

John 10:1-21

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[0 : 00] I'll hear you from John chapter 10, verses 1 through 21. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus again said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

All who come before me are thieves and robbers. But the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

[1 : 08] The thief comes only to steal, and kill and destroy. I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays his life down for the sheep.

He who is the hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf come in and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

He flees because he is a hired hand and hears nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me. Just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father, I lay my leg down for the sheep.

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

For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, and I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.

[2 : 09] This charge I have received from my Father. There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, He has a demon and is insane. Why listen to him?

Others said, These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of God? Thanks, Jordan.

This is the word of the Lord. Please pray with me. Heavenly Father, these are spiritual truths that can only be discerned to the mind that is instructed by the Holy Spirit.

And God, we need your Spirit to move in power through our minds, through our hearts, to rightly understand what you want to say to us today.

And you do want to say something to us today. It's not by accident that any of us are here this morning. It's not by accident that we're reading John 10 this morning. You are sovereignly orchestrating all of time and history, and you have brought us here for this word.

[3 : 15] So, Lord, would you help us to hear and to listen and to respond according to the power of your Spirit, for your glory. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

It's just going to work. It does. Well, good morning, church. My name is Mike. Some of the elders here at Shoreline. I'm so glad that you're here this morning. I see some faces I don't recognize, which I always love.

I always love meeting new people. So, I'd like to meet you after the service if I don't know you. I want us this morning, each of you, to picture in your mind the person in your life who you view as the best or one of the best leaders that you've ever known.

Okay? Take a minute. The best, because that's like a pretty high title, or one of the best leaders that you've ever known. Now, this could be a parent. This could be a mentor.

This could be a teacher or a professor, a coach, a supervisor or manager, a chief or department head or captain. Do you have that person in mind? Anybody? Give me some nods.

[4 : 17] Anybody have that person in mind? Okay. Josh does. Excellent. Now, I want you to consider what qualities did or does that person have that makes them such an exemplary leader?

Can you list out those qualities in your head? What was it about that person that you loved about them and you were delighted to be under their leadership? Do you have that in your mind? Okay, now, I want you to picture in your mind the person in your life who you view as maybe the worst leader that you've ever known.

Okay? The worst leader. Now, what qualities did that person have that made them such a poor leader? You should think about that. Don't do it too long.

Maybe pray for them before you move on. Now, if you had to pick between those two leaders that you just brought to mind, which leader would you pick? Stupid question, right?

Obvious question. We obviously want to be under a good leader, right? I mean, deep within the human heart, we long to be led by somebody who is courageous, right?

[5 : 31] Who's willing to do what's right in the face of opposition. We want to be led by somebody who is just and fair. We want to be led by somebody who is willing to take the time to get to know us, to find what makes us tick, what our interests are, what our joys are, what our fears are, right?

We want to be led by somebody who has our back, right? Who's going to go to bat for us, who defends us, who comes to our aid in times of need. We want to be led by somebody who will sacrifice for our benefit, right?

Does such a person even exist? I think our passage for today answers that question. So we find ourselves today listening in on a discourse or a monologue from the mouth of Jesus.

And as Jordan just read, we see here he employs the use of a sheep-shepherd metaphor. Now, in order for us to rightly understand this sheep-shepherd metaphor, we need two things.

We need some biblical context, and we need some cultural context for this image. I don't know about any of you all, but I'm not a shepherd. I don't have been. So there is a little bit of distance between me and what's going on in this passage.

[6 : 42] Now, the cultural context we're going to uncover as we walk through this text. But I want us to begin with some biblical context. Some biblical context. The sheep-shepherd metaphor is actually used all throughout the Old Testament.

So when Jesus is employing it here, his hearers aren't just thinking about, you know, like Joe, the local shepherd, and his flock of sheep. The hearers are thinking about the very rich biblical meaning.

