

The good shepherd

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[0 : 01] Well, if we come back to the portion of scripture, we read in the Gospel of John, and again we look at verses 27 to 29.

Gospel of John, chapter 10, verse 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.

Well, aware of the fact that we've come to the end of your communion weekend, and you'll be tired, and I hope that you'll be able to bear with me just for these few moments as we come to look at the security of the Christian and those who put their trust in the Good Shepherd of John, chapter 10.

The Gospel of John is a privilege to preach from, as all, passages in scripture, but for the fact of that John is giving us signs of who the Lord Jesus Christ is, giving the identity of Jesus, and he speaks of that in chapter 20 and verse 30, where he says this, and many other signs truly do Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you might have life through his name. This is his purpose for writing the Gospel. It is so that we might see and understand that he is God's Son, and by doing so, putting our trust in him, and having life in the name of Jesus.

Now, Jesus was, as we put in this chapter into context, was in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles, around about chapter 8. And he was there, and he was discussing with the Pharisees, back and forth, and they were arguing with him, and he was stating the scripture, telling them the truth, but yet they would not believe in Jesus. In chapter 9, we see how Jesus cured a man that was blind from birth. And when the Pharisees saw this man that Jesus cured, they really tried to get to Jesus through this man. And because the man didn't play ball with them, what they did with him was to throw him out of the synagogue. They unsynagogued him. And if you know the story, you'll know the story, obviously. Remember when his parents were asked about their son, how he was, how he got his thanks.

Remember what they said? We don't know. And the reason they did that, because they were scared themselves of being thrown out of the synagogue. But yet they threw him out. The Pharisees threw him out.

And what is interesting about chapter 9 is, in verse 35, it says that when Jesus found him. Now you can imagine a cloud that would have been in Jerusalem. It was the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. People would have been there from all over, but yet Jesus went looking for this man. And in that context, he speaks about false shepherds in chapter 10. Now that is a prophecy of what we have in Ezekiel chapter 34, where it speaks there of false shepherds being in Israel. And the problem was that the Pharisees were really looking after themselves. What they were doing were building ivory towers of their own self-glorification. And they didn't care about anyone. And a perfect example of that is how they dealt with the man that Jesus cured of his blindness. They threw him out of the synagogue. Now, this is what

[4 : 09] Jesus is writing about in chapter 10, that there were false shepherds in Israel. They didn't care for the people. But what he says in chapter 10 and in verse 14, he said, I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

Here Jesus gives the identification of himself, of who he is. He is the false shepherd spoken of by Ezekiel, but I am the good shepherd. The definite article is used, I am the good shepherd. But more than that, notice what he says, I am the good shepherd. Now that identifies him as God. Remember when Moses was at the burning bush, and he asked God, who will I tell the people sent me to take them out of Egypt? And God said to him, tell them, I am the good shepherd. And I sent you. So here again, Jesus is given his identification of who he is to the people.

He says he's the good shepherd, and he says that he's identifying himself as God. Now we see in verse 21, that there's a division, verses 19 down to 21, there was a division therefore among the Jews.

For these saints, and many of them said, he hath a devil and his mud. Why hear ye him? Others said, these are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? So there's a division among the people. Some are saying, don't listen to him, he's of the devil. But yet there are others, and you feel that the words of Jesus are starting to penetrate their hearts.

Because they are asking the question, could a devil do this? Now what is interesting is this, when we start to hear the voice of the shepherd, we begin to question things. We come with an open mind, and we say, I wonder if what he is saying is true. And I believe there were people there who were beginning to see the good shepherd, and to hear the good shepherd for the first time. And then we come to verse 22 in chapter 10, and it was at Jerusalem, the feast of the dedication. Now this is a feast that took place around about December time. It happens, coincides around about our own Christmas time. But the thing is, in chapter, up from chapter 8 up until verse 21 of chapter 10, that was a period where Jesus was in Jerusalem at the feast of

Tabernacles. So there seems to be a time period between verse 21 and verse 22, because these two feasts are at different times. The feast of Tabernacles was around about October, so there's September, October, October. So there could have been a two-month period between these two verses. But what is interesting about the fact of this is the fact that Jesus is in Jerusalem at the feast of dedication.

[7 : 28] What do we know about the feast of dedication? Well, it is not a feast that was set up by God in the Old Testament. But yet, Jesus felt it important to be at the feast. Now that gives us pointers as well. There could be things, festivals, in our own culture, that we could use for the advantage of the Gospel. And I believe this because there would have been a crowd in Jerusalem, and this was an opportunity for Jesus to tell them about the Gospel of God, and he was there at the festival. Although it wasn't a recognized festival by God in the Old Testament.

