote the Torah and the writings to you off by heart.

They weren't fools. They were scientific, clinically minded men who knew everything there was to know about their society. They were canny men.

Political movers. All that being said, look at their conduct in this situation here. With all the brains they had and all the power they had, they just sit and scoff at Jesus.

They grumble. They grumble. They're moaning to themselves. Grumbling to themselves. Saying, what an embarrassment. You can imagine them sitting there. There's Jesus.

[ 36 : 52 ] With all the low life of the society around them, according to the Pharisees and scribes. And they're looking down on Jesus and saying, what an embarrassment. This rabbi who is called the son of God.

Who is so special. Who everyone's saying is doing miracles. Everyone's saying he's the Messiah. Come to save his people. And there he is. Spending time with these people. With these people.

They can't stand him. They hate him. Why? Because he spends time with sinners. What they don't understand is, they are sinners too.

Just as bad as the tax collectors and prostitutes and murderers that Jesus is with. That they equally are deserving of God's judgment. The Bible tells us, all of us.

From ministers to elders. Across, top down. Every one of us. We are all fallen. We are all deserving, justly, of God's punishment.

[ 37 : 52 ] God is holy. We certainly are not. And scribes and the Pharisees, they think they're holy. But we see here, they certainly are not. So what does Jesus do to these grumbling leaders of his day?

Well, he hears them grumbling or he perceives them grumbling. And he tells them a story. Three stories. One story for ourselves this evening. He tells them the story of the lost sheep.

When the Pharisees and scribes grumbled, saying, this man received sinners' needs with him. So he told them this parable. Second point.



Sheep. Sheep. First of all, what is, it's an obvious question to ask, but what is the nature of sheep?

There's a reason Jesus often uses sheep as an analogy. All the way through the Bible to the Old Testament, God calls himself a good shepherd. And he says, people are sheep.

[ 38 : 57 ] In modern usage, that's a bad thing. When you say someone's like a sheep, it means they blindly, cluelessly follow other people. Well, people who say that often have never owned a sheep in their life.

What are sheep like? Are they clueless? Are they stupid? No. Not in general. We all know sheep are actually, at times, in many ways, smart.

At times, in many ways, completely dangerous to themselves. As you know, if you've been here for a while with me, I have no time for sheep whatsoever.

I know it's always dangerous saying that to a congregation of some here who own sheep. And no disrespect meant. If it helps, of course, those of you who know, I grew up surrounded by quite a few sheep back home in Graver.

And for many years, I was there to help and be a good nephew and a good grandchild and do what I could do occasionally with sheep. They're not my thing.

[ 40 : 00 ] But they are smart animals. They're prone to escaping. They're prone then, of course, to finding themselves in trouble.

They're prone to getting stuck in fences and stuck in lochs and stuck in islands in lochs. I'll tell you if I have told it before.

I think it was when I was here on supply. Forgive me for telling the same story again. But it's a good story to illustrate the point here. Just before I came to yourselves, probably the summer before you called me, we were in Kalbost.

And in Kalbost, there's a loch there with an island in the middle of it. A wee island. And there were sheep stuck in that island for days and days and days. Now this island, a lot of vegetation, and the sheep was quite happy.

Seemed quite content. She was scoffing her way around this island. Then one day, the owner of that sheep, who's a small man, puts on waders and wades out to collect this sheep.

[ 41 : 05 ] Wades out up to about here in this loch. It's not a joke at all. Genuinely, up to about here. Just on top of his waders. To get this sheep. Now how this small man, this old man, collects the sheep and takes the home again, I didn't quite see that part.

It was told to me secondhand by someone who watched it from miles away up the hill. But they saw it took place. This sheep had wandered away from a field, had swum into a loch, was stuck on an island, and was eventually, would of course, run out of food and would perish.

Sheep are dangerous, have left their own. They're also stubborn. I'm sure you all know that. Sheep are stubborn animals. They know what they want to do, and they'll do often what they want to do, regardless of what you think that they might be trying to do.

They'll do their own thing anyway. Friends, brothers and sisters, this is why the Bible often uses the term sheep to describe us.

Yes, God is the good shepherd who loves his sheep, but at times are we like sheep in the worst way possible. We wander away and get ourselves caught up in situations that are just bad.

[ 42 : 15 ] Perhaps relationship situations for some of us, or lifestyle choices for others, and we end up going further and further away, deeper and deeper and deeper into the heather of the moor of life, deeper into the barbed wire of life, into that fence which ensnares us and goes around us, and like a poor stuck sheep, we end up there, helpless, hopeless, caught up, and really no way to escape.

