

In the Hand of the Shepherd

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth M Ferguson

[0 : 00] Let us now read God's word from the Gospel according to John and chapter 10.

John chapter 10. We may read at the beginning. Verse 10.

Amen.

May God bless to us that reading from his word and to his name be all the praise. We will now sing to God's praise from Psalm 78.

[5 : 50] Psalm 78 verses 52 to 55. Psalm 78 verse 52.

These stans are verses 52 to 55 of Psalm 78.

But his own people like to sheep. But his own people like to sheep.

Thanks to God for the midst. And he can lift the wind and earner.

They must have locked in. And he can save beyond it me.

[7 : 41] So that they did not fear. We are not living in sight.

We are not living in sight. We are not living in sight. We are not living in sight.

We are not living in sight. But his systems are not living in sight. And he continues to live in sight.

and led into the earth which is right time our name hath heard his said the nation of Canaan by his almighty hand before their face he did expel out of their face their land which foreign head returns to them by life he did divide and made the tribes of

Israel within their hands abide now as the Lord enables us let us again turn to this portion of scripture we've read the gospel according to John and chapter 10 I'm reading again at verse 27 verses 27 and 28 John 10 27 my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand my father which gave them me is greater than all and no man is able to pluck them out of my father's hand

[10 : 44] I and my father are one particularly verses 27 and 28 this chapter John chapter 10 contains two of the Lord Jesus I am sayings know that there are seven sayings where Jesus says I am a certain thing here we have in chapter 10 at verses 7 and 9 he says I am the door I am the door of the sheep and then in verses 11 and 14 of this chapter I am the good shepherd I am the good shepherd and know my sheep and am known of mine and Jesus says these things against the background of what he has said in verse 8 all who came before me are thieves and robbers he is not talking particularly about the faithful

Old Testament prophets is talking nearer his own time regarding the Pharisees the Sadducees and the scribes and the Bible says of the Pharisees that they were lovers of money they weren't good shepherds of the flock of God at all actually they were like the person here as the hireling verse 12 who is not a shepherd whose own the sheep are not when he sees the wolf coming and he leaves the sheep and flees and the wolf catches them and scatters them the Pharisees were not faithful shepherds but Jesus is the good shepherd and also the scribes it says in Mark's Gospel chapter 12 and verse 40 that the scribes that they devour widows houses and for a pretense make long prayers these were the people who were the leaders of the religious community of the day in

Israel the scribes the Pharisees and they weren't good faithful shepherds at all but the Lord Jesus says that he is the good shepherd he is the door into eternal life no man cometh unto the father but by me and those who come to Jesus Christ by faith they come to know the blessings of eternal life well in verses 27 and 28 there are a number of things I'd like to highlight in relation to the relationship that exists between the Lord Jesus the good shepherd and his own sheep and there are five or six points here that I'd like to highlight as we consider them together this morning first of all in verse 27 he mentions my sheep my sheep what entitles the

Lord to say that about his people that they are his sheep well when you see in eternity in the covenant of redemption where the persons of the trinity met in such a way as to organise shall we say salvation for the people of God and that Jesus Christ the second person the son of God he was appointed mediator and he was granted the elect of God to save them and he received them happily and he came into this world and worked out a salvation for them he says here my sheep they were granted to him in covenant he was their surety the one who was to pay their debt the one who was to stand before

God's inscrutable justice in their room and in their place and when he came into the world he undertook to fulfill everything that was entrusted to him on behalf of his sheep his flock his people what were they like when he received them well they were lost sheep aren't they they were sinful wayward people all we like sheep have gone astray the prophet says we have turned every one of us into his or her own way that's the way we were by nature do you remember the section in Luke's gospel chapter 15 where the

[16 : 39] Lord likens us to sheep that has gone astray and the shepherd leaves the 99 and he goes and he seeks out the lost one and when he finds it he puts it on his shoulder and comes home rejoicing also the woman who had lost her coin she swept the house lit a candle so that she would find this lost coin that was so precious to her and when she found it she rejoiced with her friends and her neighbours and we see also the lost son the prodigal son he came home he came to himself in the far country covered as he was with the impurities associated with rearing pigs and feeding pigs and he came and he confessed his sin and his father received him so gladly the lost are found and we see here that

Jesus he lays claim to his own people whom he received in covenant at whom he came into this world to save and he says here they're my sheep they're my sheep but the next thing he says about them is this my sheep they hear my voice they hear my voice where do they hear the voice of the shepherd well they hear it in the word of God don't they when we meet in a situation like this where the word of God is read and preached the Lord is able to apply this word personally and savingly with comfort and with joy and with conviction to his sheep to his elect people maybe you came here often and the word of

