

# Jesus The Shepherd

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well if we could with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the Gospel according to John, John chapter 10. And if we read verse 11, John chapter 10 and verse 11 where Jesus says, I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Jesus says, I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. You know whenever I think of a shepherd, there's one person from my childhood who sticks in my mind and I'm always reminded of her every time I think of the role of a shepherd. In fact, she isn't a shepherd, she's a shepherdess and there are a few of them. There are some living on the west side too, these shepherdesses who love their sheep. But you know when I was growing up in Melbus, there was one woman in particular and she loved her sheep so much so that you'd see her pass our house. She'd pass our house on her bike probably two if not three times a day and she'd be going down the road to check on her sheep and she would keep watch over her sheep, she would watch over them morning, noon and night, rain, hail or shine. She was committed, she was a caring and a compassionate shepherdess because like many people in our community and beyond, they love their sheep. But you know what always amazed me about the Melbus shepherdess, that's what I'll call her, the Melbus shepherdess. What amazed me about her was that she could open the gate at one end of the village and she would just walk her sheep along the road through the village and the sheep would know exactly where to go and when to turn and what craft to walk into and she could direct her sheep to their destination without even having to lift her voice or use a sheep dog. And sometimes you would even see the sheep, you would see them wandering along the road long before you would ever see her and yet the sheep they knew exactly where they were going. Well at least that's what it seemed to me as a young boy.

But you know what sets Jesus the good shepherd apart from all the other shepherds and shepherdesses that we know. What sets Jesus apart is that Jesus is the only shepherd who died for his sheep.

Jesus is the only shepherd who was slaughtered in place of his sheep. Jesus is the only shepherd who can claim and confess, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

It's a unique claim. And you know I'd like us to consider this claim and also the verses in relation to it I'd like us to think about it this morning under three headings. The contrast of the shepherd, the call of the shepherd and the cross of the shepherd, so the contrast of the shepherd, the call of the shepherd and the cross of the shepherd. So first of all the contrast of the shepherd. The contrast of the shepherd. Now look at verse 10. We read there that the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. Jesus says, 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.

Now as we said before, John chapter 10, it finds its setting once again at the temple in Jerusalem. Only this time it's December and it's a different Jewish festival that's taking place.

[ 4 : 0 1 ] And we're told in verse 22 that it's winter and it's the feast of dedication or Chanukah. That festival is taking place and Jesus is there and he's speaking to the crowds.

But as we saw last week, Jesus told the crowds that they have a deficient leadership. They have a deficient leadership. Jesus said that these religious leaders who are wandering around in the temple courtyard, they're wandering around with all their pomp and their ceremony.

And Jesus says their leadership is deficient. It's directionless. It's defunct. It's a dead leadership. As Jesus said in 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. And what Jesus said to the crowds was that your religious leaders, their thieves and robbers, they claim and they confess to be the shepherds of Israel. They say that they have a care and a compassion for the souls of God's people. But Jesus says the truth is they've only come to steal, kill and destroy.

They've only come to see what they can get and gain out of God's people. Because for them, it's not about the sheep. It's about self. It's not about the flock. It's about their facade. It's not about pastoring. It's all about their popularity. It's, it's, they only come to seek their own interests and their own inclinations. And Jesus says to them, they're not good shepherds.

They're godless shepherds. They're godless shepherds. But you know, in order to emphasize his point, as we touched on last Lord's Day, Jesus told the crowds a parable. It's the only parable in John's Gospel. And we'll call it the parable of the sheepfold, where Jesus, he describes this large circular stone walled pen for sheep. And he, he described that a traveling shepherd who had come a long distance, he would come and leave his sheep in the sheepfold, he would leave them there as he went into a town or a village to find rest and refreshment. And the shepherd would leave his flock. He would leave them in this sheepfold. He would lead the flock through the, the narrow gate, this little opening in the stone wall. And he would leave the sheep in the sheepfold. And he would leave them in the care of the doorkeeper. But with no gate on the sheepfold, and in order to keep the sheep in and keep all the wild animals out and all the thieves and robbers out, in order to protect the sheep, the doorkeeper, you'll remember, he would lie down in the opening.

[ 6 : 59 ] And by lying down in the opening, the doorkeeper would literally become the door to the sheepfold. And as we saw last Lord's Day, the crowds, they didn't really understand the parable of the sheepfold. They didn't understand what Jesus was talking about. And so Jesus just says to the crowds, he says to them that he is the doorkeeper. Jesus said, I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved. Jesus said to them, I am your only access to safety, security and salvation.

