

1 John 3:19-4:6

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Preacher: Right Reverend Dan Gifford

[0 : 00] As we stand, let us pray together. Heavenly Father, on this day of Pentecost,! we give you thanks for the gift of your Holy Spirit.! We thank you that by your Holy Spirit, this word that we have read and will hear preached that we will be faithful witnesses of Jesus into the world.

For his glory, we pray. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. Well, what a joy it is to be with you today on a very hot day.

And I just noticed I have a run sheet, and it tells me exactly how many minutes I'm supposed to preach. I won't tell you what that number is, though.

It is a really great honor to be able to be preaching and ordaining Ryan and Jacob as well.

They are people that I am just delighted have come into our diocese and will be serving here at this church, working in all kinds of ways, but also Ryan, especially with young people, and Jacob with a little bit older people and catechism.

[1 : 31] We had a marvelous confirmation this morning where some of those that he was teaching at this evening service were confirmed and gave their testimony. What an encouragement and inspiration that was to hear.

And the thing that I am grateful for, for you both, Ryan and Jacob, is that you have done what Jesus has promised a reward for.

You have left home and you've left family to come here and to bless us with the ministry of the gospel in obedience to his will.

And that's a very good place to start. It's not easy. But as we have been talking about at the beginning of this service, you will be doing it in the power of the Holy Spirit that we celebrate today on this day of Pentecost.

That was very weighty stuff that you heard Aaron talking about, that ministry was, and it's true. It would have been even weightier if he had read it in German, in the original.

[2 : 34] And I would have loved to have heard a New Zealand accent with German from Aaron. Beautiful, beautiful. A heavenly language. And you are going to be hearing that all through this service, is how weighty this is.

This responsibility, the task, the importance in the world. But also, it is done, all of this exhortation is done in the day of Pentecost, as Bishop Mike was talking about.

It is in his power. It is yoked to the Lord Jesus that we are doing this. And even though that burden is something that is weighty, in the grace of Jesus, he makes it light.

And may that be the gift of grace in your ministries. I want to look at John 10, in thinking about this kind of weightiness of what we are being called to here.

If you can all turn to John 10, that would be very helpful, 1 through 16. And I am going to read, go to the next verse 17 in here as well. So it would be really helpful if you have it open.

[3 : 45] And they are words that have to do, of course, with Jesus being the shepherd. And this Bible reading has been chosen for at least 463 years in that 1662 prayer book, because it speaks of Jesus the shepherd.

And it speaks about him as not being just the good shepherd, but our good shepherd, the chief shepherd, who is over all things.

That word shepherd, I want to just kind of go into a little bit as you're turning in there, because in the Old Testament, we know the word shepherd has a deep meaning.

King David is the shepherd. He is anointed. He suffers at the hands of Saul before he comes into his kingdom. And we know that David became the greatest king of Israel.

It is the golden age of Israel. And of course, we also know if you've read your Old Testament that almost all of the kings that followed were a sorry lot. That's the theological term.

[4 : 58] They were a sorry lot. They were no good for the most part. There was none to measure up to David, a most dismal history in Israel. And so for hundreds of years, they longed for a shepherd king.

In Ezekiel 34, there is this powerful, clear prophecy that that king would one day come. And there is a twist to it.

Because what you hear in Ezekiel 34 is that God declares, I myself will be the shepherd of the sheep. I will feed them.

I will seek the lost. I will bring them back the stray. I will bind up the injured. And so when Jesus said, I am the good shepherd, he is saying he is that shepherd king.

He is God who has come to be our shepherd as God promised. And I want you to see the context of this. Look at the reading from John, the first five verses.

[6 : 05] Because there it says there are two kinds of shepherds. There are the false shepherds. The shepherds that he calls thieves and robbers. And using very strong words of the Pharisees, because they have just kicked out a blind man, because he was healed by Jesus.

He was healed by Jesus. Kicked him out of the temple. Cut him off from God's people. And Jesus says, they are those who destroy, who actually tear down the people of God.

And look at the contrast with the good shepherd. It says the sheep hear the shepherd's voice and he calls his own sheep by name and he leads them out. And what Jesus is talking about here is what shepherds are like in the Middle East.

