

# I Am the Good Shepherd

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Date: 27 October 2024

[ 0 : 00 ] When we begin our worship this evening, we're going to sing to God's praise in Psalm 42, the Scottish Psalter, verse 262. And to thy countenance approach, and in God's sight appear.

How we come to worship God, thirsting for him and longing for his presence. Psalm 42, verse 1 to 5, we stand to sing. Amen. Psalm 42, verse 1 to 5, we stand to sing.

Psalm 42, verse 1 to 5, we stand to sing.

Psalm 42, verse 1 to 5, we stand to sing. Psalm 42, verse 1 to 5, we stand to sing. My heart to me, God, in my heart, where this night of the same.

My soul is poured out in me, when this night of the same.

[ 2 : 35 ] He was born, because that with the maldiction I here to go, had gone.

With the maldiction I here to sing. With the maldiction I here to sing. Of the maldiction I here to sing. Of the mald voy voy voy voy voy voy voy voy voy voy voy voy voy voy voy voy! voy voy voy voy voy voy voy voy voy voy voy Trust down my soul, why in this odyssey?

Trust of for I shall precede, this countenance is my name.

Let's come to God in prayer. Bow our heads in a word of prayer. Lord, our gracious God, as we gather in your name, I knew this evening we are thankful for this, your day.

[ 4 : 13 ] We are thankful to be able to gather together in this way to come, offering praise to you, beginning with these words that we have sung, thirsting for your presence, thirsting for you as the psalmist was.

We pray that that would be our longing and desire this evening as we come, as we come seeking you and come to hear your word, come to be in your presence and in the fellowship of your people. We pray that you will give us that thirsting soul and that longing after you. And we thank you that in the psalm we are reminded too that, just like the psalmist in his day who lived in a time when there was so much mocking of you, when people said to him, where is this God of yours?

And we live in such a day as well and we see so much mocking of you, when we hear so many people who just put slander across about you, who make fun of you, who make a joke out of you. And we thank you that we can come this evening knowing that you are God and there is no other. And we pray, Lord, for your mercy upon us as we live in these days, as we see these things around us.

[ 5 : 27 ] We pray, Lord, that we will have the confidence of the psalmist, that we will come maybe feeling our souls cast down, but yet saying, why are we so dismayed when we can trust God and praise you and that you are our aid at all times, that you are the one who is our help and our keeper.

And so, Lord, we pray these words this evening. We pray that they may bring us close to you in our worship, that they may, from the outset, give us a focus upon you, that we'll be able to leave aside other distractions that maybe we even had as we came through these doors this evening or even as we sat speaking to one another when there are things that can easily lead our minds away from you.

We pray that you will give us that focus upon you for this time of worship, that you will give us a prayerful spirit, that you will help us even now as we unite our hearts in this way, offering up all our prayers to you, spoken and unspoken, prayers that maybe no one else knows, but you do.

And we thank you that you are the hearer and answerer of prayer. And we thank you that we can come to you in that way, that we can come, even as Jesus himself taught the disciples so long ago, to come saying, Our Father, who art in heaven, we thank you that we can come in that way, calling upon you in such an intimate and a personal way, even though you are Lord and God of all, that we can say, Our Father, who art in heaven.

And so hear all our prayers and guide us by your spirit as we seek to worship you. We might do so in truth, that we might hear your truth as we read from it and as we consider it together this evening.

[ 7 : 16 ] May it be your truth that guides us in life and keeps us going on. Your truth that brings us back to the right paths and helps us to remain on them.

And we pray for the blessing of your spirit to be on the reading of your word and all our meditation upon it, that you will lead us into it in a fresh way, in a new way, and that your word would speak to all our hearts.

We are thankful for it, for all it says to us, for all we have been reminded about already this day, of the wonder of your covenant bond with us, for all that you have done for us and for all the generations of your people.

As we were reminded of the covenant with Abraham this morning, we thank you for how we see it out, worked and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, our Lord. And we pray that this evening, as we continue to worship you as Lord and God, that you would continue to remind us of all the blessings that are ours in Christ and that we have so much to be thankful for.