What do we know about this festival? Well, the Jews call it Hanukkah. And it took place, it took place, they started celebrating this festival from 164 BC.

There was a man called Epiphanes, who was a Syrian. He was the ruler of Syria. He went down to Egypt, and he had a great victory in Egypt. But he was pushed out by the Romans.

And on his way back to Syria, this is what historians tell us, on his way back, you see, Palestine was under the rule of Syria at the time. And he was so blessed by what the Romans did to him, that he came to Jerusalem, and he slaughtered many men, women, and children. But not only that, he went into the temple, and he took and stole some of the treasure that was in the temple.

But to show contempt to God, he sacrificed a pig on the altar. Now you can imagine how the Jews felt about that. How they would have felt because the pig was an unclean animal, and here was this man full of contempt to do such a thing in the temple of God.

[9 : 33] Now the man's name was Antichus. His first name was Antichus, and he gave himself the name Epiphanes. Now the word, the name Epiphanes, means the Great One.

He called himself the Great One. Now that's quite a common thing for people to think highly of themselves. We still have it in the wrong day, where people think highly of themselves.

But here was this man, he simply called himself, me the Great One. But it's interesting that the Jews called him something else. They called him Antichus Epiphanes, which means me the madman.

They played on his word, on his name. But what is interesting is this, there was a man called Judas Maccabees, and he had loads of brothers. And he started off a revolt against this man, this Syrian. And after time, there was a huge revolution in the country. They won Jerusalem back, and they won the temple back.

And they pushed out Epiphanes from Jerusalem. And that is why the Jews celebrate Hanukkah until this day.

[10 : 51] They do so because the temple was restored. The temple was cleansed. It was all the profane things and the polluted things were thrown out.

And all the good things, the new altar was purified, and the robes and the utensils were brought in and back into use. That is what's being celebrated. And that is what Jesus is at, at this time in Jerusalem.

But notice what it says. It was winter. Now, we know it was winter. Winter time in Israel, they tell us that it is the rainy season.

And it tells us here that he is in Solomon's porch. Solomon's porch is like we can picture a lean-to that goes on to the edge of the building.

With high columns of 40 feet high. And what took place was that people in the winter used to walk in that place. And they would do so meditating. But also rabbis would be there with their students.

[11:58] So you can imagine that Jesus was there with his disciples as they questioned and spoke to him. But notice what happened in verse 24. Then came the Jews round about him and said unto him, how long does thou make us to doubt?

What is happening here? Well, in the original language, it tells us that they encircled him so that he couldn't get away. And they are asking him. And they are asking him the question, how long are you going to keep us in suspense?

If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. And can't you see what they are doing here? They are just simply putting the blame on Jesus. And they are saying, the reason that we don't believe in you is you have fought.

Because you haven't told us plainly. I wonder if there is anyone in here tonight. And that is what they are saying. I don't believe in you Jesus because it is your fault.

You are making everything so complicated. I just can't understand it. There are so many things. I don't understand. The Jews were blaming Jesus for their unbelief.

[13:12] But notice what Jesus says to them. Jesus answered them in verse 25. I told you, and you believe not the words that I do in my Father's name.

They bear witness of me. Jesus didn't tell them outright that he was the Messiah. But there were many signs, many things that they saw to show that he was the Messiah.

But they didn't believe it. But notice he says them again in verse 26. But you do not believe. You believe not. Because you are not my sheep.

You know, there's a danger of unbelief, isn't there? That it blinds us to the fact that no matter, no matter what we hear, we are just not going to listen to the gospel.

We have bled our minds out. We come out. We do our religious bit. We go home. And that is it. But we are not going to allow it to penetrate our hearts.

[14:18] It is because of the unbelief of our hearts. Well, Jesus himself spoke about how we are enslaved in the things of this world. Where he said in Luke chapter 16, 31, they will not repent even if one should rise from the dead.

So that tells us that something needs to happen in our heart. Something needs to happen in our heart. Someone has to instigate something in the heart of the sinner.

And that is where God comes. God begins the good work in us. Notice verse 26, what it says. But ye believe not because you are not of my sheep.

Notice it doesn't say you are not because you are not my sheep. You believe not. It is because we are not his sheep.

That is why we don't believe. So how can we become his sheep? How can we become sheep? Well, we can't.

[15:26] Unless God instigates that. Now, there's two ways of thinking about God. You might be the cynic and saying, I'm not so thin. There is no way that I can become a Christian.

I'm just as well going home. I'm just waiting till the time that God will come and make me the sheep. And then I'll believe. Well, there's some folk who do think like that.