And so I want to highlight a few passages. If you go to the back and bottom of the scriptures for sheep and shepherds, you can find a whole bunch more passages. What I want to do is take us to a few key passages to help us understand.

So, you know, the earliest example that we have of a shepherd is actually Abel, right? Adam and his son, Abel. Genesis 4, he is a keeper of the sheep. And then we fast forward, and so too is Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, as it was common to keep sheep in those days.

But then listen to this. Listen to how Jacob describes God in Genesis 48. He says this. The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day.

[7 : 53] So here Jacob, the patriarch Jacob, applies the metaphor of a shepherd to the Lord, right? Now fast forward to Numbers 27. Moses is nearing the end of his life, and he has been barred from entering the promised land, right?

And he asks for God to reveal to him who is the next leader of Israel going to be. And listen to this. It says, And then we see this sheep-shepherd metaphor, it's not just something that Israel uses. It is actually a common metaphor of the day in ancient Near East to use of leaders of a nation, of rulers. And then we see this metaphor gets developed throughout the Old Testament, especially through the Psalms and the prophets, right?

What's the most well-known psalm of all? If I know. Psalm 23, of course. And in Psalm 23, David is exulting in God as his shepherd. It says, The Lord is my shepherd, right?

I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness.

[9 : 27] For his name said, Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

What a glorious picture David paints for us. It's God as the shepherd. But then in the prophets, we see a dichotomy being developed between the shepherds of Israel, or kings and prophets and priests, and shepherds or a shepherd to come.

One who will look a lot like God, the true shepherd of Israel. Ezekiel 34 is one of those passages. We're going to quote it later. But so too is Jeremiah 23, which reads a little more succinctly, Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, declares the Lord.

Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people, you have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them.

Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the Lord.

[10 : 42] Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord.

God is declaring here that the supposed shepherds of Israel have proven themselves to be false, illegitimate shepherds who actually care nothing for the sheep.

But one day, he will send a true and legitimate shepherd to gather, to guide, to provide for, to protect his sheep. And the Old Testament, it ends with this note of both discord and expectation, right?

And the people of Israel are, they're waiting, they're longing for the fulfillment of these promises.

And then, after hundreds of years of silence, Jesus enters the scene, right?

So with that context in mind, what I want us to do here is see now. So with that in mind, we should be able to see much more clearly what Jesus is trying to say in John chapter 10.

[11 : 57] Now, a few weeks ago, we preached the before Abraham was, I am passage, right? We went until the very end to talk about that massive claim. But from the start, what I want to do is just name it. Like, what is the claim that Jesus is making?

And Jesus is saying that he himself is the true and legitimate shepherd foretold by the prophets, right? That's me, Jesus is saying. I am the promised and long-awaited Messiah who has come to redeem Israel, to lead her in love and in righteousness, and not only the Messiah, but God himself, right?

He is, God himself, the good and faithful shepherd of Israel who gathers, guides, provides for, and protects his sheep. And that there is the roadmap to where we're going next.

So we looked at context. We defined the claim that Jesus is making. And now, we're going to walk through this passage and look at the characteristics that Jesus is describing about himself as the good shepherd.

Tracking? Are you with me? Okay, so here's the first one. The good shepherd gathers his sheep.

The good shepherd gathers his sheep.

[13 : 13] We're going to look at verses 1 through 3. Let's read these. Jesus says, Okay, now here's some cultural context.

Jesus is describing here in these verses a morning shepherding scene. So it was common in those days for several flocks to be kept in one sheep pen or one enclosure, and it was guarded by a gatekeeper.

And in the morning, a shepherd would come to gather his own sheep through the pen and then lead them out to find pasture. The gatekeeper, of course, would recognize the shepherd as the true shepherd, allow him entrance into the sheepfold, and then the shepherd would call his sheep.

And they would actually oftentimes name each individual sheep. And as the shepherd spoke, or he might have a distinct sound, he'll have a distinct sound in his voice, or he might play a certain melody even, or have a certain call.

