

# John 10:1-16

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Date: 14 June 2026

Preacher: Rt. Rev. Mike Stewart

[ 0 : 00 ] Would you please be seated as we pray together. Father, we thank you for the gift of your holy word. We pray.

Amen. Well, my dear brothers and sisters, again, may I say what a joy it is for me and for my wife, Marianne, to be here with you this evening for this very special ordination service.

And we had in our first reading a few moments ago from the prophet Isaiah chapter 6 verse 1, four words that I would like to suggest to you lie at the heart and motivation for all ministry in the Christian church.

Four words that lie at the heart and motivation for all ministry in the Christian church. We read in Isaiah chapter 6 verse 1, Isaiah says, I saw the Lord.

I saw the Lord. This is how it was for the prophet Isaiah. This is how it was for the apostle Paul.

[ 1 : 40 ] Fuji and Ryan, this is how it is to be for you. And my dear brothers and sisters in Christ here this evening, this is how it is to be for all of us.

For all Christian ministry begins and ends with a vision of God. Yes, my friends, let us take consolation in the fact that God sits.

God's grace. God's grace. Ruling over the affairs of mankind. Infinite calm and absolute power. What Isaiah sees is uncreated holiness. It's a holiness that can kill. It's a holiness that can save. Here in chapter 6, Isaiah, and indeed right at the end of the Bible, on the island of Patmos, the apostle John in Revelation chapter 4, sees a vision of what Daryl Johnson, in his wonderful commentary on the book of Revelation, calls the supreme headquarters of the cosmos.

[ 3 : 19 ] And amidst all the chaos and the fragility of our world, we are reminded tonight that there is one who sits above it all.

And so as Christian people, we are to look aright and recall that our God reigns.

And we are to keep the King in our sights. Throughout his epistles, the apostle Paul is clear.

When he talks about his own ministry, which he describes as the ministry of reconciliation, a ministry that he is very clear he has received by the mercy of God.

But when he speaks about this ministry that is entrusted to him, he's very clear that he does not tamper with it.

[ 4 : 27 ] He does not water it down. He does not change it. He does not mess with it. He was able to hold fast to it faithfully and not lose heart.

He was not motivated by money, that is salary or the cost of living. He was not motivated by human approval.

He was able to endure his own weakness and his own sufferings. For the sake of the gospel, how was he able to do this?

He kept the king in his sights. The king who appeared to him on the road. You see, like Isaiah, Paul too saw the Lord.

The one through whom we receive the forgiveness of our sins. And the one through whom we are reconciled to the holy God who rules and reigns upon the throne.

[ 5 : 53 ] As the apostle Paul wrote. In Jesus, God was reconciling the world to himself. How did he do this?

Well, Paul writes in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21. For our sake, he made him, that is Jesus, to be sin who knew no sin.

So that in him we might become the righteousness of God. But this is what the church reformers used to call the great or the wonderful exchange.

And Fuji and Ryan, as ordained clergy in the church of God, you are, my brothers, to proclaim that the crucified Christ is Lord.

And is seated at the right hand of God. Through his own sacrifice, he has made atonement for our sin.

[ 7 : 01 ] The good news of the gospel, if people will receive it, is this. Your guilt is taken away. Your sin is atoned for.

Hallelujah. You see, the heart of the problem is the problem of the human heart. Brothers, don't mess with this message.

And always keep the king in your sights. Remember King David, Israel's melody maker.

Who once said, I've set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

And those who are called to the pastoral office in the church are reminded in the Anglican ordination service.

[ 8 : 03 ] That the congregations whom they serve are the sheep of Christ for whom he shed his blood. These, my brothers, are sobering words.

In other words, tread carefully. Equip the saints. Help us grow up. Bring us to maturity.

All pastors in the church are to never forget that they are under shepherds of the good shepherd.

Whom we heard about in our gospel reading tonight from the gospel of John chapter 10.

Jesus Christ, the good and the beautiful, or we might say the attractive shepherd. Who laid down his life for the sheep. And my dear brothers and sisters in the church.

It's good to remember from time to time that we are like sheep. Gone astray. As the prophet Isaiah would later write.

[ 9 : 13 ] Everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him. The iniquity of us all. Or as we sometimes sing.

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Morning and evening. Day after day after day.

We Anglicans in morning prayer and evening prayer. Confess to God that we have what? Erred and strayed from thy ways.

Like lost sheep. More often than not. Silly. Sinful.

Stubborn creatures. Getting all tangled up in the most ridiculous of dilemmas. Often of our own making. And the church is not immune from all this.

[ 10 : 20 ] But the church is God's choice of venue. It is with us that he has decided to dwell.

And we know, don't we, that the Bible's preferred image of leadership is that of a shepherd. It's also true of the Bible's preferred image of kingship.

And it's this very image that Jesus uses in John chapter 10 to explain his own claim to be the true king of Israel.

John chapter 10 verse 11 we read, Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. This, my friends, is the good shepherd who became the sacrificial lamb for us.

Utterly sufficient. And instantly effective. Is his great sacrifice. In dealing with Isaiah's problem.

[ 11 : 35 ] The apostle Paul's problem. My problem. And your problem. Our sinfulness. Utterly effective.

Utterly effective. Utterly effective. Is the saving work of Christ. As one Bible commentator once said, No picture of Jesus has drawn believers to him with such magnetism as the picture of him as the good shepherd.

Who cares for his sheep and surrenders his life for them. He also goes on to say that faithful pastors will not, in the apostle Paul's words, preach themselves.

Their own philosophies or ideas. But they will preach Christ crucified. As the power of God unto salvation.

For faith in the good shepherd. And the desire to reflect something. Of his sacrificial love. Must always be the characteristics.

[ 12 : 45 ] Of those worthy to be called pastors of God's people. And so beloved church, let me close with this.

As we witness these two ordinations this evening. And pray for these pastors. With thankfulness of heart.

Let us. As the people of his pasture. And the sheep of his hand. Keep the king in our sights.

As we hold on and hold out. The message that has been entrusted to each one of us. That through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can now be reconciled. To the one who sits upon the throne. To him be the glory in the church. [ 13 : 48 ] And in Christ Jesus. Throughout all generations. Forever and ever. Amen.