God it was a noise as it were that you heard in the background but it wasn't touching you but then as time went on things started to move within you in response to this word and you realised that the word was speaking about you as a sinner in need of salvation you realised that the word of God was speaking requiring things of you to repent of your sin to turn from your evil ways to follow the Lord Jesus Christ to look to Jesus Christ as Saviour to embrace him as he is freely offered to you in the gospel and this is what Jesus is here saying my sheep he said they hear my voice isn't it amazing when the word of

God becomes personal when it becomes full of power in your experience it changes your life it changes the direction of your life the voice of Christ the word of God applied by the Holy Spirit to those who are the elect sheep of Christ himself for whom he has died and now he undertakes to apply to them the redemption that he has purchased for them my sheep hear my voice but not just at the very beginning of Christian experiences is that the case as the sheep journey through the wilderness the voice of Christ is heard by them maybe you started following the Lord many years ago and his voice was sweet and comforting and blessed to you at that time now you're down the road maybe 10 20 40 more years and it's his voice you still want to hear you sometimes go a long distance without having heard a word from the

Lord you sometimes go days weeks months maybe longer and the greatest longing of your heart and your soul is that you would hear a word in season a word applicable to your situation and then that brings us to the next thing my sheep hear my voice and I know them I know them he knows every detail of our experience he knows our trials he knows our temptations he knows how lonely the wilderness journey is becoming he knows the strength of the tide of iniquity and wickedness in the world round about you that you have to negotiate day after day after day he knows the strength of the wind against which you have to walk that's the world we're in and

[22 : 32] Jesus says I know them I know every detail of their experience and I am there to help them I am there to speak a word in season I am there to apply my grace like I was with the apostle Paul when he was again and again praying that the Lord would remove this awful thing that afflicted him whatever it was the thorn in the flesh the Lord said my grace is sufficient for you my strength is made perfect in your weakness and that's where we have to stop that his grace is supplied measured out for your situation whatever situation you or

I may have his grace is sufficient stories told about some Christian afraid of what may lie between her and death and what is death going to be like and her counselor whoever was counseling the person said well you can be assured that even as you go through the door of death there will be a supply of grace there at the door post to meet your every detailed need follow follow me what kind of following is this well first of all it's a faith following we follow

Jesus by faith the grace of faith what does faith really mean well the catechism reminds us that there's more than just believing about Jesus in saving faith there is a believing about him yes but particularly there is a trusting in him a leaning upon him and that's what we have at the very centre of this phrase at the end of verse 27 they follow me it's as if they are leaning upon him who is this that cometh up from the wilderness it says in the song of Solomon chapter 8 who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved leaning upon in the eastern countries the shepherds lead their sheep but if the sheep become too weak they carry them in their arms this is something that we ourselves experience don't we from time to time we wonder if we are able to carry on one more step things are so hard so difficult so discouraging the night is so dark my heart is so cold and so hard can

I carry on well he who has begun the good work in you will perform that work until the day of Jesus Christ that is why we are able to follow him because he has undertaken not only to begin the good work of grace in us but to supply grace in every situation so that you put one foot forward and then another one every step of the way so it's a faith following it is also an obedient following a following of obedience he gives us direction and command and we are duty bound to obey surely when we love someone we will be happy to oblige in anything that he or she asks of us and that is something that undergirds this following also not only is it a following of faith but it's a following of obedient love they follow me and they follow in such a way as to give the primary place in their hearts and lives to him so this word says elsewhere in the scriptures we must run our race with patience looking unto

Jesus who's the author and finisher of faith looking to him and that word looking means looking away from anything and everything else that would require our attention primarily focusing upon him they follow the shepherd they hear his voice they recognize his voice he knows them and they follow him and then it says in verse 28 I give unto them eternal life I am giving it to them eternal life life this is life of a different quality to ordinary life that we live in the world this is a life of a different quality because it is a life based upon being united to the source of life what do

[29 : 33] I mean by that it is to know him whom to know is life eternal we are united to the source of life to the source of salvation and it says here I am giving them this quality and this particular kind of life day by day he breathed life into our soul at conversion and you woke up as it were to a new world new priorities new longings in your soul new desires new appetite for the things of God you were able to turn your back upon the idolatry that filled your life before you were able to turn around and like the followers of

David at one point in his life he said they said to him thine thine we are David and for thee thou son of Jesse this is the change that came into the life of those into whose hearts the Lord blessing came and it says I am giving them eternal life what kind of qualities does this life have well it is not only a life of knowledge of God but a life that gives us to become like him he imparts to us his Holy Spirit and we become the temple of his spirit and we become Christ like in our longings in our desires in our lifestyle to do thy will

I take delight although my God that art this was the feeling of the psalmist and the longing of the psalmist it's to do the will of God not his own will and we flee unto Jesus who is the fountain of life I am giving them eternal life how does this life come to us well it comes to us through the means of grace grace the means of grace I often think of the woman of Samaria when she went to the well at Sychar hoping to replenish her earthly bucket with water from the well and she met the Lord Jesus there and he interviewed her and she tried to evade at all costs his questions and his interrogation until at last he said