It's very helpful as we hear it. Because when we see, think of shepherds, you know, like Bishop Mike being the Scottish shepherd, is you think of sheepdogs driving them forward.

And that is the kind of the model of that in the West. But in the Middle East, the shepherds still today, and certainly in Palestine, in ancient Palestine, led the sheep, often in groups of a hundred.

[7 : 25] And there was a special call by which they would call their own sheep out from other sheep. And the terrain in that, in the Near East, is very treacherous.

It's rocky, it's hilly and uneven. And so the shepherd chooses safe paths and the sheep just follow him along. And, of course, the characteristic then is that the shepherd is actually known personally by the sheep.

They will only follow him or her now. Now, there's a trust there. And then also, of course, leading means that shepherd is going to encounter the dangers first.

If there are wild animals, if there is something that where they might fall, if there are thieves to steal sheep, he will see them first.

And so listen to what Jesus, the good shepherd, says of the false shepherd. He says the sheep actually flee from him because they do not understand what he was saying to them.

[8 : 30] Now, I think that is a very helpful verse for us today. Because this church of St. John's and many other churches actually fled the false shepherds years ago when we started our own diocese of Canada.

And many faithful Anglicans in Canada, as well as members of other denominations, have had to leave their churches over the years since as well.

And they have left because they know and love the voice of the true shepherd. They have actually fled from the voice of the stranger, from what the prayer book calls strange doctrine.

Fantastic phrase. And Ryan and Jacob, you're going to make a vow that says, Will you be ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word?

And that is what we have had to do. And we are a diocese and you are a church where people have come as the safe place, as the place to come to hear the true shepherd's voice.

[9 : 49] And there's great challenges for you, both of you, as people who will be ordained in the church. Because your job is going to be to proclaim the clear, true voice of the shepherd.

And you will experience persecution. You will experience rejection of different kinds. And there will be opposition as well. But there is actually no greater calling than to proclaim the voice of our good shepherd.

It is the greatest thing in the world. The greatest joy is to see people of all walks of life knowing and loving the good and true shepherd's voice.

It is the thing that will give you the greatest joy, strength, and help you to persevere. And we rejoice with you today because you're committing yourself to the work of following, but also representing

our shepherd in that way.

Now, I don't know how things have been for you both coming into this ordination as you prepared. There may have been some nervousness made a little bit worse because of what Aaron was saying about the weightiness of what's happening here.

[11:07] And I have to tell you, this is the biggest vow and commitment you're making outside your marriage that you will make in life. So not to put any pressure on you at all.

And the liturgy several times says this. It says, it is important that you have in remembrance how weighty an office and charge to which you are called.

And that's why it also says, pray earnestly for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Spirit. And on Pentecost, we celebrate that it's in his power that we carry out Jesus' ministry.

I was ordained deacon exactly 35 years ago to this day. And when I was ordained deacon, I was not yet married. I didn't have an experience with big vows.

And I have to say, I remember thinking shortly after my ordination, what have I done? I don't know if I can do this. And I, it might not be your experience today, but there will be many times when you feel completely inadequate to carry out this ministry that God has given to you.

[12:18] And I have to tell you that that feeling actually points to the truth. Because you cannot do it in your own power. Because Jesus is the only one adequate to minister to your congregations, to the congregations that you will be serving.

And that's why the last 10 verses of our passage completely focus on Jesus. Jesus says, I, he says, me, he says, my, over a dozen times in those 10 verses.

He says things like, I am the gate. I am the good shepherd. And very simply, this means that Jesus gives himself now to us as our minister.

His ministry continues. And you probably know that the word pastor means shepherd. And that the root for pastor, the Latin root is to eat or to graze.

That's why Jesus said in the ordination vows for Peter. He says, feed my sheep. Feed them. Feed them. Feed them. But what we are feeding them with is the bread of life.

[13:29] Is Jesus himself. Is his gospel. And we are actually meant to be people who point to the chief shepherd. To the pastor who is over all pastors.

And I want to tell you that this is what takes all the pressure off of you in one way. Because it means that all of us pastors are actually under shepherds who very simply point the flock to their good shepherd.

To the chief pastor. And so the mark of a faithful pastor or under shepherd. Is not first of all that they are a great communicator. Or an incredibly efficient administrator.