I've got to ask some questions which require honest answers, but only you can answer it. And this question isn't for the person beside you or behind you. Friends, it's for all of us.

Just a few questions. And just answer, please, in your mind, yourself, honestly. Do you perhaps this evening feel like you have wandered away from God?

Before I ask any more questions, just to say, I always say this, but don't think if I'm looking at you, I'm not looking at you, it means anything. I always say this to the congregation. I'm blind anyway, but with glasses, without glasses, it's just shapes and faces.

If these questions hit you, it's not because I'm carefully crafted to target you, I haven't. Do you feel like you've wandered perhaps away from God?

[ 43 : 43 ] Have you found yourself asking the question? We asked it this morning, I'll ask it again. Surely, surely there's more to life than just getting up, going to work perhaps, going home, watch some telly, read some books, go to bed.

Perhaps we enjoy our lives. I'm not saying that. There's good parts God gives us, a beautiful creation. And living here, we're so blessed to live here. And we can go to the beach and enjoy time with our family and our animals and all that.

But you know, back in your mind, you say, all that good thing aside, surely there's more to life than up, awake, alive, active, sleep.

Day after day, year after year, decade after decade. And then for nothing in the end. This is grim, but we all know it to be true. 50 years.

50 years. 100 years. We're all gone. We're gone. In 150 years, our memory is distant, perhaps.

[ 44 : 48 ] If at all. Our time comes and goes. Are you wondering, what is the point of it all? Another question.

Perhaps you were once close to the Lord. You can say, well, once I did know him. And once I was sure I was close to him. But now you've wandered away. There's my distance between you and him that has grown.

Or perhaps the opposite direction. You've never been close. But now you find yourself strangely wanting to read the Bible. Or wanting to come to church.

Or wanting to ask the big questions of life. And you think, this is strange. This is uncomfortable. I didn't once care about these things. Now all of a sudden, I care about these things. You think, this is weird.

Why is this happening? If you're once more close and you've gone away. The shepherd has not abandoned you. He is right where you left him.

[ 45 : 47 ] If you've never been close. And you're feeling suddenly this pull to come closer to him. That's not from you. That's not from you. That is him searching and seeking you out this evening.

Jesus, the good shepherd. Is here to take you home. He's here to find you. To hold on to you. To receive a man in this story doing.

To grabbing you in love. And look how it's described. What the man here does to the sheep. When he finds the sheep. He lays it on his shoulders. What a beautiful image.

A gentle image. A caring image. He lays the sheep on his shoulders. And he carts that sheep home in love. That brings us to our final point here.

The shepherd. The shepherd. As we said, quite obviously. The shepherd finds his sheep. There is no doubt about that.

[ 46 : 48 ] He finds his sheep. You try and run away from him. You try and distract yourself with this. And with that. And the next thing. And the Christians here will tell you.

Some here. Christians here. Try to run away from him. For years. He. Will find his sheep. He will find his sheep.

In his time. In his way. He will come. And he will rescue you. Crofters love their sheep. Crofters care for their sheep.

But friends. Jesus cares. And loves his sheep. More than the most dedicated crofter. You can think about. He loves his sheep.

As we know. But to remind ourselves. He loves his sheep. So much. He loves his precious people. So much. That he. Left. Glory. An eternity. Of perfection.

[ 47 : 44 ] And beauty. And praise. He leaves all that beauty. It takes on. This. Flesh. He becomes like us.

In every single way. Apart from sin. He becomes like us. Living. Breathing. We said this morning. Jesus. Who was a baby. Had to be changed. Looked after.

And fed. Jesus. Who. A young man. Being taught by Joseph. How to be a carpenter. Getting splinters. And cuts. And missing the nail. That's who our saviour is.

Living in the dust of this world. And seeing around him. Every single day. The death. And destruction. And pain. That sin has brought into the world. A world.

That was made. By him. And through him. And for him. That's what our saviour did for us. And more than that. He goes to the cross. He is.

[ 48 : 39 ] I was careful this morning. There's some children in the service this morning. Let me be careful. We were more blunt this evening. Our saviour. Who I have love for his people.

Is stripped naked on the cross. Before that. He is beaten to a pulp. He is back. And his sides. And his face. His body. Is lashed. With whips.

With shards of bone. And glass. And metal shoved in it. A crown of thorns. With thorns that size. Not placed. But jammed into his head. Hitting off all the main nerve endings in your scalp.