I am he who speaks to you she said when the Messiah comes he will tell us all these things I am he who speaks to you and that self disclosure of Jesus to her and to her soul changed her life the next thing we see her doing is leaving her water pot and going and saying to the men come see a man has told me everything that I've ever done is this not the Christ her water pot as it were typical of the lifestyle she had lived up until then and she left it aside because she had found something far far better she had found the source of life eternal life living water and she found it at the well of Sikar and where do we find it well in a situation just like we have here this morning the means of grace where the word of

God is read where the word of God is sung where the prayers of the people of God ascend where the Lord promises to be where the two or three are gathered together in his name the well of water may each of us know what it is to have a drink from this living well of this living water who is Christ himself there's also not just only the public means of grace through which the Lord applies this blessing of eternal life but also at home when you go on your knees in the private place of prayer that can be a place where the Lord can speak to you in a wonderful and comforting way also when you have fellowship with the

[35 : 22] Lord's people all of these situations the Lord can use to draw near and give you more and more of a taste of this eternal life what does it involve while those who have been granted eternal life their sins have been forgiven there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit there is the fact of being justified there is the fact of being adopted into God's family there is the fact of being sanctified and at last we shall be glorified I am giving them eternal life he says and then he says they shall never perish they shall never perish perish what does this involve well

I think at the back of this statement is the danger to which each of his people God's people are open I mean he talks in the context here about a wolf coming and if the hireling runs away and doesn't protect the flock then the wolf tears the flock and kills some of them there are wolves around us as we walk the wilderness way as Christians there is the world with its fangs seeking to sink them into your life there is the flesh and there is the devil each of these like wolves seeking to tear and to destroy in the song of Solomon there is a reference there to catch us the foxes the little foxes that spoil our vines and one thing about the fox he can pretend that he's dead but he's not dead at all he can pretend he's dead so that an animal can come so close that when the fox realises the animal is close enough for him to attack he turns upon him and kills the animal and sin is like that and

Satan works like that it's as if Satan says there's no harm in that sin or in that particular lifestyle but you see although it seems dormant and asleep given the opportunity such a sin and such a situation can very quickly rise to destroy your life to destroy your life but the thing is the Lord here says they shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand you see he's saying they are my sheep I received them in covenant bonds before the world was created I saw them for what they were and I saw their need and their need was dire and they were lost and perishing but

I undertook to come and save them and I finished the work in their room and in their stead and I said it is finished and now he says whatever or whoever will try and pluck them from my hand I will not allow it because they are mine by right and however the devil may try and put them off the straight and narrow road he will never ever pluck them out of my hand never it's not a comfort to the people of God and then he says my father who gave them to me is greater than all no man is able to pluck them out of my father's hand what wonderful security the people of God have maybe you're here this morning looking with foreboding into the future wondering what this particular situation holds for you or how that's going to work out well if the good shepherd is walking on ahead of you and you are following him by faith and in obedience take heart because he will not allow any of us who trust in him to perish nor any man pluck them out of his hand the

Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of the majesty on high he will throughout eternity feed his people and lead them unto living fountains of water and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes the good shepherd undertakes to lead us through this world and in eternity he will not tire in leading us into living fountains of water where we shall see more of his glory and experience more and more of his love and know more and more of his peace world without end come to Jesus today he receives sinners and eats with them let us pray help us this morning to know what it is to have the voice of

[42 : 13] Jesus Christ the good shepherd addressing us in the depths of our soul and assuring us that he is ours and that we are his we thank you Lord for the glorious work of salvation and give us to have more and more understanding of it for ourselves and give us to see more and more of the beauty of our saviour who is able to do in us and for us exceeding abundantly above what we are able to ask or even think bless us as we sing your praise in conclusion and forgive our sins in Jesus name and for his sake amen we'll now sing to his praise from the 23rd psalm psalm 23 the

Lord's my shepherd I'll not want he makes me down to lie in pastures green he leadeth me the quiet waters by my soul he doth restore again and me to walk doth make within the path of righteousness even for his own name's sake yea though I walk in death's dark vale yet will I fear none ill for thou art with me and thy rod and staff may comfort still my table thou hast furnished in presence of my foes my head thou dost with oil anoint and my cup overflows goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me and in God's house forever more my dwelling place shall be we'll sing the whole of the psalm psalm 23 to God's praise the Lord's my shepherd wherency in heavy in

He leadeth me the quiet waters by my soul.

He doth restore again on me to walk away within the hands of righteousness.

Heal for his own name's sake. Ye, though I walk in death's God's grave, yet will I fear not ill, for thou art with me.

[45 : 53] And thy road has to be come for sale.

My table has first been stirred. In dresses of my clothes, my head that passed with oil and oil, my mind that both are full.

Goodness and mercy of my life, shall surely follow me.

And in God's house forevermore, my way it shall be.

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest upon and abide with you all, now and forevermore.

[47 : 32] Amen.