So hear our prayers, Lord, and we pray for so many different needs around us. We pray for our communities. We pray for our island. We pray for our nation and the world in which we live.

[ 8 : 31 ] We pray for all the different needs. There are so many, Lord, and yet none hidden from you. We thank you for your knowledge of us, that wonderful knowledge that nothing is beyond your reach, nothing is beyond your control or power, but that all things are done by you and for you.

And so we pray, Lord, that you will do good to us, do good to our people, our congregation here. May you bless us. May you guide us. May you help us. Every step that we take, may you guide us by your spirit, unite our hearts in prayer, and bless us, Lord, with your presence and with your peace.

We do pray, Lord, to see your spirit working in our midst, thankful for all the promises that we have in your word that remind us that your word does not return to you empty or void.

And we pray that, whether it's in the preaching of your word from the pulpit here or in our prayer meetings, in our Sunday school and creche and twinnies and Bible class and all the efforts made to reach out with your gospel, that you would bless it.

We pray for this week ahead as we think of all that goes on and as we look ahead, God willing, to our baptism service next Sunday morning. We thank you for the privilege of that.

[ 9 : 51 ] We thank you for the families who will be coming for baptism. We pray for the parents and the children and all the families, that your spirit be with them, Lord, as we prepare for that.

We thank you for the blessings that there is in baptism. And not just for the ones that we look forward to, God willing, but as we look back as well, we thank you for the bonds that there are in baptism as a congregation.

And we remember the many children who have been baptized here over so many years. Many now even parents themselves or even grandparents. We're thankful for the blessings that there are in that community of your people.

We pray for those who have been committed to you over many years, who have fulfilled their vows, who have kept the faith, who have gone to flourish as Christians.

We thank you for that. Remember those who are maybe still seeking after you, maybe even over many years seeking for you and seeking your peace and your presence.

[ 10 : 52 ] We pray that you will come and bring that peace to them, that they will find you as their Lord and as their God. We remember others maybe who have, although been baptized, have wandered away, who have gone maybe to different parts of the world even, who have even turned their back on you at a time.

But Lord, we pray that you will remember these vows that were taken, remember these children as they were baptized, or even adults as they were baptized, and draw them to yourself in your time and by your spirit.

And so we do thank you, Lord, that your eyes are upon us. We thank you for that, for our community as well, and all the different things that are going on. And we thank you that you are not a God who is sleeping, not a God who will be mocked, but that you will come in your power and by your ways.

Remember that as our community needs you. It needs enriching. It needs enlivening. It needs your spirit to work, that we would see many being drawn to you, turning from darkness to light.

And so we pray for every endeavor made in your name. And we pray for our nation, O Lord, that you would bless us, that you would guide us, that you would help us, even as we think of our

government at this time.

[ 12 : 15 ] And even in this coming week, when there are many decisions that will be made, many budgets that will be set, and we think of the great trials that they face in terms of leading our nation, helping our nation.

And we pray, Lord, for your spirit in the midst of it all, to give wisdom, to give guidance, to give a turning to you. For we neglect you at our peril.

We turn away from you, and we see the consequences. But we thank you that your promise in your word is that when we return to you, that you will return to us. And so, Lord, may you hear our cries, may you hear our prayers, and protect your people.

Protect your people to all ends of the earth, Lord, as we thank you for the gospel that goes out to all ends. We pray that it will be blessed, and that your people, near and far, as they are described as your sheep, even as we think of it this evening, we thank you for our shepherd, the one who is gathering his flock together, the one who is building his church.

And we pray, Lord, to see and hear great things throughout all nations of the world. So remember us, we pray. Remember our people. Remember those in need at this time, as we remember those in hospital, both here in Stornoway, and further afield as well, those who are going through treatment, those who have gone through operations, those who are laid aside at this time.

[ 13 : 50 ] Lord, may you be their refuge and their strength. May you be their ever-present aid. May you watch over them and all the families and hear our prayers for them. So remember us, Lord.

