

Good Shepherd

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, those of you who are here in person and those who are online. We're glad you have joined us. Peter, thank you for those words. I feel like we should just stop and meditate on those. I don't need to preach.

I will anyway, but thank you for those. I really appreciate them. As we go to God's Word this morning, will you join me in prayer? Lord, we thank you that as we gather this morning, Lord, we gather to know you more.

And we gather because you have been at work, Lord, being the loving Savior that we have just sung about. Lord, we pray now that by your Spirit you would open our hearts and our minds to receive your Word.

Lord, I pray for your enabling power so that I might speak clearly. And Lord, that you might use this time, Lord, to draw us closer to you. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. So as Pastor Nick mentioned, it's Palm Sunday. And on that day many, many years ago, the crowds gathered and lined the streets of Jerusalem and laid down palm fronds and coats in honor of Jesus who rode in on a donkey.

[1 : 15] The expectations were high. People were looking for a king. A king who would come and rescue them from Roman oppression. A king who would come and free the nation of Israel to have independence again.

A king who would come like the king of old. King David, the great shepherd king. The one of whom it said in 2 Samuel 5, It was you who led out and brought in Israel.

And the Lord said to you, You shall be a shepherd of my people Israel. And you shall be prince over Israel. These people longed for someone who would come and lead them out and lead them in in victory.

One who would come to deliver them. One that they could follow with confidence, knowing that he would lead them to life and security.

I wonder if your heart resonates with that longing this morning. Do you long for someone to come and to take you by the hand?

[2 : 22] To raise you up? To lead you out of darkness and into life and into light? It's worth recognizing how easily our hearts look for this.

And how we latch on to things. Sometimes we latch on to a religious leader. Or a political head of state. Sometimes we just latch on to the social leader of our high school group.

Or a mom's group. We latch on to others to follow. Because we know we need it. Or maybe in this 21st century, we don't.

Because we are desperate to be the captains of our own ship. And we latch on to ourselves to lead us into life. And we deny our need for anyone else. And yet, as this pandemic has so painfully shown many of us, we end up suffering alone.

We don't choose well, often, when we look for leaders. When we look for someone to follow. When we look for someone to latch on to. We don't know. We don't know.

[3 : 31] But we do need it. And God has spoken into this human longing. He has spoken by sending His Son, Jesus. Which leads us to our text this morning.

We are in John. The Gospel of John. Chapter 10. We are continuing in our series in the first 11 chapters of John. Remember, last week, Pastor Nick preached on Jesus coming to the blind man and healing him.

Bringing sight to someone who had been blind from birth. But then also, how that provoked controversy with the religious leaders. Because Jesus did not fit into their paradigms.

Of how God would bring this life and light to the world. In our passage this morning, in John 10, we see that Jesus alone is the good shepherd we need to lead us into life.

We'll look at this in two sections. Verses 1 through 21. Jesus being the good shepherd. And verses 22 through 42. How Jesus alone can be that for us.

[4 : 35] So, let's look at these sections in sequence. If you have your Bibles at home, or if you want to read along on the screen, we're going to read verses 1 through 21 first.

And reflect on that for a few minutes. So, read along with me. John chapter 1. I'm sorry. Chapter 10, verse 1. 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 out 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 the strangers.

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

[5 : 48] 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 come that they might have life. I 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. 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.

[6 : 54] 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.

And 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? And others said, these are not the words of a demon.

These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? As we've seen in John, Jesus is using rich metaphors to try to help us understand who he is.

And he comes to us in this passage and he says, I am the good shepherd who leads us to life. And we're going to walk through the passage and make some observations about what Jesus says. Verses 1 through 5, Jesus simply paints a picture of what a sheepfold in the first century would look like.

It was often a pen or an enclosure. Sometimes it would be a natural thing like a cave. It might be put up against a house on the backside or on the side of a house with usually a single entrance.

[8 : 07] And it might hold multiple flocks from multiple shepherds. He describes how the sheep know their shepherd. So that when a shepherd comes and he calls them out, they have a relationship and they know.

And the shepherd knows the sheep and the sheep know the shepherd. And so the shepherd would come and give his whistle or his signal. And his sheep would come out and the rest would stay. And he says, and this is the relationship between healthy sheep and shepherds.

When people try to come in by another way. Or people try to come and take other sheep that are not their own. They're thieves and robbers. And so helpfully, John in verse 6 points out, he used this as a figure of speech.

So we know this is a metaphor. This is helpful. John hasn't always told us that. But here, it's very clear. He uses the figure of speech to help us understand what a lot of Old Testament Jews would have already understood some of.

Because this image of shepherd and sheep is a very well established one in the Old Testament. I want to spend a few minutes just laying out a few of the scriptures, not even exhaustively, that point to or use this imagery.