But you would think, if you realize tonight of your own helplessness, you are without hope in God. So I would say we should press the panic button.

I would say we need to do something about this. But I'm lost. I'm lost without Christ. So what do we do? We get on our knees and we plead with them.

Please, Lord, make me one of your sheep. Make me one of your sheep. And if you're lost tonight, this is what we ought to do so that he might bring us to himself.

[16:32] We are lost apart from Jesus Christ. So we ought to pray that he would not abandon us and to leave us in that state. Are you willing to do that if you haven't done it yet?

Well, there's an encouragement here for those who are his sheep tonight. My sheep hear my voice in verse 27. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

My sheep hear my voice. Do you know this verse speaks of total dependence upon the shepherd? Those of you who are shepherds on your troughs, you know that your sheep will not survive without you.

Yeah, they might survive the summer, but there's going to come a time when they're going to need their shepherd and there's total dependence from the sheep on the shepherd.

And that is the way it is with us and Jesus. And it speaks of a close relationship that exists between the shepherd and the sheep, between Jesus and his own children.

[17 : 48] And the point is this, when you think of who you are, first of all, you are a gift from the Father to the Son. Remember what John said in chapter 6 and verse 37, All that the Father gives to me will come to me.

And him that comes to me, I will in no wise toss out. You are a gift from the Father to the Son. But secondly, you have been purchased.

And you have been purchased with a high price. It took Jesus' day, that you commemorated yesterday here, it took his day for you to be purchased, to be bought out of the marketplace, and to be called his sheep.

And in that sense, you are his by calling, and you are his by choice. Now the question is this, did God love me and love you because there's something lovable about you?

Is that the reason that God chose you? Do you know sometimes we categorize people. Did you ever say about someone, well, do you know that person would make a good Christian?

[19 : 08] And isn't it amazing that people sometimes that God does make Christians? We're kind of shocked. We're taking it back. And do you know what is interesting? When the Gospel, first of all, came to Europe, and Paul, remember, it was Paul that took it there, and you know Paul was a Pharisee one time, and as a Pharisee every morning, Paul used to get up, and he used to pray this prayer, I thank you, God, that I am not a woman, that I am not a slave, and that I am not a Gentile.

How did God start the church in Europe? He started it with a woman, with a slave, and with a Gentile. And it's as if saying to Paul, Paul, I just want you to sit back for a moment, and consider how I'm going to build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

I want you to be honest to it, but it is me that's going to build the church. Was it something in you and I that God saw to make us lovable?

Well, think of it this way. Think of those of you who are married, and if your wife asked you when you were young, and she said to you, why do you love me?

And if you said to her, when you were 26, 27, well, I love you because you're beautiful. Don't you think that an element of doubt could be in the wife's mind, and she might say, what happened when I was 65 or 70, and I'm not beautiful anymore?

[20 : 57] Does that mean that he won't love me again? There could be an element of doubt. And you know, I was saying to our own folk, yeah, a long time ago, imagine if my wife had said to me, Kenny, I love you because of your curse.

Well, I would be in a bad state today if her love to me was because of that. Why does God love us?

Well, it is just simply this. I love you because I love you. I love you because I love you.

And that is all we need to know. That is enough for us to cling on to that. That is how he loves us. My sheep hear my voice.

When the shepherd speaks, we recognize his voice. Those of you who are his sheep, do you remember the first time you heard that voice?

[22 : 01] Isn't it amazing that it sounded familiar? I wonder why that is. Why is the shepherd's voice familiar to you?

Is it that maybe you were made in his likeness? Is it because that God believed in us his own spirit at one time, but we lost it?

But yet there are still traits of that in every one of us. And when we hear that voice, it is a familiar voice. Do you remember young Samuel when he was taken to Eli by his mother?

And for the first time, when he heard God speak, it's interesting, it was a familiar voice to him. He thought it was Eli, someone he knew.

But Eli knew, and he said, you go back. It is God that's speaking to you. Have you heard the voice of the shepherd speak to you?

[23 : 05] We heard it somewhere before. I know your voice. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them. He says, I know them.

This is not a superficial knowledge. This is a special knowledge. That he knows you intimately. That is how he knows you.

Last evening, we were looking at how Judas came and kissed the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane. He kissed him because he knew him.

A kiss was an intimate sign of friends. But you know what is interesting? That on the day of judgment, what Jesus is going to say to Judas, Judas depart from me.

I never knew you. I never knew you. What does Jesus mean by that? He means that I didn't know you specially. It wasn't this special knowledge that I have of my own sheep.

[24 : 13] That is not the knowledge I have of you. How sad it would be that for years that we came to church, and yes, of course, we know the Savior, but do we know him intimately?