Go before us, comfort us, guide us by your Spirit. Receive our praise and forgive all our sins as we come confessing them on you this evening. You know, Lord, our hearts, and we pray that you will cleanse us, that you will renew us, that you will build us up.

And all we ask, we ask in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, for his sake and glory. Amen. We'll again sing to God's praise.

We're going to sing this time in Psalm 139a, in the Sing Psalms version. You'll find this on page 180, Psalm 139a.

We'll sing from verse 1 down to verse 10. Psalm speaks of the wonderful knowledge that God has of his people, has of us all, how he knows everything about us.

[ 14 : 59 ] O Lord, you have examined me, you know me through and through. My sitting, rising, all my thoughts are far are known to you. My going out and lying down are plain before your view.

Before I speak a word, O Lord, it is well known to you. We will sing from verse 1 to verse 10 and the tune is Saint Andrew. We stand to sing to God's praise.

O Lord, you have examined me.

You know me through and through. My Savior Christ, in all my thoughts, have found my room to live.

My going out and lying down are plenty for your good.

[ 16 : 17 ] Before I speak a word, O Lord, it is my home to you.

You have been behind before. You hear only your hand.

Such joy is too wonderful. To hide, to understand.

Where can I from your spirit flee? Are proper dresses full?

If doom the heavens dear are there, or in the necks below.

[ 17 : 44 ] If I should take the wings of God, and where are beyond the sea, there also you who give my guide, your right and holding me.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We'll turn together now to read God's word. We're reading in the Gospel of John, chapter 10. Gospel of John, chapter 10.

We read from the beginning of that chapter down to verse 21. John, chapter 10, verse 21. John chapter 10, verse 1. This passage that speaks of Jesus and one of the I am sayings in the Gospel of John where he describes himself as the good shepherd.

I am the good shepherd. 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.

[ 19 : 15 ] 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, and 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. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. 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 flees 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 a father knows me and I know the father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

[ 20 : 43 ] 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.

For this reason the father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. 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 the blind? And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word. Before we turn back to look at this passage, we'll again sing to God's praise this time in Psalm 106 in the Scottish Psalter, singing at the beginning of the Psalm.

[ 21 : 53 ] Psalm 106 from the beginning, verse 1 to verse 5, four stanzas. The tune is St. David.

Give praise and thanks unto the Lord, for bountiful is he, his tender mercy doth endure into eternity. God's mighty works who can express or show forth all his praise.

Blessed are they that judgment keep, and justly do always. We'll sing from verse 1 to 5 into God's praise we stand to sing.

Amen. Give freedom and sound to the Lord, for bounty, cool is he.

His tender mercy doth endure unto eternity.

[ 23 : 04 ] God's mighty works who can express our show forth all his praise.

our show forth all his praise. God's mighty works who can express our show forth all his praise.

Blessed are they that judgment keep, and King, and just in due always.

Remember me, Lord, with God above, which thou tonight us bear.

With thy salvation, O my God, to visit thee for near.

But I thy chosen could be seen, and in their joy rejoice, and and be with thy inheritance, on cheerful voice.

[ 24 : 40 ] As we're singing in these verses in Psalm 106, that verse 4, there is like a prayer for us to offer up.

Remember me, Lord, with that love, which thou to thine dost bear, with thy salvation, O my God, to visit me, throw near. And sometimes we can feel like we're calling out to God in that way.

Remember me, Lord, remember me with that love which you show to your people. And as we come to this passage this evening in John 10, we are reminded of how God has remembered us, and how he has sent salvation for us.

And he has visited us, he has drawn near to us in the person of Jesus Christ, his son. And that's what we see as we were thinking as Gordon was preaching this morning on the reminder of the covenant, God's promise to us, and how it will be fulfilled in Christ this evening.

We're just kind of following on on that theme and just seeing how Jesus is the one we see the fulfillment of that in. He is the good shepherd who has come for his people.

[ 25 : 56 ] We're going to read at verse 9 in John 10, verse 9 to 11. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The Bible often describes the relationship between God and his people in this way of using the image of the shepherd and the sheep.