But either way, the sheep would recognize the voice of their shepherd as distinct from the other shepherds, and they would follow him out. Now if anyone attempted to get an entrance to the sheepfold by another means, then pass the gate itself, right past the gatekeeper.

[14 : 43] And clearly they were not the true and legitimate shepherd. They were thieves. They were robbers. And so we see here, Jesus is distinguishing himself from the thieves and robbers that have come before him.

He's distinguishing himself from the prior false, illegitimate shepherds of Israel. And he's not just talking about in generations past. Remember what happened just a week ago?

Jordan preaching from chapter 9. The blind man, right? You guys remember this story? The blind man who Jesus healed was kicked out of the synagogue. And that was significant.

That means he was expelled from the Jewish community itself by the Pharisees, right? They were the leaders of the people, the very ones charged with tending the flock of Israel. And Jesus finds that formerly blind man, right?

And he speaks to him. And the man recognizes his voice, and he follows him. So this monologue in chapter 10 is what immediately follows that scene in chapter 9.

[15 : 41] This is Jesus' commentary on what just played out right before this. The Pharisees have proven themselves to be false, illegitimate shepherds of Israel.

And Jesus has demonstrated that he and he alone is the true and legitimate shepherd. He's calling his sheep out of the flock of official Judaism. And he's gathering them into the fold of God and he's leading them out.

So I want us to consider this. This is a picture of intimacy, right? This is a picture of fellowship. He knows each individual sheep. He knows their names.

And he specifically calls them out, right? And this is what he did for the blind man. He lovingly, he intentionally, he specifically sought out that man who had been passed over his entire life, right? Who had been ignored his entire life. Who was just kicked out of the synagogue. Jesus healed him and called him to follow him, gathering him into the fold of God. And he's not only gathering Jews.

[16 : 43] Because look what Jesus says down in verse 16. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice.

So there will be one flock, one shepherd. Since Jesus' ascension back to heaven, right? And then the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the gospel has gone forward to the ends of the earth, right?

To the nations. The Gentiles, the nations. They too have been being gathered into the fold of God. That's who Jesus is talking about here. This too is the fulfillment of all sorts of Old Testament prophecy that we don't have time to go to today.

We are recipients today of God's shepherding, loving care because of this promise. He's going to gather sheep that aren't of the fold of Judaism.

Amen. Yeah, amen. So if you're a believer and you're in this room, I want you to consider the goodness and the kindness of God to have lovingly, intentionally, specifically sought you out, and to gather you in.

[17 : 54] Consider the intimacy and the fellowship with God that you, that you, that you are able to have because of His pursuing love, right? His redeeming grace.

He knows you. He knows everything about you and He loves you. He has made and He continues to make Himself known to you.

Later in the passage, Jesus says in verse 14, I know my own and my own know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. We have been invited into the loving and intimate fellowship of the trying God and that has existed from eternity past and a relationship of perfect love, of perfect fellowship, of perfect intimacy.

That's what we have been invited into. So we ought to just want to consider that and to give glory to God. as we got to do earlier today, we do it right now. We ought to give Him thanks and praise, right?

Gratitude and worship. That is a fitting response and that's exactly what happened with the blind man, right? Who said, Lord, I believe and He worships Him. This is one of the reasons I love hearing testimonies, right?

[19 : 08] We get to see how God is working specifically, intentionally for individual people and we got to just hear five testimonies over the last three weeks here in Shoreline, which was awesome.

I loved being to hear those testimonies and I got to hear another one this week from a local ministry leader. I got to hear how this man abandoned the faith when he joined the Navy and he was a self-proclaimed atheist and he told me about how God lovingly and intentionally and specifically

sought him out even using mundane things like pure water, having to get it to the right settings. If you're in the Navy, you know what I'm talking about, but I don't fully understand. He's used something like that to get his attention and wake him up and he calls himself and gathers him into his fold.