[9 : 16] So back in Numbers 27. So we're at the people of Israel have been wandering in the wilderness. They've come to the edge of the promised land. And God tells Moses, because of his disobedience and faithlessness, he is not going to enter into the promised land.

And Moses says this to God, Let the Lord appoint a man over the congregation, who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as a sheep that have no shepherd.

Psalms 23 is a well-known psalm that many, many of us have heard. The Lord is my shepherd. 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 for his name's sake. In the prophets in Isaiah chapter 40, as Isaiah is beginning to look ahead to the renewing and what it will take for God to renew his people.

He says, Say to the cities of Judah, Behold your God. He will tend his flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in his arms. He will carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young.

[10 : 36] And as Andrew read earlier in Ezekiel 34, this is in the context of judgment of the exile when God had come and removed Israel from the promised land because of their faithlessness and disobedience.

And yet he said, and he specifically in that chapter is condemning the leaders of Israel because they had not led the people to worship God, but it led them astray to worship other gods.

And he says, Those shepherds have been faithless, but I, your God, will be your faithful shepherd. But then he says later in that chapter, in verse 23 of Exodus 34, And I will set up over them.

This is a prediction coming in the future. I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them, and he shall feed them, and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them.

I am the Lord. I have spoken. Now friends, this was written long after David was dead and in his grave. He was not talking about the resurrection of David.

[11 : 46] He was talking about one in the line of David who would come and fulfill this. So Jesus steps into this long history and says, I am the good shepherd who has come to lead you to life.

And he says four things about him, and I want to move quickly through these because there's a lot to go here. First, he says, I am the way to life. I am the door. In verses 7 through 10, he says, 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. But I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly. Jesus has come to lead his sheep to life. When he leads them out to eat the grass, that is their life.

If they don't eat, they die. Think about what Jesus has done to the people that he's encountered. In chapter 9, the blind man. In chapter 5, the cripple at the pool of Bethesda.

The crowds in chapter 6, who he fed food, bread from heaven, manna, and then reminded them of a greater food. The Samaritan woman who comes out for water in the heat of the day.

[13 : 01] Jesus offers a greater water. When Jesus comes, he brings life to his sheep. He is reversing the curse of death. He is fixing the fallenness of the world.

And he says, following me will lead you to life. In contrast to the leaders of the day, in contrast to the Pharisees who are contending with him in chapter 9, he says, follow me and I will lead you to life.

That's the first thing he says. The second thing he says is in verse 14. 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.

Jesus says, I am the good shepherd who knows who are mine. And again, in this context, the Old Testament people of Israel, the greatest privilege was to be God's people, to be God's flock.

And Jesus says, I know my flock because I know the Father. And he's being provocative when he says this.

[14 : 02] He says, if you don't know me, you don't know my Father. And these Jews were claiming to know him and yet reject Jesus. Claiming to know God and yet rejecting Jesus.

So Jesus comes with this image to say, I know them. I know my own. And if you're rejecting me, don't fool yourself that you are my own.

But he says, but to all who do listen, to those who follow me, they are my own. And verse 3 reminds us, I know them by name. Friends, do you know what it's like?

Do you remember what it's like to walk into a room and have someone know you by name? To walk into school the first day after a long summer and for your friend to say, hey, Matt, it's great to see you.

To walk into a family reunion, your in-laws family reunion where you've never been before and have the host come up and say, wow, Matt, it's great to have you here.

[15 : 08] We're so glad you're a part of this family. When you are welcomed is one who is known. There's a sense of belonging, a sense of identity, a sense of welcoming, a sense of safety and of comfort.

Jesus says, I am the good shepherd and I know my own. The third thing that he says in verse 16 is that he will gather all of his own to himself.

And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them in also so that they will listen to my voice so there will be one flock and one shepherd. And again, the Jewish people thought that they were, because they were physically the descendants of Abraham, the special people.

And Jesus is reminding them as he has in multiple other ways. No, the people of God are going to come from every tribe and tongue and nation. It's not just going to come from the people of Israel.

It's going to come from everyone, everywhere. And they're not going to have to come and find me because I'm going to take the initiative to go and find them and bring them in.

[16 : 15] I'm going to find the scattered people throughout the world and I'm going to call them in to the people of God, which will ultimately be the church.

Friends, wandering sheep don't find their ways home. Shepherds have to go and find them and bring them back. And Jesus says, I'm going to go and find those of you who are looking for me and I'm going to draw you in and I'm going to bring you back with love and devotion and sacrifice.

And my people will be one flock and they will be led by one shepherd. Friends, in the kingdom of God, in Jesus, under Jesus shepherding, there is no insider, no outsider.