We are described as people as being like sheep and I don't know what that calls to mind for you as you immediately start to think. When you think of sheep, what do you think of?

For some people, when you think of sheep, it's a joyous thing. If you love sheep, if you love looking after sheep, spending time on the moor or gathering the sheep, shearing the sheep, whatever it is, it's a pleasure for many people.

[ 27 : 02 ] For others, it may be just a pain, a waste of a good Saturday, or just a time that's misspent. Sheep are often seen in these two different ways.

But what characteristics of sheep do you see and you start to think, well, I can understand why the Bible describes us as sheep and the need of a shepherd that we have.

think of some of the characteristics of sheep. Maybe some of the more negative ones first, they easily led astray. Many will just follow after one or a part of the flock and they'll just go with them. It doesn't matter which way they're heading or what they're doing. They're social creatures. They like to be surrounded by others. They like to be part of a flock. Again, that can describe people. They can be wanderers. They can just go off on their own and just go astray, just thinking the grass is greener over there, that's the way I'm going, and they wander off and end up lost.

[ 28 : 03 ] They can be stubborn. Again, it's a characteristic we see in ourselves so often. We see so many characteristics in sheep that remind us of ourselves, but we're also like sheep, defenseless, we're vulnerable.

We're all of these things. The list could go on and you could perhaps add your own description. But what about valuable or precious?

Is that the way that you think of sheep? Is that the way you think of yourself as valuable or precious? Well, as we think of these words of Psalm 106, remember me, Lord, with that love which thou to thine dost bear.

The word of God reminds us that we are indeed precious. sheep can be very precious. In August 2020 in Lanark, just outside Glasgow, there was a sheep sale there.

And on that day, a Texel ram by the name Double Diamond sold for a world record fee. 368,000 pounds.

[ 29 : 12 ] A valuable sheep. That just sounds like madness to pay that much money for a sheep. And yet, when we think of that, we are reminded of those sheep are vulnerable, they can be valuable, and because they're valuable, they come under threat.

There are those who want to steal them. There are thieves who want to get a hold of them so they can get money out of it. But there are shepherds who want to protect them.

And as we think of the Bible and how it describes sheep, and the shepherd in this way, we are reminded of so many different things. But one of the greatest images is when we find the sheep who are going astray, the sheep who are precious to the shepherd.

And because they're so precious, the shepherd will go out after his sheep. And even to the extent as we read of here in John 10, the shepherd who will give his life for the sheep.

Our idea of sheep and the shepherd and the way the Bible describes the relationship of the sheep and shepherd are probably poles apart. Modern day thinking of as we would think of the shepherd and the sheep is very different to what Jesus would be describing to the people here and what they would be understanding of this relationship.

[ 30 : 37 ] You see just the kind of language that Jesus uses here in this passage. he says the sheep hear my voice. They follow me. Now when do you see that around our island here?

The sheep just listen to the voice of the shepherd. It has to be a very good shepherd who will just speak and the sheep will follow. More often than not, the shepherd is behind the sheep driving the sheep.

So often it's about the quantity, a large quantity of sheep in our idea, whereas in Jesus' day it would be smaller numbers. Every sheep would have a name.

Today we don't often see, although sometimes you do, you have a lamb, you call it a name, you look after it, but it can soon be forgotten about, whereas the sheep in Jesus' day the shepherd would have them perhaps for many years and know each one by name and be able to look out for them and see this personal and protective oversight of them.

And so what Jesus is talking about here is a very intimate, it's a very personal relationship. And you see that throughout the Bible. You see it in Psalm 100, when in verse 3 it says, no, the Lord, he is God, it is he who made us, we are his, we are his people, and then it describes and we are the

sheep of his pasture.

[ 32 : 04 ] He has made us, we are his people, but describes the sheep of his pasture. So it's a reminder that God has made us in that image of sheep.

There's a reminder of where we are as sinners in Isaiah 53, verse 6, it says, all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way.

