

Jesus the Good Shepherd

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 May 2026

Preacher: Sandy Fitton

[0 : 0 0] Right, Michael's right in saying, let Jesus calm her heart, because when I praise the Lord, my heart races with great joy. I love praising the Lord, but more than anything, I love hearing you! It's incredible. We get to hear you from that side, don't we, the band, and it's just an amazing thing to hear you. It really is. So today, I'm speaking from John 10, 1 to 21, but I'm only going to read 7 to 11 to introduce it, but I will be bringing all of that scripture through as I speak. So I pray in Jesus' name that you do hear what God says more than I. So let's get, if you've got your Bibles or your phones, whatever you use to read the word, it's John 10, 1 21, but I'm reading from verse 7.

And I'm reading from the NIV. Jesus said again, very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. And today's teaching is on Jesus, the good shepherd. I don't have any slides. That all went wrong. We've had a few technical glitches. So I always think if we've had a technical glitch, then Satan really doesn't want this to happen, but we're going to do it anyway.

Today, a shepherd knows his sheep by the marks that he puts on the sheep's back. It can be a paint or a different type of color or a different position on the sheep, and that's called a rud mark.

And then it can have a little clip in its ear that has the details of the shepherd.

And on May the 10th, on our local Stronger Together, we heard that there were some thieves trying to steal one of our local farmers' sheep. But the dogs barked and the sheep were saved.

[2 : 1 4] The thieves and the robbers ran away. This time, it worked, but it doesn't always.

Sometimes, even with a rud mark, even with an ear mark, the sheep are successfully stolen from their rightful owner, never to be seen again. And this is a warning to us. I'll explain later.

John 10 speaks of Jesus as the good shepherd, and his sheep are the analogy of those who become Christians and those who are to become Christians and how he protects them. But what he does explain in this as well is about the hired hand. And the hired hand is the one that comes to steal them, steal them away, rob them. And we know that Satan would love nothing more than steal our Christianity from us. He's very well known for it in John 10. He said, as I just read, he'll try and steal Christians away from their faith to ultimately steal and kill, sorry, kill and destroy them. Now, as Christians, sheep of the good shepherd, we are to listen to Jesus. And we do have him for our protection to stop the thief, Satan's ploys, to steal our faith and ultimately to kill and destroy us. And if you think this has been dramatic, it's not. Satan wants nothing more than to snatch you away from Jesus' arms. Nothing more than to snatch away your faith, even if it's just beginning or just begun.

Be aware. Because Satan's ploy is, this is the only goal he has in his life for you and I. The only goal is to stop us having faith in Jesus. And in this parable, Jesus was speaking about the sheep being in the safety of a pen. Now, in the biblical times, I had a lovely picture of it. Imagine it now, if you will. A picture of a sheep pen. It was a corral, a walled corral. But there was no gate at the front. The shepherd used to sleep in the front of it to protect his sheep. And the robbers would have to climb over the wall to try and steal those sheep. And it was usually full of nasty stuff on the top of the wall. So it made it awkward. Lambing season is crazy at the minute and on the moor.

The sheep aren't corralled into a pen. They're all over the place. This morning was absolutely mad. I think we must have probably had about 10 or 15 lambs running in front of us. And one actually jumped so high, he jumped on his mother's back. It was quite hilarious. It made me laugh out loud.

[4 : 5 4] I thought, why didn't I have a camera? It was really good. But they are nuts at the minute. They're just skittish and they're all over the place. But on the moor, they actually don't see the

distinction between the road and the moor. They just think, it's the land and I'll walk on it.

They don't have a shepherd protecting them day and night. But Jesus' parable tells us that we enter into the Christian faith through the gatekeeper. And he is the gatekeeper. He says in verse 7, very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. Now this is of utmost importance to anyone that's listening today that doesn't know this. You can only enter into Christianity, into a relationship with God one way, through one gatekeeper and one man, and that is Jesus. Anything, anyone, and any way else is a lie and a trick by Satan to stop you making the right choice for your life. So it's important then for me to explain how you can become a Christian if you aren't already, so that you can recognize the truth that is from God, not me, but from God, and make an informed choice. Because I've heard so many non-Christians say to me, well, I don't believe in God. And I think, well, which God do you not believe in? Or I don't believe the Bible. Have you read it? The answer always is no. So read the