Or a very compassionate caregiver. All those. Those are great things. Those are great things. The mark of a true and faithful pastor. Is that you are an under pastor.

Who constantly tells and shows your flock. That Jesus is their pastor. That he is their shepherd.

[14:37] And that he is your shepherd as well. Faithful pastors are those who live for their flock. Hearing the voice of the true shepherd. And receiving his ministry.

In the power of the Holy Spirit. You see it is only Jesus who can minister to the deepest needs of the world. He hasn't given up his ministry. He keeps exercising it today.

That is what the day of Pentecost is all about. He exercises it today through you. This congregation. As you are equipped. By leaders in this church. We are simply telling people to turn to the good shepherd.

He alone. Brings people from darkness. Into his marvelous light. He ministers. In the deepest possible way. Because we are representing him.

We bring his gospel. This precious gift of the gospel of Jesus. To those in our life. And so the last part of the sermon. What I want to do.

[15:41] Is to spell out. What Jesus. What Jesus spells out. How he exercises the ministry now. In the present tense. And that is what this passage is done.

In the present tense. And he has got. He has got statements. And I have tried to. Be a little bit clever here. And I may have failed. But I'll tell you what the five things are.

The first thing he says. Is that Jesus says. That he is the lifesaver. He's the lifesaver. That is because in verse seven. He says.

I am the door. If anyone enters by me. He will be saved. And he will go out. In and out. And find pasture. He will find. Find food for his soul.

And Jesus is saying. That he alone. Can save people. And bring them. Into that flock of God. Actually bring them. To the place. Of safety. Which is knowing. That you are God's own.
[16:39] Forever. And that's the gift. That we bring. To those. When we bring. The gospel to others. When you preach. Ryan. And Jacob. You are saying.

There is the door. Who is Jesus. Go to him. And he will open. The kingdom. To you. He's a lifesaver. Secondly.

He's the life giver. Look at verse 10. I came. That they will have life. And have it. Abundantly. And Jesus is saying this. In the context.

Of him saying that. The false teachers. And really. The preaching. Of our world. All around us. Actually takes. Away life. That preaching. Steals.

It kills. It destroys. What is of greatest value. To people. That everyone needs. And that is. To know God. Which is eternal life. And that's why. Heresy.

[17:35] Is sometimes called. Cruelty. The cruelty. Of heresy. And false teaching. It's because. It distorts. And it dilutes. The truth. Of the gospel. Of life.

It takes life. Away from people. But Jesus. The shepherd. The shepherd. Gives abundant life. And eternal life. And I know that. Here in this congregation.

And if you heard. The testimonies. From those getting confirmed. This morning. You know. That Jesus. Gives. New life. Personally. To people. You have been.

Transformed. You have been. Renewed. Day by day. In the power. Of the Holy Spirit. Your life. Is completely different. You are a new creation.

Where Jesus. Is in the center. All things. Are made new. And our world. Is looking for that life. It's looking for real life. It is looking for life. Whether they know it or not.

[18:30] That only Jesus. Can give. And that's why. John says. At the end of this. Great gospel. I wrote these things. So that you may believe. That Jesus. Is the Christ.

The son of God. And that by believing him. You may have. Life. In his name. In his name. And then the third thing. Jesus says here. Is that. He is the life.

Protector. The life. Protector. Look at verse 11. He says. I am the good shepherd. Who lays down his life. To protect. The sheep. And you see. That the.

Shepherd's primary job. Was to protect sheep. But rarely. Would those shepherds. Die. In defense. Of the sheep. Jesus here. Is saying. I plan.

I deliberately. Lay down. My life. For the sheep. And then. In verse 17. If you jump. Right down. To just past.

[19:25] Our passage. He says. I deliberately. Lay down. My life. And take it. Up again. And he does it. In order to defend. And to rescue. The sheep.

So here. He's talking about. His death. And his resurrection. The center. Of the gospel. That we have. As. His death. On a cross. Do for us.

It. Conquers. The two. Great. Enemies. That all. Of humanity. The enemy. Of death. That we all. Will face.

And the enemy. Of sin. What separates. Us. From the God. Of life. And his sacrifice. On the cross. Conquers. Those two. Wolves.