So we've wandered off, we've gone away. Jesus has another moment in his experience when Matthew 9, verse 36, when he's seeing great crowds of people and he has compassion on them. Why does he have compassion on them? It says, because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. So you're seeing there, there's this close bond between shepherd and sheep.

So the sheep who are harassed and helpless, there's no shepherd to look after them. And that's why he has compassion, like sheep without a shepherd.

[ 33 : 06 ] But then you come to John 10 and you have this wonderful passage that describes the sheep and the most precious shepherd of all. As you think of this in light of John's gospel and him talking about the great I am sayings and how that reminds us of how God remembers his people.

Well here we are again reminded of Jesus as the I am, the I am, the shepherd of the sheep. The shepherd who ultimately lays down his life for his sheep because that's how precious his sheep are to him.

We want to think of three things about this shepherd this evening. Three things that we see of Jesus as the shepherd of his sheep.

And the first is his perception, his knowledge of the sheep. shepherd. The second thing is his purpose as the shepherd.

And then thirdly we'll see the promise and protection that he gives to his sheep. We'll begin by looking at his perception, his knowledge of the sheep.

[ 34 : 19 ] When we think of ourselves and the people we have around us, what kind of knowledge do you have of the people around you? What kind of knowledge do you have of the people sitting next to you, behind you, or in front of you?

It depends maybe how close you are to them. There'll be some who are family, there'll be some who are friends, there'll be maybe some who are strangers to you. Our knowledge varies depending on how much we see of the people.

And there might be some people you know pretty well. You've got to know them over a long period of time. You know their good habits, their kind hearts, their generous spirit, you know all of these things about them.

And then the more you get to know people, you also see the less positive side of them, the bad habits that the people might have, their failings as well. But it's all about getting to know the people. And as you get to know people, you realise all of these things about them, yet even the person you know best, you don't know them better than Jesus does. Jesus' knowledge of his people, of his sheep, is far more than any of us can have, even we could say of ourselves, that Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves.

[ 35 : 44 ] And Jesus speaks of his knowledge of his sheep here in John 10. He speaks of it in verse 2 and 3 where he says, He knows his sheep so personally.

He knows them that just at the command of his voice, they will follow. They will follow after him. You see it too in verse 14.

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. There's this relationship that's about knowledge of how he knows his sheep.

What kind of knowledge is this? It's the kind of knowledge that the psalmist speaks of in Psalm 139. The knowledge that he says is too wonderful as he describes too high to understand.

There's not a word that comes to our lips that is not known by him even before we speak it. Our rising, our sitting, our sleeping, everything about us it is known to him.

[ 37 : 11 ] The psalmist describes even if we go to the utmost parts of the sea, even there your right hand is leading me. There is a knowledge that is so wonderful, so personal beyond anything that anybody else has of us, even ourselves.

You think of a relationship with your parents and the knowledge that they have of you and you have of them. Think back maybe when you were younger or perhaps you were at that age just now when you would go out in an evening.

You would go away for an evening and by the time you come home it's later than you maybe should have been out. You're trying to sneak back in. You're trying to sneak through the front door and then trying to sneak through the inside door, sneak through the rooms, sneak up the stairs into your own bedroom and go to sleep and you think to yourself I've got away with it.

They don't know what time I came in. They don't know I was past the time I was meant to come in until the next morning and they tell you exactly what time you came in.

They know. They don't miss much but sometimes they do. And yet the knowledge that Jesus has of us, it goes way beyond even that.

[ 38 : 36 ] Everything about us, every little detail. When Jesus says I am the door and I am the shepherd, he is describing this knowledge of us, that there's nothing that we do, nowhere that we go, that he doesn't know.

And describing himself as the door and the shepherd, it's not two different things. It's the same thing. The shepherd as the door and just being the shepherd as the shepherd himself, they're talking about the same thing.

The shepherd is the door. when you see here Jesus talking about the sheep fold in verse 1. He says later, I am the door for the sheep.