The good shepherd gathers the sheep and here's the next characteristic. The good shepherd guides the sheep. Guides the sheep.

The sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them and the sheep follow him for they know his voice.

[20 : 19] As strangers, they will not follow but they will flee from him for they do not know the voice of strangers. So here we see, Jesus, he's exposing the true identity of these supposed shepherds of Israel, right?

He's showing them to be counterfeit, to be strangers. The sheep do not follow him. But consider this picture here of leadership and of continued fellowship with the sheep that the true shepherd has.

The sheep know and follow his voice, right? The shepherd guides the sheep out of the sheepfold and he goes through them or he goes before them through the wilderness.

It doesn't say that explicitly here but that's what's happening. As the sheep are led out of the village with the shepherd in front, they're going through the wilderness and we're going to find out in the next verses the shepherd's leading them somewhere.

He's leading them to pasture, to green pasture. The language of leading them out and going before them reminds me of Israel's exodus from Egypt and her wanderings in the wilderness.

[21 : 18] And what happened? God physically led the nation of Israel by pillar of cloud and by pillar of fire by night. And Jesus is saying here that he too leads out his sheep.

He goes before them. He guides them along the path. I want to ask the disciples of Jesus, the followers of Jesus this morning, do you know that Jesus goes with you and before you?

Through all of life's journeys he's with you and goes before you. Even though I walk through the valley the shadow of death. I will fear no evil.

Why? For you are with me. Isaiah 43, Fear not for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine.

When you pass through the waters I will be with you and through the rivers they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through fire you shall not be burned and the flames shall not consume you for I am the Lord your God the Holy One of Israel your Savior.

[22 : 22] Now listen to how Paul expects God's nearness to impact the believer. Philippians 4 How many of you know this? The Lord is at hand. That's how it starts. Sometimes that gets cut off. I don't know why.

The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything but in everything like prayer and supplication and thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God in the peace of God which surpasses all understanding.

Peace that makes no sense. That's what we've been saying. Surpasses all understanding. It will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Jesus is with you. He goes before you.

He will not abandon or forsake you. He leads and He guides you no matter what no matter if the way is easy or hard. So let me ask you are you listening for are you listening to the voice of Jesus? Which voice is it that's dominating the inner life or the inner conversation that's going on in your mind and your thought life? Which voice is it? Church Jesus breathes life into us.

[23 : 30] Right? He raised us from the dead. He gathered us into the fold of God. We heard and followed His voice. Right? But we also know that along the journey of life we so often start following other voices.

Sometimes we deny or dismiss the voice of our shepherd. The way is too hard. So we just dismiss that voice out of our heads. Are you in that place right now? Where the way forward seems too difficult.

You know what Jesus is saying to you but you don't want to follow because it's just going to be too costly. Instead you choose to listen to other voices right?

Telling you to do easier things. You can always find other voices that will tell you to follow the easier path. Sometimes we don't deny or dismiss His voice but we just get distracted by other voices.

Right? This could be the voice of the news or media or of culture or simply be the voice of your unbridled thoughts. Right? Just letting them go free. Leading you down a path.

[24 : 33] In September you all graciously gave me a month off before starting this position full time. And for about a week in the middle of that I experienced some pretty significant discouragement. And I think that the primary reason is that I was allowing other voices to be penetrating my mind.

I wasn't listening to the voice of my shepherd. and I found myself in a discouraging place. Right? I was listening to the voice of the enemy. Are you sure you can trust God in this? Are you sure? Right? I was listening to the voice of my own flesh. Like are you sure you want to do this thing? Are you sure you want to give these things up? Is that really what you want? Like you're discouraged. But, by God's grace, over the following days, as I allowed the voice of my good shepherd to dispel those other voices and to actually hold my attention, that discouragement, it was replaced with peace, with the settled peace.

It was replaced with the understanding that I can actually walk forward in boldness and in confidence that I don't need to worry or fear. And it's not because of anything about me. It's because the good shepherd is with me and he goes before me and he has promised to do so for the rest of my life.