And imagine the fact if he was going to tell us, yes, for years I went to church in point, but depart from me, I never knew you.

How sad would that be? Do you know this shepherd intimately? my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and then it tells us that they follow me.

What does that tell us? Well, it means that we have a new lifestyle. They follow me. Isn't that what we say in the Gaelic language when someone in our own culture starts coming, they're out following for the first time, at the Toshah of Elyehti.

Who are they following? Of course, they are following. the shepherd. They have heard his steps, and they begin to follow him. There's a new obedience in their lives, and they do what he commands.

[25 : 25] But what is interesting is this, it is the hunger he puts in our hearts. You know it's wonderful when we are soaked under the gospel, and I believe you folk have the privilege of being soaked under the gospel, Sabbath after Sabbath.

And by doing so, isn't it amazing how after being filled in a service, you then can't wait for the evening.

In the filling, he is emptying you because of the fact that you are following him. this is what it means to follow our Savior.

He gives us this filling of himself that makes us desire more and more. We can never, ever be satisfied. But the point is this in regards to following the shepherd.

Do we always listen to his voice? Well, to our shame, we don't. we get sidetracked, we get pulled away, and before we know it, we are just simply steeped in this world.

[26 : 34] And we have lost sight of our shepherd. Isn't it so true, so often, of how sheep, they go away and they fall into a ditch or whatever because they drift away.

But if they're always with the shepherd, they're in his will, then he's able to look after them. But as when we take our deed to, that is when it is dangerous for us to be led there.

But the true shepherd will come looking after his own sheep. Didn't he leave the night in night? And he came and found the lost sheep and he put him on his shoulders to go home and rejoice to say, but I have found him again.

What a wonderful shepherd we have to know that this is our saviour. Although we might drift away, he will never leave nor forsake us.

But then finally we see how he encourages us by giving us things. By giving us gifts. And we see that first of all in verse 28.

[27 : 41] And I give unto them eternal life. I give unto them eternal life. Do you know that was stated in the present indicative text which says, I keep on giving to them eternal life.

Do you know eternal life is more than quantity? We know that eternal life means it's going to go on forever. It is more than that. It is abundant quality.

It is the quality of life that you know about. before you were in your darkness. You were dead in your trespasses and sins. But now you've been given this life.

God's life in me. And that is eternal life that will never end. It is God's kind of life for you.

And you know, it's interesting, we had a young convert in our house last evening. And she said this, do you know she says, for the past two weeks has been the most important and the best weeks of my life.

[28 : 53] And this lady had a tough life. And she said, I wouldn't swap these two weeks for anything in the whole world because of what it meant to her.

Eternal life was precious to God's own children. It is our life that goes on and he keeps on giving us. But then notice it says in verse 28, and they shall never perish.

They shall never perish. Do you know that the Greek text here is very strong? What it literally says is this, they shall not ever perish forever.

They shall not ever perish forever. So you could say it like this, I give to them life forever and they shall never perish forever.

That is what the shepherd is saying to his own. Isn't that amazing? Now we live in a world where there's so much perishing going on around about us.

[30 : 02] Every year we see it in autumn time where things down. God reminded us that this is what this kingdom of the world will give us. Nothing but decay and death.

But he promises his own that they will never, ever perish. That is the promise and the security of being one of his sheep.

We shall never perish in this life and it means also that we are going to survive death. Isn't that amazing? When he was taken to the gallows two or three months before the war ended in Germany and he was one who stood against the Nazis and as the commandant was putting him he was naked stripped naked before the gallows and the commandant said to him Dietrich Bonhoeffer this is the end to which he said no.

No, it was the end of the beginning. But the beginning of the end which is to last for all eternity that man stood firm for his saviour and he was able to say to his enemies this is not the end.

Do you know that tonight? well his sheep know that and they will never ever perish. Do you want more evidence in the fact that you won't perish?

[31 : 42] Let's go back then to verse 14 and 15. I am the good shepherd and know my sheep and am known of mine as the father knoweth me even so know I the father and I lay down my life for the sheep.

What is he talking about? he is talking about the sacrificial atonement that took place at Talbot that you remembered yesterday and gave thanks for all our guilt was placed on him and because of that we will not be forsaken.

That is why we thank my God my God why have you forsaken me? Is there an answer to that question?

Was it a rhetorical question? No it wasn't. God didn't answer it then because he knew that some of you one day were going to try please do not forsake me and he can't.

Do you know why? Because he dealt with your son and he will never ever forsake you. Never. You will never ever perish.