Face. Body. Bruised. Skin. Ripped open. And then on the cross he is there. As he suffocates to death. On his own internal fluids.

As blood and fluid fills his lungs. That's our saviour. Dying there on that cross for us. That's the reality of what took place on the cross.

[ 49 : 41 ] That's a physical reality. Then add on to that. That whilst all that's going on. That he became. The Bible tells us. He became sin for us.

In other words. He took on himself. All the punishment. That was meant for us. All the punishment. So that if we trust in him. We can be free.

That doesn't make sense. It's not fair. Exactly. It's not fair. That's the good news of Jesus. He suffers everything.

So that we suffer none of it. He takes on all the punishment of God. So that we only have left. The love. And welcome. And invite of God. It is not a fair exchange at all.

It's a glorious exchange. It's not fair. He loves his sheep. That much. My friends.

[ 50 : 37 ] It's no coincidence. That you're here. This evening. Perhaps. You saw the invite. The banner. Perhaps you got your invite handed to you. Perhaps a friend or family member.

Invited you to come this evening. It's no coincidence. We're here this evening. You're here this evening. Because a good shepherd has brought you here.

To hear perhaps the first time. Or to hear perhaps. First time for a long time. That he is there. And he has never stopped searching for you.

That he is exactly where you've left him. That he knows you. He made you. And dear brothers.

Dear sisters. That he loves you. My friends. Don't keep wandering away. Because right here.

[ 51 : 33 ] The shepherd is there. He says to you. I made you. I know you. You are mine. I have come to rescue you. I have come to take you to myself. To give you the life. You were created to live.

Don't wander away from that. More and more. And more. Look what happens. When Jesus finds a sheep. The shepherd finds a sheep.

Look at the joy. Look at the. The rejoicing that takes place. When he has found it. Verse 5. He lays on his shoulders.

Rejoicing. He comes home. And he. He has a party. He calls together friends. And neighbours. And they all rejoice together. For I have found my sheep.

That was lost. I asked a question this morning. I asked the same question this evening. How do you view Jesus?

[ 52 : 31 ] I was to ask you. What's one word. Or one thought about Jesus? Do you think he is too far out there? Do you think he doesn't care? Is he aloof?

Is he too high up there? Is he uncaring? Is he distant? Is he distant? Is that the Jesus you see or we see together in these verses? No. The Jesus in these verses is close to his people.

Is close to the ones who have wandered away. To the lost. To the sinners. To the abandoned. To the hurting. He is close. And he has come.

To rescue you. And to take you to himself. And we saw that theme in these three stories. Is the lost being found.

This story here. The sheep ends. With the beautiful image. Of a party. Of joy. The lost coin ends the same way.

[ 53 : 31 ] As a woman finds her lost coin. She says to her friends. Rejoice with me. And the lost son. The prodigal son. As it's often called. We have the beautiful words of a father.

Who says. It was fitting to celebrate. And be glad. For this your brother was dead. And is now alive. He was lost. But he's now found.

Friends. We don't believe. A sermon saves anyone. I said it this morning. I said it again. Me talking at you. For half an hour. Doesn't save you.

Some streets of A4. Doesn't save you. God saves you. Our job is not to somehow. Convince you. Our job is not to somehow. Push you into heaven.

Our job. And my job. And the Christians here. Our job together. Is just to point you towards. Jesus. I can't save you.

[ 54 : 32 ] We can't save you. He does. Every single Christian here. That is our story. Isn't it? Once we were lost. In various ways. In different ways. Some here.

Were lost in addictions. Of various types. And were very lost. Some here. Had hard lives. And hard upbringings. And tough situations.

Some here. Lived a good life. Before you were saved. All the money. All the shiny things. Of this world. And yet together. All these stories together.

We all came to know Jesus. And now we love him. And serve him. And are loved by him. And are given peace by him. And cared by him. That is the good news this evening.

My friends. He has come to seek. And to save you. You might feel your wonder too far. He is able to find you. You might wonder. And stress.

[ 55 : 29 ] And strain. And think. You're too far gone. You're too mangled on a wire. He is able to come and rescue you. And take him. Take you home. On his shoulders.

There is a shepherd. A good shepherd. The best shepherd. He has come to seek. And to save. The lost. And today. This evening. You are invited.

To come to him. You are invited. As we said this morning. To come and pray to him. And if you forgive me. To repeat what I said this morning. I will end with this. What is prayer?

We'll say come to Jesus. Come to the shepherd. You say pray to him. What is prayer? Perhaps you've never prayed before. You think there's some. Set of words.