He's describing this setting where the sheep would have to come in and go out of. A place that would have walls, four walls and just one entry. And for every sheep they had to go through this entry, either coming out or going in.

and the shepherd would be the door. The sheep would have to pass him, either coming out or going in.

[ 39 : 54 ] So he knew exactly the sheep that he had, he knew their condition, and he knew that he had them coming back in at the end of the day. Nothing was missed.

And that's the knowledge that Jesus has of his sheep. And us as his sheep, there's nothing that passes by him.

And so when you think of your life, there's no sneaking past Jesus, there's no thinking, I got away with that. Everything is known to him. This knowledge is so wonderful, it's so high, it's beyond our understanding, and yet it should give us such great comfort.

Because his knowledge is complete. His knowledge is past, present, and future. His knowledge of us means that we are watched over at all times, wherever we go.

And there's a great blessing in that. As we think of ourselves, as we think of others, as we think even of, as we're praying there for the baptism service next week, God willing, as we think of baptized children, as we think of those who have gone away from here, gone away from home, that this is knowledge that Jesus has, that he is watching over his sheep, that he has them as his flock watched over at all times.

[ 41 : 20 ] They're coming in and they're going out. And that as we pray, we can pray in that way of his knowing everything about us. So whatever stage we're at in life, we come to the shepherd looking for his help, looking for his guidance, for his knowledge to be revealed to us, for his help to be given to us, for his rod and his staff, as we'll consider later, as well as directing us in every way that we should go, bringing us back or putting us forward.

So as we think of what school subjects we take, as we think about moving away from home to university, as we think of going into the working life, as we think of other struggles that will come our way through life, challenges, as we think of illness and bereavement and all of these things, all the struggles that we might have, whatever it is, he knows.

His knowledge of us is so complete. He is the good shepherd who knows his sheep. And that leads us then into his purpose.

His knowledge of us is so complete, but then we begin to see his purpose. Why has Jesus come? Why did God send his son into this world?

Well, when you think of, again, just our natural setting, when you think of the lamb sales or the sheep sales, when they go ahead, buyers will come with a purpose. They come for the best, they come for the quality, and they come to pay good money, you hope for them.

[ 43 : 10 ] And you see the extraordinary amounts when you think of double diamond bought for 368,000 pounds. Vast sums of money can be spent on sheep.

And how does the purpose of Jesus, the good shepherd, compare to that? Did he just come for the best? Did he come just to hand pick the best for himself?

Imagine going to a sale and coming home with sheep that were old, sheep that had no teeth, sheep that were lame or blind. It would seem foolish, it would seem madness, you would be asked questions, what have you done?

Hope you didn't pay anything for them. And if you were to turn around and say I actually paid top money for these, you would be seen as being crazy. It would be madness to spend any money on sheep that are old and lame.

And yet when you look at the scriptures and you see the relationship of the shepherd and his sheep, did he come to pick the best? Did he come to pay only the top prize for those who were worthy?

[ 44 : 26 ] Did he look at their qualities and say that one's not good enough? When you read through God's word you see who Jesus came for. As he came for his sheep he came for them all.

Each of them sinful, lost, facing God's judgment. In order for them to become his sheep, Jesus had to come for his sheep.

And coming for his sheep, that involved a great price. It involved a great cost. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

He pays the ultimate price. He paid for our sins. And this redemption, this price cost much.

And yet what he says is my sheep they love to hear my voice. My sheep they hear my voice and follow me.

[ 45 : 36 ] And isn't that just a wonderful reminder to us? The purpose of Jesus is to call not the perfect, not those who are everything sorted, but to call his sheep as his own, to call them by their name.

What kind of sheep are you? Are you a perfect sheep? Prime quality, top price? No.

There's none of us who could say we're that. We're straying, we're lost, we're sinful. And yet what kind of sheep did Jesus come to give his life for?

The very sheep that we think of as worthless, the lame, the blind, the sick, the ones who are useless in other people's eyes. Jesus says that himself in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 2, the scribes and the Pharisees were around and when they saw him eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

Why? Why does he do that? Well, Jesus heard it and he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

[ 47 : 06 ] We are all sheep who have gone astray. We're all turned to our own way and that's why Jesus came. That's his purpose.