[25 : 47] And on into eternity, but we're going to get there. The good shepherd gathers his sheep, he guides his sheep. Now, as a brief aside, I want us to consider the kindness and the patience of Jesus in this interaction with the Pharisees.

Verse 6, this figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So here we have evidence of the Pharisees continuing blindness to the truth, which we looked at last week.

And that's been thoroughly demonstrated in the Gospel of John so far. And Jesus made it very explicit at the end of chapter 9. They should understand this figure of speech. They should get it, but they've been blinded by their pride and their hard heartedness.

So Jesus, in his patience and his kindness, he continues to develop this figure of speech, and he makes its meaning explicit. Let's read verses 7-10 there. So again Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

[26 : 59] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. a good shepherd provides for his sheep.

Provides for his sheep. Now Jim Gangar has rattled off a bunch of these I am statements. Jesus makes seven I am statements in the Gospel of John. We've covered two of them so far.

In chapter 6 Jesus said, I am the bread of life. Chapter 8 he said, I am the light of the world. And here now he's declaring, I am the door of the sheep.

And in the very next verse he's going to say, I am the good shepherd. So some more cultural context. You may have noticed that the scene has shifted a little bit. I actually didn't notice the first time.

I thought it was all one scene. But I needed some help. Jesus is developing the sheep shepherd metaphor. Now before we were in the village in the sheep pen. The shepherd is gathering piled rocks and they put thorns around the top to protect the sheep from wild animals.

[28 : 13] And then the shepherd himself would sleep in the entrance to that enclosure providing a door. And there in the open pasture with the shepherd standing by, the sheep were free to pass in and out of the sheep pen.

They could go out and graze in the field. What would find there? Nourishment for their bodies or they would come and rest in the pen and they would find security and comfort and that was the abundant life for a sheep.

That was the life. And that here, that's the picture that Jesus is giving to us. Jesus the true shepherd, the kind of life that he provides for his followers.

The illegitimate shepherds who came before, they brought only destruction and that God's abundant provision is secure.

In and through Jesus there is freedom, there is nourishment, there is security, there is peace, there is comfort, and these things, this abundant life, it is secured for his followers eternally.

[29 : 22] I mentioned Ezekiel 34 before. I want to read some words from that chapter. This is Ezekiel prophesying over Israel while she is in exile in Babylon.

Therefore he says, For thus says the Lord God, Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and will bring them into their own land.

There they shall lie down in good grazing land. And a rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep and I myself will make them lie down declares the Lord God.

We're seeing this next part before. I will seek the lost and I will bring back the strayed and I will bind up the injured and I will strengthen the weak and I will set up over them one shepherd my servant! Prince among them I am the Lord I have spoken friends this passage in Ezekiel 34 it is fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ Jesus Christ came into this world to gather sheep into the family and fold of God to guide them with his presence and with his voice and then to provide for them abundant life are you experiencing the abundant life that Jesus came to provide now let me be clear Jesus is not talking about health and wealth this is not the prosperity gospel if you just give your life to Jesus everything will be easy all of your relationships will be fixed you'll get the house and the car and the career that you always wanted that is a gross distortion of the truth what Jesus secures for us is so much better than that any worldly temporal thing that you could get this is so much better the abundant life that

[31 : 28] Jesus secures for us now is a life of spiritual abundance that is possible in the midst of any circumstance life in the midst of the most difficult tragedies the most painful trials it is a life of intimate fellowship with the trying God in which we are fully known and fully loved by him it's a life of unquenchable joy of inexplicable peace that's the abundant life that Jesus came to provide and I hope that you are experiencing that kind of life if you're a believer and you're not experiencing the abundant life I just want to ask could there be unconfessed sin in your life we know that sin separates us it does in an ultimate sense it also does in a daily sense of communion and fellowship with the Lord it separates us from the Lord if there's unconfessed sin in your life it surely will have a negative impact on your walk with the

Lord in John 15 we're going to talk about the vine and the branches we remain connected to Christ abide in me there you will bear much fruit this is our unconfessed sin or could it be that you're allowing distractions we talked about earlier to suck up all your time so there's none left for the Lord we're very busy people especially in New England we get distracted really easily and it just sucks up all of our time I recently read this quote from a book entitled enjoying intimacy with God it would seem that admission to the inner circle of deepening intimacy with God is the outcome of deep desire!