There is no ethnic policy. There is no income restriction. There is no educational barriers. All are welcome.

Finally, the fourth thing and the most important thing that Jesus says about his shepherding is that he says repeatedly throughout this that he is a good shepherd because he will lay down his life for his sheep so that they might live.

[17 : 29] This is the extended contrast in verses 11 through 18. I will lay down my sheep. He repeats it four times in those verses. And he contrasts it. He contrasts it with hired hands.

A hired hand is someone who is brought in but doesn't know his sheep. And he does not care for them. And when they're out in the fields and danger comes and the wolves come to attack the sheep, the hired hand says, well, this is too much.

I don't really care enough about this sheep to die. And the hired hand runs away and the sheep are ravaged by the wolves. Jesus is not a hired hand.

Jesus comes and with great love he says, I am willing to lay down my life for the sheep. I will trade my life for yours.

This is a rebuke of the leaders who sought to consolidate their own power rather than receiving Jesus who had come from God. Jesus comes and he says to these people on this day and to us today, I have come to lay down my life for you.

[18 : 42] To rescue you from the wolves. To rescue you from the false leaders that will lead you astray into paths that are not life. And even more so to lead you out of the darkness of sin and out of the slavery to fear of death.

Your greatest enemies, the wolves that most have the ability to destroy your soul. I will come and I will lay down my life. In the book of John we are close to the end.

The turning point. If you've ever thought through the map of the book of John the first 11 chapters all happen within like 3 years. The last 11 chapters have it in 7 days.

And it's all heading towards the cross. And Jesus knows that and he's saying I am coming to lay down my life at the cross for you. I will die in your place.

I will die for your sin. And I will rise again to be eternally your good shepherd who can lead you to life. Jesus declares that he is the good shepherd.

[19 : 52] And he offers an invitation. Will you hear his voice? Will you respond? Will you come to him and follow him? And we see in verses 19 through 21 that the people are divided.

Some people look at him and say you're crazy. You are a possessed man. Whatever you are thinking that's ridiculous. I'm not listening to you. But others look at his works and say could someone who had healed a blind man be powered by the devil?

That's not one who brings death but life. So Jesus says I am the good shepherd.

But he goes on in this conversation with the people in verses 22 through 41 Jesus explains more of the basis on how he can be the good shepherd.

Why he alone is the good shepherd. And it's linked specifically to his relationship with God the Father. So let's read verses 22 through 41 together. It will be on the screen here you can read it along at home.

[21 : 02] Chapter 10 verse 22. At that time the feast of dedication took place in Jerusalem. it was winter and Jesus was walking in the temple in the colonnade of Solomon.

So the Jews gathered around him and said to him how long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ tell us plainly. And Jesus answered them I told you and you did not believe.

The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me. But you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

I and the Father are one. The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them I have shown you many good works from the Father.

[22 : 05] For which of these are you going to stone me? And Jesus answered them it is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy because you being a man make yourself God.

Jesus answered them is it not written in your law I said you are gods if he called them gods to whom the word of God came and the scripture cannot be broken do you say of him who father consecrated and sent into the world you are blaspheming because I said I am the son of God if I am not doing the works of my father then do not believe me but if I do them even though you do not believe me believe the works that you may know and understand that the father is in me and I am in the father again they sought to arrest him but he escaped from their hands he went away across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first and there he remained and many came to him and they said John did no sign but everything that John said about this man was true and many believed in him there in this in this interaction with the leaders

Jesus is explaining how he can be and must be the only good shepherd for us the timing is a feast of dedication which is not a feast you will find in the Old Testament law but it comes from the history of the Jewish people when in 173 BC the Roman emperor Antiochus Epiphanes IV invaded Rome desecrated the temple sacrificed a pig on the altar and did great damage a few years later there was a rebellion the Maccabees rose up against Roman rule and pushed out the Romans and they rededicated the temple and when they rededicated the temple that's what he's talking about here it's the feast of dedications also called the festival of lights which is also called Hanukkah which is probably what many of you know it as so this is where we're at in the Jewish calendar in the year and the people come with a question are you the deliverer just as we celebrate this deliverance from Rome are you the deliverer the one that God has anointed the one that we are waiting for and at the heart of his answer is verse 30

I and the father are one what does this mean well there's been a lot of ink spilled throughout history on this one theologically but let's make a few observations first of all the oneness includes both a distinction there's a father and there's Jesus and they're separate and yet he says we are one and there's an ongoing theological discussion throughout history about whether this is the unity of purpose or oneness of purpose or whether it's a oneness of a greater oneness of essence I'm not going to answer that question today it's way too deep to try to get into the weeds of it but clearly Jesus is saying we have a oneness of purpose and I think that there's at least signs that he's pointing to what we would now understand to be the doctrine of the Trinity that God the God of the Bible is one