We've all gone astray, but he came to call his own to himself. The parable of the prodigal son, which comes just after the parable of the lost sheep who left the 99 to go out after the one sheep who was missing.

The prodigal son is along the same lines. When the prodigal son goes away, wanders off into his sinful life, fulfills it the way he would see best, and then realizes how empty it is.

And when he comes to his senses, he says, I will return to my father. And there's that part in Luke 15, verse 20, where it says, the father ran out to meet him and embraced him.

Another word of translation there for embrace is he fell upon him. You think to yourself, what's the significance there? Why fall upon him in this way?

[ 48 : 20 ] Well, if you go back to the Old Testament and to Deuteronomy 21, verse 18 to 21 there, it speaks about what people were instructed to do to a child who had disobeyed and dishonored his parents.

What was the price that was paid? Well, they were instructed to stone that child. Sounds so awful, sounds so cruel, that they would put that child to death for disobeying their parents and dishonoring their parents.

But if you see that version and you see the prodigal son, you realize just how significant that embrace and that falling upon him is. Because what the father was doing was knowing what the people would be commanded to do for that son who had dishonored him.

He fell upon them, upon his son, he embraced him to protect him. So they wouldn't harm him, so they wouldn't touch him. And that's exactly what Jesus is doing here for his sheep.

I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. So I would put that into the same way, who lays down upon his sheep, who protects his sheep.

[ 49 : 49 ] They deserve to die, but he took our sin. And he took out our sin that we might have life and have it abundantly, as is described here, that they might have life and have it abundantly.

So his purpose was to save his sheep. He knows his sheep, he knows their sin, but his purpose is that he might save his sheep from their sins, and that we might have life abundantly.

And the third and final thing we see here is his promise and protection. There are many things calling for our attention in life, many things that lead us in different directions.

And you think of Isaiah, he knew so well as he was describing there, all we like sheep have gone as they, we have turned each to his own way. We wander off, we listen to the wrong voices, we listen to the wrong things, we go in our different directions.

But as Jesus describes himself here as the good shepherd, he's describing himself in light of the thief as well in verse 10. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

[ 51 : 16 ] I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. And what he's saying here is there's the two different outcomes depending on whose voice that we listen to.

Do we listen to the thief? Do we listen to the devil? Do we listen to his wiles of forgetting God? Even like the psalm in which we're singing, Psalm 42, when we see so many people saying, when is this God of yours?

is that what we listen to? Is that the voices that we heed and say, well, maybe there isn't a God. Maybe we shouldn't listen to what the Bible says. Maybe it is just something to be forgotten about. Well, we are reminded here the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. There's no other purpose. but Jesus has come.

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. The thief has a purpose, but there's nothing good about it.

[ 52 : 34 ] It's a bit like the shepherd that we see described in the Old Testament in Ezekiel as well, where the Lord warns in Ezekiel 34, verse 2, Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves.

Should not shepherds take care of the flock? They're only interested in themselves, so impersonal, so selfish. They come only to steal and kill and destroy.

And listen to that voice, and that's where we end up ourselves. So there is that warning to us. But contrast that to the leading of the shepherd, the good shepherd, the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep, the good shepherd who knows his sheep, the good shepherd who has done everything for his sheep.

So we'll be singing in conclusion in a few moments Psalm 23. that great psalm just reminds us of the leading of the shepherd through every experience in life.

And his tender leading, his care towards his own. And when you think of the rod and the staff as described in that psalm, and as you read about it in light of other scripture passages, you see that these were the key things that the shepherd would use to help the sheep along the way.

[ 54 : 08 ] The rod was probably shorter and used more closely to prod the sheep, to put them in the right direction, to move them along the way.

The staff was longer with the crook at the top so the shepherd could pull the sheep back. And again, it's just that reminder of the way we are.

Sometimes we just need the prod in the right direction, just gently kept on the right path. Other times, we need a good pull back onto the right path. But there was another purpose of the rod and the staff as well, maybe more so the staff.