Only those who count such intimacy a prize worth sacrificing anything else for are likely to attain it if other intimacies are more desirable to us we will not gain entry to that circle saints a life of glorious abundance is available to you in Christ so pursue it go after it and it will be well worth any sacrifice that you have to make to pursue that life the good shepherd provides for his sheep finally the good shepherd protects his sheep protects them verse 11 I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep he who is a hired hand and not a shepherd who does not own the sheep sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees and the wolf snatches them and scatters them he pleads because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep

I am the good shepherd I know my own and my own know me just as the father knows me and I know the father and I lay down my life with sheep so here the illegitimate shepherd's lack of care for the sheep and their pursuit of selfish gain is demonstrated all the more we've already seen it but even more and so too though is the selflessness of the good shepherd sheep are very vulnerable creatures helpless they can't do anything they can't protect themselves at all they can like fall under their back and then they can't get up but they'll actually die if they fall on their back because they can't get themselves back right side up they need a protector they need somebody who's going to stand and defend them or else they're doomed to be ravaged by predators!

the sheep just like these hired hands that Jesus is talking about so back to Ezekiel 34 I want you to hear the indictment of the Lord against the false shepherds of Israel ah shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves should not shepherds feed the sheep the weak you have not strengthened the sick you have not healed the injured you have not bound up the strayed!

[36 : 00] you have not brought back the lost you have not sought and with force and harshness you have ruled them so they were scattered because there was no shepherd and they became food for all the wild beasts my sheep were scattered they wandered over all the mountains and on every

high hill my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth with none the search or seek them now John 10 is primarily about Christ about Jesus and how he is the good shepherd who is the fulfillment of all the hopes and dreams of the old testament but there is also a word here for under shepherds for those of us for whom people have been placed under our care now leaders of the church are especially in view here but the application it can rightly be extended outward especially to husbands and to parents God has called us under shepherds God has called us not to wield our authority for self gain but to sacrificially love and lead our sheep like

Christ if we misuse mistreat or abuse the sheep under our care there will be a reckoning God holds his shepherds accountable and if you're here this morning and that's you I want to implore you to repent and turn from that destructive sin expose what's hidden in darkness and don't let it keep festering and growing in the shadows and you also need to know there is forgiveness for sin at the foot of the cross and there is power to change and the power of the spirit now if you're here and you've been the subject of some shepherd's mistreatment or abuse I first just want to say that I am so sorry and I lament you've had to endure such evil if you're not safe get help don't continue subjecting yourself to it get help and I also want to say that if that's you you need to know that you are so valuable in

God's eyes he has made you with dignity and with worth and with honor and as such you deserve to be treated with love and kindness and respect and you need to know and all of us need to know this morning that Jesus is a far superior shepherd!

and he is completely unlike those illegitimate shepherds of Israel that God condemns in Ezekiel 34 he is the true shepherd he is the good shepherd who puts himself in harm's way for the sake of the sheep even as he says here laying down his life for the sheep now that is incredible right there is a shepherd who willingly offers up his own life for the well!

And there's even more verse 17 Jesus says for this reason the father loves me because I laid down my life that I may take it up again no one takes it from me but I lay it down in my own accord I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again this charge I receive!

[39 : 32] from my father who has authority over life and death? God Jesus yes God has authority over life and death right only God has the kind of authority that Jesus is speaking about and Jesus is saying yeah that's the kind of authority that I have the kind of authority that God has that's the kind of authority that I have this is another massive claim to divinity right Jesus is claiming to be God himself and because Jesus is God nobody can take his life from him he is going to tell!