Bible and understand that the truth comes from that and not from somebody else's opinion. Jesus tells the Pharisees and us in verse 15 that he laid down his life for us only to take it up again. No one took his life from him, but he lay it down of his own accord. He had authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again, even though this was a command he received from his father. That seems a bit of odds. But let me explain it this way. Jesus died because we sin, God who is holy, cannot be in the presence of sin, needed to have a way to be with us, and that sin had to be removed. For that, Jesus, God showed us how much he loved us by sending his one and only son into the world that we might have eternal life through him. That's John 4, 9. But then God sacrificed his one and only son so that we could have eternal life with him. That's John 3, 16. Pretty famous verse that, isn't it? And this was a jointly decided sacrifice. Jesus gave his life, as I've just reminded you in John 10, 15. But 1 Peter 3, 18 says this, Christ suffered for our sins once and for all, all time. He never sinned. I've heard someone say that

Jesus sinned because he was in a human body. That's not true. He never sinned. Not once. Not in thought, not in word, not in deed. But he did die for the sinners who sinned, that's you and I, to bring them safely home to God. To bring you and I safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit, and that's what all this is about. Ephesians 1, 20 tells us that Jesus is now sat at the right hand of the Father and interceding on our behalf so that we can make the right choice.

And this is it. Acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God. Acknowledge he died for your sins and say sorry. It's easy to say sorry sometimes. It's hard. Some others. But Jesus accepts every sorry if it's from the heart. And then he asks us just to repent and walk away from those sins. They're not good for you anyway, so why would we do them? And as we accept Jesus as our Savior, we allow him to guide our life.

[8 : 47] He doesn't control us. He just allows us to walk a beautiful and wonderful and abundant life. And it is simple and profound, but this choice will restore the broken relationship that you have with God.

And if you're not a Christian, you have a broken relationship with God. It will change your life for the better, and it will save you from hell, which is a place of extreme sorrow and regret.

Read Matthew 13, 42 to understand that further. Now the Pharisees didn't like this and didn't get it at all. They were the ones that interpreted the law, maintained strict purity, ritual purity laws, and taught this in the synagogues. But because of this, they were stuck firmly in their religion, stuck firmly in their rituals and their laws. Because of that, they couldn't see Jesus.

He was right in front of them. Because of this, they kept the Jews that they were teaching from knowing the truth. That there, right in front of them, was the one that was the one way to get them to a relationship with God, and not the laws and the rituals that they were trying to abide by.

And for the purity they were trying to achieve that they would never achieve on their own. They made up rules. The Pharisees made up rules and regulations were moving people farther and farther away from the Ten Commandments that Moses brought down from the mountain when God gave them to him.

[10 : 16] And yet they professed to follow Moses in chapter 9. Jesus told them very truly, I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.

The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. But the Pharisees didn't understand what he was telling

them.

How could they when they weren't seeking God's answer to their sin? So Jesus spelled them out, spelled it out in plain language. He said this, Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers. I am the gate. Who enters in through me will be saved. I am the good shepherd. They weren't listening because they thought they were right. Pride in their unbending knowledge and authoritative position in society meant that they wouldn't learn or admit they were wrong. They wouldn't put their trust in the good shepherd simply because they couldn't see past their own pride and power.

[11 : 28] Don't let that be our legacy. You may be sitting here today wondering, Why should I put my trust in this good shepherd? You know, that's a good question to ask.

Well, one that I will answer by reading John's gospel. Jesus told us this. He said, I am the good shepherd because he knows what a good shepherd is and what a good shepherd does. The good shepherd lays down his life, he says, for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. Jesus knows you as intimately as he knows God. And he and God are one, it says in John 10.30.

So he's that close to us because he's that close to God. And because he knows us that well, he willingly gave up his life for us so that we wouldn't suffer for our own sins.

[12 : 28] So that we would have a relationship with the Father. So that when we accept Jesus as our Savior, we can call God our Father too.

You know, this just shows how the relationship changes when we have mercy and grace instead of law and rituals in place. Christianity is the only faith that has grace and mercy and not law and rituals and works to get you into some form of a kingdom.

Our faith gets us into a relationship with God now and forever. And Jesus knows how wonderful that relationship with God is. And importantly, he knows how awful it is to be out of that relationship. Because he died and suffered on the cross and took our sin. And for that time, he was in a state of pain that we cannot comprehend.

He didn't run away from the task of dealing with our sin. And he didn't run away from being separated from his Father because he loves us. He also tells us what the imitation is.

[13 : 36] It's the hired hand. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.

The man runs away because he's a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. Let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, the hired hand will throw you to the wolves. He has invested nothing in you and he does not care for you.

Because he doesn't own you. But Jesus does. And because of this, and because he is our good shepherd, we would trust him in every circumstance, even when things get tough.

I have a lovely story of a man called Michael who was caught on the 78th floor of Tower 1 during 9-11. Michael, blind since birth, had his dog, Rozelle, with him there.

And when the first plane hit, Rozelle picked up and took him down the stairwell. And down 30, I think it was 1,463 steps.