[33 : 03] That is the reason the nature of the atonement is the fundamental reason that you and I will never perish. But then there is this your life will be guarded it will be kept and it will be protected by whom by two incomparable persons.

Look at the end of verse 28 Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand as Jesus and then my father which gave them me is greater than all and no one is able to pluck them out of my father's hand.

Paul put it this way in Colossians 3 he put these things together but he said your life is hid with Christ in God. Imagine if someone asked you tonight where are you where are you placed or I am hid in Christ I am in Christ not only that but also in the father's you you you you see no one is able to snatch you out of the son's hand but there's the devil surety of the godhead where the father comes and he wraps his hand around that dead so that nobody can snatch you out you know the picture is that someone is trying to get to you trying to get to you who is that well the world flesh and the devil but the point is this you see you are a prized possession and he would do anything to mar the glory of god because he hates god and because you believe in god he hates you as well that is the picture he is snatching at you trying to snatch and pluck you out ah but you tell you try and get the effort back and they would not succeed to take you out of the firm dirt of

Jesus and his father they would not ever ever let you go there was one of the john browns i'm not sure which one one of the ministers years ago in the central belt in Scotland and he went to visit a godly woman on her death bed and he asked her a strange question the question was Mary haught if he said that god was going to let you go at the last minute and she said to him oh minister that will not come and he said to her but Mary what if he did it what if he did it and Mary fell ahead and she said this well minister she said I would only lose my soul but he would lose his honor now he would not have that would he if god promises something he would fulfill it and he would not lose his honor well

I hope you people who are enthused and enthused tonight to go forward in this world knowing that you are the untouchables because of grace but there are people out there that we have made untouchable because we have looked down upon them they are in their addiction and sin and we need to preach them tonight with the gospel because there's hope for them too you know it's interesting when you think of this whole chapter this is how I picture it when Jesus spoke to the people he spoke about a sheepfold and a porter being at the door the picture was that when these villages they had their own sheepfold and when the shepherds came at night they would put their sheep into the fold and they would hire a porter to watch them at night they themselves went home and slept the night and in the morning they would call their sheep out and the sheep would follow them and they would go out to grace him but then if they were too far away from the village what they used to do was temporary pens and that is why

[37 : 44] Jesus said they would make this with stone or with wood or mud or whatever and there was no gate on that and that is why Jesus in verse 7 says I am the door of the pen what the shepherd would do was he himself would sit on the gate at the gateway and the sheep could not get out but through him now the picture is I believe is Israel is the fold in the village and Jesus called them out of Israel and what he has then is his sheep that are following him and what he has out in the country is his own church and it is only those who are his who are there because he is the door into this pen but the point is this if this is Israel is there hope for us tonight as Gentiles well that is where verse 16 is important and other sheep I have which are not of this fold them also

I must bring and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold and one shepherd there's a glimmer of hope for you and I and we latch onto it we latch onto there's hope for the Gentiles to get into the fold of Jesus Christ but you know what is so wonderful about the picture of the shepherd and the sheep is what we see in verse 4 and when he put forth his own sheep he goes before them and the sheep follow him if we are in God's will he is always before us and do you think he is going to lead us into harm not at all he is going to lead you to safety or you might be on the edge of the cliff there might be storms there might be many things in your life and death might abandon you but he will never ever lead you where you would come to any harm because he himself always goes before you and I hope in the strength of that to know as you come again with your communion season as you go back into the world some of you have been out already today that you are not unwell but that you are a prized possession you have been bought with a price and he values you and not only as heaven looked down and you remembering his death until he comes not only did he say to his father father see how much they love me and you know how much I love them but not only that do you know what else he says about you oh I am proud of you

I am proud of you because you are this sheep and you have listened to his voice keep on listening to him and keep on following him and you will guarantee this point that he will eventually lead you home where he will be waiting for you you know I sometimes think the picture we have of him standing with Stephen coming home he couldn't remain seated he had to stand up because this was his prized possession you know the way we are when our own children our loved ones come home we hear them at the gate we don't stay sitting we get up and we run to the door and we throw our arms around him that's what is going to be right for us as he waits for us in the glory come good and faithful sound and inherit the kingdom that

I have prepared for him and you know what is so interesting is this he can't wait for us to go home father I will that those whom you have given me will be with me when I am why so that I may show them the glory the glory you know sometimes sometimes although we're so caught up with this world there are times that we can't wait just to see face to face amen let's pray

O loved one, in our night, that your love to me was wonderful, and that is true of your own sheep tonight, as we think of our good shepherd, our great shepherd, our chief shepherd, that your love to us is wonderful.

[43 : 29] Blessed Lord, we thank you for these few moments together, firmly cherished, and the beautiful take away our many sins, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.