Of humanity. And the power. Of Jesus. Utterly. The power. Of those wolves. That is. Unimaginable. That Holy Spirit. Is a taste.

[20:20] Of that power. And I want you. To notice. That this power. Goes in. Hand. In hand. With a deep. Love. That the shepherd. Has for us.

Look at verse 13. He says. He says. That he. As our pastor. Is not like. He cares. Nothing. For the sheep. In contrast. He cares.

So deeply. That he gives. His life. For you. And for me. That. Is the love. Of God. So powerfully. Inacted. For us.

And that's why. When I look. For. Who should. Who I think. Should be ordained. Who I think. Should be leading churches. The first thing. I look for.

How well. Do they love. The Lord Jesus. And the second. I look for. Is how well. Do they love. Their flock. How well. Do they love.

[21:15] Their flock. Because when you preach. In the power. Of the Holy Spirit. That is God's power. For salvation. But it is. Always designed. To be. In the context.

Of his. Deep. Love. For us. Lives up. His life. To us. That is our. Our great. Motivation. The love of Christ.

Compels us. It moves us. Forward. So Jesus. Is the life. Protector. And then. Fourthly. Is the life. Knower. Now.

That's a little bit. Weak. But what I mean. By life. Knower. Is look at verse 14. I know my own. Jesus says. The shepherd. And my own. Know me.

Just as the father. Knows me. And I know the father. Now. That's incredible. Knowledge. Because. It's the. It's family. Knowing.

[22 : 10] It's about knowing. The members. Of the Trinity. Being brought into that life. Jesus says. He shares. That knowledge of God. To his flock. And we. Know Jesus.

In this way. We know him. In the way that. That Jesus. Knows the father. The father. And this is where. Preaching comes in. Because. The problem.

To address. In preaching. Is not. That we have a lack. Of social skills. And we need. Some self-help. Sermons. The problem. Is not. That we.

Have emotional. And psychological. Needs. Even though. We do. And that is. Therapeutic. Preaching. Says. That people's. Primary problem.

Is that. They do not. God. They do not. Know. Know. The life. Of God. They don't know. His deep. Love.

[23 : 05] For them. That he brings. The healing. Of our souls. Our bodies. Our minds. The most. Helpful. Therapy. Which are. All important.

Things. Cannot. Bring. To know. God. And that. Is the task. That the good. Shepherd. Has given. To you.

When you preach. Jesus. People come. To know. God. And Jesus said. In his prayer. That eternal. Life. Is that they know. The only true.

God. And Jesus. Is that. A very. Joyful. Life. Here. Not only. Is. Jesus. The life.

Knower. Not only. Is he. One. Who. Unites. Life. He. Is the life. Uniter. And what I mean.

[24 : 00] By that. Is that. Jesus. Amazingly. Says. That the nations. Will. Know him. That this. For this. Is.

For the whole. World. Power. Actually. Envelopes. All. In this. World. 14. It says. I know.

My own. My own. Know me. Just as the. Oh sorry. I mean. The wrong. Verse 16. And I have. Other sheep. Are the.

It is the. Nations. I must. Them. He says. To my. One. Flock. One. Shepherd. And that.

Shows. The nature. Our. Pastor. The king. Of. And. He is. On. A mission. To bring.

[24 : 55] People. All. All. All. All. All. All. He is. Bringing. The whole. Nations.

To. Together. Into unity. Under. Him. That is. The promise. Of the day. Of. The. The.

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The. The. The. The. The. The. The. The. and your shepherd, and that we each are representing him as under shepherds. That's a very powerful relationship and unity that Jesus is working towards the day when all things in heaven and earth will worship Jesus, bend our knees to him, and say, you are Lord, you are King, you are shepherd.

[26 : 11] So Ryan and Jacob, this is your great pastor. He's the lifesaver. He's the life giver, the life protector, the life knower, and the life uniter. He is the pastor who dearly loves your flocks and who calls you to feed those flocks with the food of life. He is the powerful King of Kings who loves you and your flock. So as you begin your ministry as Jesus' under shepherd, may God grant you faith in his powerful ministry so you always point to him, so that you always bring those you serve to him, and may you always take joy in seeing Jesus care for his flock with all love and power as you speak the voice of the good shepherd. Amen.