[14 : 41] But wonderfully, he was then followed by 30 other people in that building. And that dog took them from all through the debris and through the noise and through the smoke and got them down.

And after sending half that distance, they stopped to greet the firefighters. firefighters. And I love that, because wouldn't that have been an encouragement to those firefighters heading into, who knows, their own death maybe?

That dog took the time to greet them. The descent actually took over an hour. It wasn't a quick trip down the stairs. He was leading a blind man, and probably the rest were blind, because it was full of smoke and debris.

But that dog kept going no matter what. No matter what flew at them, it kept going. Michael later said, while everyone ran in panic, Rozelle, his dog, remained totally focused on her job.

While debris fell around us, and even hit us, Rozelle stayed calm. But once she was clear, she led the owner and those other people far away to a subway station, where it was safe.

[15 : 48] And when they got there, they helped another woman who was blinded by the attack. Now, I've heard of the blind leading the blind. But this was the blind dog leading the blind.

Wasn't it? Incredible. Rozelle, by the way, when she got home, immediately started playing with her predecessor guide dog, Linny, as if nothing important had happened.

It was just another day in the duty of her life to look after the one she loved. Michael trusted the one who was his eyes. He trusted the one who could see and guide him in normal daily life.

So he did it when disaster struck as well. And you know, if we are Christians, we can do that too. We know that we can trust Jesus, no matter what.

David, the psalmist, wrote in Psalm 56, that when he was afraid, he said, when I'm afraid, I will put my trust in you. That was, put my trust in God.

[16 : 53] We can do that with Jesus now. Jesus said that the sheep, that's anyone who can put their trust in him and accept him as their savior, anyone that hears his voice will follow him.

He also said that those who accept the one way and accept him as their savior will come in and go out and find pasture. Jesus offers a life of abundance, not one of pharisaical laws and restrictions. In the Amplified Bible, verse 10 says this. He says, I came that they, that's you and I, may have and enjoy life.

You know, Christians do enjoy life. It's not boring. Is it? Oh, hang on. Is it boring? Oh, good. Still half-hearted. But it isn't.

Life as a Christian is not boring. It is exciting. Because when you walk with Jesus, oh my goodness, do things, fun things happen. And good things happen, even in the bad times.

[17 : 53] I have a saying when people say, how are you? I say, I'm good. Or I say, how are you? They say, not bad. I say, I hope that's not, better than not good.

And I say, I'm fine even when I'm not. Because quite frankly, when I'm not, I know that Jesus has got me. And I will be fine. If you ask a Christian, if their glass is half empty or half full, what do you think they'll say?

No. Full. Overflowing. Remember that one. Our glass is never half full. It is always overflowing if we rely on Jesus.

As a follower of Jesus, it is a joy to hear Jesus' voice and follow him. And in fact, I am overjoyed to say, I am a follower of Jesus. I'm not ashamed to call him my savior.

I'm not ashamed to say that he is my God. I don't make him my idol, because that's something that you would put on a plinth and just do the wrong thing with. But he is my God.

[18 : 58] For sure. I am so glad that he led me out of the life I had before him. Because quite frankly, that wasn't a good life. I thought it was.

I thought it was, I was doing all right. Until I realized, until I came to faith, and then I realized, wow, life is so much better with him than without him.

And I imagine that when Jesus reconnected with God, it was, phew, yes, it's done. He said it on the cross. It is finished.

And it's true. It is. He's dealt with it. And all we need to do is accept. Now I can read this and know what it means when Jesus said in John 4 to 5, John 10, 4 to 5, he calls his own sheep by name, and he leads them out.

His sheep follow him, because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger. In fact, they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the stranger's voice.

[20 : 00] Because I know God, the good shepherd, and I know him intimately too, I also know the imitation. And then because I know the true voice of God, I won't listen to the stranger's voice either.

I never want to go back to my old life. I trust Jesus with my life. And why wouldn't I, if he gave his life for me? I'll throw this question out to you.

Why wouldn't you? If he gave his life for you. As Mike said earlier, not one person has been excluded from this invitation. Jesus said something really important in this passage, and I want you who are not Christians yet to know that this is him calling you today.

If you don't know him as your savior yet, please listen up. He said this in verse 16, I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.

They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. I'll explain. Jesus was speaking about the Gentiles then.

[21 : 10] To the Pharisees, they weren't Jews. They weren't part of the Israelite heritage, the Jewish law and the inheritance. They were outsiders to them and could never be part of the flock.

Well, Jesus' mission was and is that everyone will know there is one gatekeeper, one shepherd, and there will one day be one flock. You may be sitting here today and thinking that this doesn't count for me.

I'm an outsider. I've done too much for God to forgive me. And I can't change because I've tried it before and it didn't work. Well, that's a lie.