Pilate under trial look you would have no authority if it weren't given you from above can imagine that the guy in charge of the land like under the Roman empire Jesus said yeah you wouldn't have any authority if my father didn't give it to you because he's in control nobody can take Jesus life from him and he's able to take it up again he's able to take his life he lays it down and he takes it back up and but I want us to consider the boundless love of Jesus the good shepherd he doesn't just stand between the predator and the sheep and risk his life he willingly lays it down of his own accord and he does that why why does he do that because he loves the sheep he loves them can you even conceive a greater love than this Jesus as we know

Jesus is speaking about the sacrifice that he was soon going to make on the cross of Calvary on which he would lay down his life to rescue mankind from our great enemies sin and death by laying down his life to redeem us from the grasp of sin what did he do he secured for us a place and life of abundance in the family and the fold of God and because he took off his life again he proved that he was God and that he is able to secure that abundant life forever he's calling us to follow him into that life of abundance so we have a choice to make right look at the context the claim the characteristics and we have choice will we follow or not will you follow or not it's a choice that you have to make the

Jews listening to Jesus were divided and answering his question there was again a division among the Jews because of these words many of them said he has a demon and is insane why listen to him others said these are not the words of one who is oppressed but Jesus like his grandiose claim and the claims we've seen in the book of John they stirred up controversy right they stirred up division among the Jews and they continue stirring up division today because we have to decide you have to decide what to do with the person of Jesus Christ if you haven't I've been speaking to believers most of this time but if you're here today and you haven't chosen to follow Jesus he is inviting you today to follow him this is the invitation to leave the sheepfold of your worldly pleasures and comforts and values and to gather with his blood to submit to his loving and good leadership

and faith and trust now before you do that know that there's a cost your life may not get easier it might get harder it might lead to opposition and to difficulties but also know that Jesus the pre-existent God of the universe the king of kings and the lord of lords he paid the ultimate cost he laid down his life willingly of his own accord in order to rescue your soul from the greatest enemy of sin and death right and to secure for you a life of abundance soul satisfying abundance did that for you and it's a life in which you increasingly get to enjoy all of the spiritual blessings of being part of the family and the fold of God and this abundance gives way to a greater abundance that we can barely even begin to imagine in glory and Paul says in Ephesians 2 he says that the God who is rich in mercy has raised us up with Christ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in

[44 : 50] Christ Jesus what will you decide this morning will you follow! will you follow! that exemplary leader that you called to mind at the start of this sermon remember that person?

how do they compare to Jesus the good shepherd the good shepherd gathers his sheep he knows them he calls them by name he blesses them with the intimacy of his presence and his fellowship the good shepherd guides his sheep he goes before them he leads them through the journey no matter what comes and he leads them into abundance!

he provides for his sheep giving them freedom and peace and security guaranteed for them because he also protects his sheep doing so at the cost of his own life which he lays down willingly to shield them from the enemy and to secure God's abundant provision for them forevermore right? How does that exemplary leader compare to Jesus the good shepherd? I answered the previous question I answered this one they don't they don't compare friends there is no greater leader than Jesus he is the good shepherd that Israel is longing for he's the one that our hearts long for and he will lead us into a life of glorious abundance now and forever more if we would but follow him please pray with me Father will you just worship you for who you are Jesus we worship you for who you are the perfect leader the good shepherd God you are gathering sheep into your fold because of your great love for us but

I pray that you would gather more even this morning God I pray if there are sheep in the fold who are not experiencing the life of abundance that you promised to give God I pray that you would show them why let us trust you let us abandon all else be willing to sacrifice other intimacies to have the greatest intimacy with you we praise you Lord for being who you are to change us this morning in Christ name we pray amen so in the time remaining we're going to move to a