God a unified God in three persons and those three persons are co-equal in value they have different roles in the Trinity but this is why we worship in the Christian church a triune God Bible verses like this where show clear distinction and yet absolute commitment to the unity of God as one and friends rather than trying to sort out the hairs I hope that this morning at least we can stop and revel in the mystery and the wonder of the word of God made flesh that we can think about this being God come to earth taking on human form so that he might accomplish a redemption for us that God had determined before the beginning of the world and that we would worship him and one of the reasons I don't want to spend all my time talking about that is that's not Jesus purpose in bringing this up Jesus purpose in bringing it up in this context is to say you want to know why

[26 : 40] I'm the good shepherd why I'm the fulfillment of all those Old Testament prophecies it's because I'm from God he has sent me and he and I are one in working together and he says three things about that first he appeals to his good works as proof you see this in verse 25 and 32 and 37 and 38 do you want to know who I am look at what I've done simply stop and look at what I have done he says the source of my power is not demonic because I bring life to all who interact with me the source of my goodness as a good shepherd is that I am one with the father you have seen these you cannot deny them and if you were here this morning you're exploring who Jesus is or you're wondering who Jesus is I encourage you look at what he's done and pay a lot of attention next week as we celebrate good

Friday and as we celebrate Easter and we think about his death and his resurrection for these are the greatest works that Jesus will do and Jesus is preparing us to see those things so that's the first thing he says the second thing he says is that my oneness with the father anchors the security of my sheep I am a good shepherd because I am one with the father so verse 28 I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand my father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand pastor John Piper says this about this passage speaking in the words of Jesus the father and I are one no one can take you from me because I am stronger than all and no one can take you from my father because my father is stronger than all when you are in my hand you are in his hands when you are in his hand you are in my hand our omnipotence and our unity are your safety and your salvation friends what great comfort this is to know

Jesus as a good shepherd our relationship with God is secured based on his initiative him finding us and drawing us in him knowing us and calling us to be him because our salvation is dependent on his work in our hearts we have great security and great joy and great comfort the wonderful thing about this truth is that the confidence we have is not because this is an abstract system of logic and of theology but it is a trust in a person our good shepherd who has come to save us so in just a minute we will sing when I fear my faith will fail Christ will hold me fast when the tempter would prevail he will hold me fast I could never keep my hold through life's fearful path for my love is often cold he must hold me fast

Jesus says because I am one with the father if you follow me as your good shepherd I will hold you fast the final thing that he says here the final thing that happens in this is that his claim to oneness provokes a response you see it in verse 31 they pick up stones again to stone him for blasphemy how dare you call yourself God and he challenges them and this doesn't seem like a great theological debate it actually seems like it might be a debate tactic to say well wait a minute in Psalm 82 6 the psalmist refers to the people of God who received the revelation at Sinai that's the context of that verse that they are like gods little gods and if God is willing to do that in his word why are you stoning me for calling myself the son of God that doesn't make any sense at all as one commentator says in the heat of their opposition to what

Jesus is saying they are partly right that is he does make himself equal to God they're partly wrong his equality with God does not make him a rival to God which is what they think and they're profoundly mistaken because they don't understand that the drift of their own scriptures reveals how he is the fulfillment of them and they have not known God well enough to perceive that this revelation that he is and brings in is continuity with and a capstone of the revelation that he's already provided that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the things that these people have been longing for and they're rejecting him because they don't understand them and again there is a divided response in verse 38 they seek to arrest him verse 39 I'm sorry verse 40 through 42 people come out though the religious leaders seek to squelch Jesus the people hear and they long and they say

[32 : 31] John never did a sign but this man he is everything that John said he would be he is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world he is the one to bring life and friends this is the this is then the question for all of us how do we respond Jesus in verse 37 and 38 says this look at the works that I do if I didn't do them then they'll believe in me but if I did see the father in them believe that I am one with the father and because I am one with the father I am a good shepherd and come and believe in me for those of you who are here this morning and you have already said yes to Jesus know what great comfort it is to know him means that he knows you and if he knows you he will never let you go take great comfort in his love for you in his knowing your name and him holding you fast and the call the call for us who are seeking the call for us who are wondering who he is look at his words look at his works look most importantly at his death and resurrection because what we proclaim this morning is that the good shepherd has come and he calls us to turn to him and in faith come to him and find him to be our good shepherd let's pray lord we thank you this morning for this word we thank you for the encouragement that it is lord we pray that we would find comfort in you lord we pray for those who are seeking lord that they would lord behold your goodness and embrace you as their good shepherd we pray these things in Jesus name amen very soon you thank you for the

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