This is the truth. You do count to Jesus. You are not an outsider and most certainly not an outsider in this church. You're welcome. You're welcome.

Just as you are. Even the vilest offender is given a pardon. When he repents, he or she repents. And when you accept Jesus, everything changes for the better.

[22 : 14] The struggle is no longer yours and yours alone. Jesus has got you. He's your good shepherd. He'll show you the right way. He'll show you how.

He'll keep you safe. And every Christian will testify to that. 1 Timothy 2, 3 to 5 states this. God wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind. The man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as ransom for all people. Now, if your heart is racing in your chest at this moment and you don't know why, I do.

It's because Jesus is talking to you. He's calling you. He's saying, come into this life of a full abundant life that I will give you. See, listening and hearing Jesus, having your heart thumping in your chest is the first part of accepting Jesus as your Savior.

Savior. The second part is this. And it's one of the most important steps you'll take in your life. It is the most important step you'll ever take in your life.

[23 : 28] You say, yes. Accept Jesus as your Savior. Accept the fact that he is God. That he will give you a relationship with God. That he's the good shepherd.

That he's taken your sins away from you. Say sorry. And then say, thank you. It's amazing. We should be thankful for Jesus taking our sin.

Say yes to living a full and abundant life of eternity in heaven. Which is not hearts and clouds, by the way. Far from it.

And say no to the old life ruling your new life. The Pharisees were living a life of self-appointed power. They weren't listening to Jesus. This message that day was for them.

They needed to know they were leading people astray. And their rules and regulations and hierarchy was doing it. This message today is for you and I to know Jesus is our good shepherd.

[24 : 26] Even now. You may feel like some of the Jews who saw and heard that Jesus that day. Saw Jesus that day. And divided between your thoughts and the decision. Verse 19 to 21 tells us that the Jews who heard Jesus explaining who he was were again divided.

That happens a lot when Jesus comes around. Many of them said he is demon possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him? But others said these are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon.

Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? Well if you thought I was being dramatic at the beginning I think this is dramatic. When they call him raving mad and a demon. Thought that was a bit over the top.

But the mere mention of Jesus does cause division. Does cause this quite frankly. A point in your life where you have to make a decision. You're either for him or against him.

You can't be agnostic. It's either a yes or a no according to God. But I implore you to ignore opinion of anyone. And even yourself if you don't know Jesus yet.

[25 : 32] And listen to Jesus. Listen to what was said today. My prayer is the same as Paul's when he wrote to the Ephesians. Over 2,000 years ago. Hasn't changed.

The message is still the same. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened. In order that you may the hope to which he has called you. The riches of his glorious inheritance.

In his holy people. And his incomparably great power. For us who believe. I pray that you and I are not like those Pharisees.

And undecided Jews. I pray that we have ears to ear. And hearts to listen. Not pharisaical ears. Or questioning hearts. And that we respond to the good shepherd.

He's calling us all to a full abundant life right now. A relationship. Not a religion. A relationship that will last on earth. But will take us up to heaven.

[26 : 30] Beyond death. I'm going to finish with this. To give you thought. Would the band like to come up and play please? The saddest thing to hear. The saddest thing to hear on the moor.

Is when the lambs have been taken from their mums. We can hear bleating for days after. As their mothers are searching for them. The lambs are led away from the safety of their mothers.

And the moor. Oblivious to the danger of their lives. The saddest thing. To hear. Is when a Christian has given up on their faith.

Leaving the safety of Jesus. The good shepherd. Oblivious to the wolf. The danger of the wolf. In sheep's clothing. If you are a Christian.

That has backslidden. I think that's the word for it. It's a big word for. Fallen away. Given up on Jesus. Given up on God. For whatever reason. May I pray for you.

[27 : 32] That you don't give up on Jesus fully. You come back. You come back to the safety of the fold. You come back to his protection.

And allow somebody to speak with you this morning. There's going to be John at the front here. And the elders at the front here. Come and speak to somebody.

If you're cross. Angry. Upset. Sad. At something that you believe God has done. Come. Speak it out. Let someone hear you.

And let's hear your heart. And then hear God's heart. As he's calling you back. Back. Back to him. And if you haven't accepted Jesus right now.

Then I ask you. Just to quietly. In your heart. Ask him to come. And show you who he is.

[28 : 30] Ask him to reveal himself to you. He will. He did it to me. He did it to all the Christians in this room. And then come for prayer at the front here.

By all means. And ask someone to show you how you can give your life to Jesus. And it's not a way of giving up. It's not giving up.

It's not giving anything. But giving yourself to somebody that cares for you. That is the good shepherd that wants only the best for you.

Now and forever. Amen. Amen. Thank you.