And it reminds us of just how personal the care of the shepherd is, of his promise and protection to his sheep. And what it was, was as the sheep were being brought in at the end of the day, the shepherd would lay the staff across the entrance into the sheepfold.

And the sheep would stop, each one, one at a time. And the shepherd would look over the sheep and make sure that sheep was well, that everything about that sheep was right, that it hadn't been injured, that it wasn't lame, that nothing had come upon it during the day, no injury.

[ 55 : 30 ] And if the sheep was fine, he would lift up the staff and let the sheep in, and the next one would stop. And when you think of that in light of Psalm 23, and especially when you think of the last words of Psalm 23, goodness and mercy, all my life, so surely follow me, and in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be.

You think just of the care of the shepherd. How he's going to look over all his sheep, and how he's going to heal every hurt and every wound. Why is that important?

Well, again, when you go back to Ezekiel, in chapter 20, verse 37, it says, I will make you pass under the rod. I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.

I will purge out the rebels from among you. And those who transgress against me. And there's a description there of the care and concern of the shepherd.

Only his own will get in. He will allow his own to pass under the rod, but not those who have no place there.

[ 56 : 51 ] The good shepherd cares for his sheep. He will heal his sheep. He will look after his sheep. So there is that care now and there is that care eternally.

That the hope of the Christian is just that, the promise and the protection of Christ as our shepherd. He knows his sheep and his purpose for his sheep was that he would come and lay down his life for his sheep.

That we might have life abundantly in him. His healing touch, his caring touch, his restoration of his sheep.

Well, do you know God as your shepherd today? Do you know the good shepherd? And can you say the Lord is my shepherd?

For some of us, the call tonight is come. Come to me and I will save you. Hear my voice, and follow me.

[ 58 : 12 ] Perhaps that's you this evening. You're hearing the shepherd calling. It's time to follow. And for others, he's saying stay with me.

I will guard you. There's so often we're tempted to drift off and go our own direction, to wander away, for doubts to come in, but he's saying stay with me.

I will keep you. I will watch over you. I will care for you. I will heal you. And each of us knows which voice to listen to.

My sheep hear my voice and follow me. The call is to follow him. remember double diamond, the texel ram, sold for 368,000.

Well, you're even more precious. You're worth far more than that to the shepherd of his sheep who has given his life for you.

[ 59 : 24 ] Let's not be stubborn. Let's not turn away and go our own way. let us listen to the voice of the shepherd and follow him.

Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you are the shepherd who calls and give us ears to hear and to follow, to listen to your voice and not to those who would seek to kill and destroy, but to seek to listen to the one who has come that we might have life and have it abundantly.

Teach us, Lord, your ways and lead us in them. So we ask it all in your precious name. Amen.

We're going to conclude by singing these words of Psalm 23 and the Sing Psalms version.

Page 28 of the Psalm book. The tune is Jehovah's and Kenyu. Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd, no one shall I know. He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow.

He leads me to rest with the calm waters flow. We'll sing the whole of this Psalm and we stand to sing. The Lord is my shepherd, no one shall I know.

[ 60 : 48 ] He makes me lie down where the green master's grow. He leads me to rest where the waters flow.

He leads me to rest where the waters flow. My wandering steps he brings back to this day.

He has done his great name to display. He has done his great name to display.

He has done his great name to display.! Lord,! walk in des paris where darkness is near.

Because you are with me, no evil I'll fear. Your rod and your suffering become heart and cheer.

[ 62 : 15 ] cheer. Your heart and your suffering become heart and cheer. In the sight of my enemies the table you spread.

In oil of rejoicing you pour on my head. my cup overclose and I'm gracious me fed.

My cup overclose and I'm gracious me fed. So cheer in your covenant and mercy and grace will follow me close me in all of my ways.

I will dwell in the hands of the Lord all my days. I will dwell in the hands of the Lord all my days.

After the benediction I'll go to the door to my left. We'll close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forever more.

[ 63 : 49 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.