You have to say. Some performance. Some special routine. What is prayer? Prayer is talking. To God. Now you do that out loud. In your mind. Whatever.

[ 56 : 27 ] If you are here this evening. And as of yet. You have never prayed. But you feel. And you know. As if you're lost. And you believe. At least in part. That maybe this could be true for you.

That the good shepherd has come. To find you. And to save you. I encourage you this evening. Pray. Just pray. In your mind. Say to God. I've not done this before. I don't know what I'm saying.

I don't know what to say. But I heard about you tonight. And I believe. That what I heard. Might be true. Is it true? Can you rescue me? Can you save me?

Use your own words. I'm just. Using a. Idea. What you might say. Can you save me? Is it all true for me? Just pray.

Speak to him honestly. And again. Speak to someone you know. Of course. I am here. The elders are here. We are. Very much here to serve you. We are here. To love.

[ 57 : 22 ] And look after. And to be there for you. In these matters. Speak to family and friends. Who have invited you to church. Family and friends. Who are Christians. And say. Is it all true?

And they'll be glad to help you. But don't let this chance. Pass you by. Please don't. Come to the good shepherd. Who rejoices at finding the lost sheep. Who has come to seek.

And to save. The lost. Let's bow our heads now. A word of prayer. I thank you Lord for your word. I thank you for the promise we find in it. The encouragement we have.

And reminder that we have. That we have a good shepherd. Our saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ. Who has come to seek. And to save the lost. Who is the perfect shepherd. The good shepherd. The caring shepherd.

Who loves his sheep. Who loves his sheep so much. That he himself became that final sacrifice. That final perfect. Spotless.

[ 58 : 19 ] Blameless lamb. Who died. Who died. On our behalf. Who died so that we may live. Who now lives eternal. At your right hand. Making that constant intercession.

That constant prayer. That constant prayer for his people. Lord we ask that everyone here this evening. Will come to know Jesus. Come to love him. Come to serve him.

Come to follow him. Leave that with you. You alone change lives. Help us this evening. Help us in our fellowship this evening too.

To spend time in fellowship. And enjoy together. God bless all that was said today. From your word. Give us the peace knowing. That your word has gone out. And you will accomplish with it.

What you have planned to do. Let's call these things in. And through. And for Jesus. His precious name's sake. Amen. Amen. Just to say.

[ 59 : 18 ] This is not a formal thing we're doing. This is life and death for us. We mean this. Please. Please avail yourselves. Of talking to me if you wish.

Myself and Emma are home most evenings. The phone number's there. Swing by. Write a letter. Knock on the door. Whatever is easiest for you. We're here for you. Please do come.

And share. And ask. And talk. And our desire is the congregation. That every one of us would come to know. The Lord. We can close with that.

Great psalm of hope. Psalm 40. Again the Scottish Psalter. This morning we sang. And sing psalms. It's the evening we're singing the Scottish Psalter. It's all God's word. Scottish Psalter. Psalm 40.

That's on page 259. Page 259. Psalm 40 verses 1 down to verse 4. This is of course a psalm.

[ 60 : 13 ] Speaking of how God rescues his people. I waited for the Lord my God. And patiently did bear. At length to me he did incline my voice.

And cried to hear. He took me from a fearful pit. And from the miry clay. On a rock he set my feet. Establishing my way. Psalm 40 verses 1 down to verse 4.

To God's praise. I waited for the Lord my God.

And patiently did not to hear. And patiently did not to hear. He took me from a fear. He took me from a fear. He took me from a fear.

And from a fearful pit. He took me from a fearful pit. And from a fearful pit. He took me from a fearful pit.

[ 61 : 16 ] He took me from the fearful pit, and from the mighty pit.

And on a rock is held my feet, is down in shame my face.

The good and the song in my heart, I brought him my life high.

Men shall sit, and men shall fear.

And on the Lord rely. O blessed is the night of the night.

[ 62 : 47 ] Upon the Lord relies. Respecting not with no doubt.

The Lord has turned aside to the eyes.

Say grace, and after a grace, bend action. Lord, thank you for our time this evening.

Thank you, Lord, for the provision we have of food and of fellowship together. We ask you bless that to us.

Thank you, Lord, as always, for those who work behind the scenes in all these things. Those who work diligently to prepare at these times of fellowship. Who often go unfanked and unthought about, perhaps.

Say, Lord, that fair service to you is important. And you, you value it, and you appreciate it. Help us, Lord, to enjoy our time together of fellowship.

[ 63 : 53 ] And to do so for your glory. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Both you now and forevermore.

Amen.