Jesus was saying to them, I'm the middleman, I'm the mediator, I'm the, the one who has come to, to lie down in the gap and fill this chasm that exists between a holy God and sinful man. I'm your mediator. But of course, when Jesus said, I am the door, he was giving us his third I am saying in John's Gospel. As we said before, John, he records all of these I am sayings in order to, to make sure that we get the identity of Jesus right. Because if we get the identity of Jesus wrong, it's a big mistake, because we'll misunderstand the Gospel and we'll fail to see that Jesus is the Son of God and the only Savior of sinners. And you know, that's actually what happens here with the crowds. They fail to see who Jesus is. They fail to see that Jesus is the Son of God and the only Savior of sinners. And so what Jesus does is he carries on explaining his parable of the sheepfold. And he says in verse 11, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. And of course, by making that declaration, I am the good shepherd,

Jesus is contrasting himself to the godless shepherds in Israel. Jesus, he claimed and confessed that the godless shepherds, these religious leaders, they were thieves and robbers, they're only out to steal and kill and destroy. But Jesus says, as the good shepherd of the sheep, I have come that sinful sheep may have the promise of abundant life, of eternal life.

But you know what's really interesting here is that Jesus contrasts the godless shepherds of Israel with himself as the good shepherd. He makes this contrast because that's what the Lord did.

That's what the Lord did when he criticized and condemned the false shepherds in the Old Testament. You remember when we looked, we touched on it last week in Ezekiel 34, where the Lord commanded Ezekiel to proclaim and pronounce judgment on the shepherds in Israel. And Ezekiel was to do that because like the leadership here, the shepherds in Ezekiel 34 were deficient leaders. There was a deficient leadership and Ezekiel prophesied to the godless shepherds, he said, thus says the Lord, you don't feed the sheep, the weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back and the lost you have not sought. But then in contrast to that, in contrast to the godless shepherds, Ezekiel prophesied and proclaimed that the Lord is the good shepherd in Israel. Because Ezekiel, he went on to say, thus says the Lord, behold I am against the shepherds and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to them. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. The Lord says,

[11:07] I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them. Behold, I will search for my sheep and will seek them out. I will rescue them. I will feed them with good pasture. I will be the shepherd of my sheep. I will seek the lost. I will bring back the strayed.

I will bind up the injured and I will strengthen the weak. And you know, it's based upon that prophecy in Ezekiel that Jesus here, Jesus the true prophet of God, he criticizes and condemns the religious leaders as deficient shepherds and he says that they're godless shepherds and he does that in contrast to himself. He claims and confesses that he is the divine shepherd. He is the good shepherd in Israel. You know, my friend Jesus was emphasizing to the crowds and to these criticised shepherds. He was saying that he is the Lord. He's the one who was speaking in Ezekiel 34.

He's the covenant god of his people. He's the true shepherd of Israel. He is the shepherd who led his flock through the wilderness for 40 years. He's the shepherd who brought his flock into the promised land. He is the shepherd whom David, King David claimed and confessed in Psalm 23 when he said the Lord is my shepherd. He is the Lord. That's what Jesus was saying. I am the Lord. I am the good shepherd. And so in contrast to the deficient and godless shepherds in Israel, Jesus says that he is the divine and the good shepherd in Israel and he has come to rescue and redeem and restore his sheep. My friend, that's why Jesus has come. That's why he's come. He has come in contrast to the deficient leadership in Israel because he has a divine leadership. He has come in contrast to the godless shepherds in Israel because he is the good shepherd. My friend, Jesus has come and as he says,

I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly. Jesus has come for lost sheep.

He has come to seek and to save lost sheep so that we will receive and enjoy abundant life and eternal life. And as we were saying to the children, we need to be praying, Jesus, come and find me. I'm lost. Come and find me. He has come that we might have life and have it more abundantly. And so we see first of all the contrast of the shepherd. But then secondly, we see the call of the shepherd, the contrast of the shepherd and the call of the shepherd, the call of the shepherd. Well, read in verse two. We're told that 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. You know, like the crowds who first heard the parables of Jesus, you know, we sometimes find it difficult to understand the true meaning of a parable. And so what Jesus does here is that he explained his parable and he says to the crowds that he is not only the doorkeeper of the sheepfold who laid down in the gap. Jesus says that he's also the good shepherd of the sheep who laid down his life for the sheep. But what confirms that Jesus is the good shepherd of the sheep is that as the shepherd, he enters by the door of the sheepfold. Because the doorkeeper, as we read there, he will only open to the true shepherd of the sheep. He won't open to thieves and robbers. He won't step out of the way for thieves and robbers. But you know, as both doorkeeper and shepherd in this parable, Jesus is saying to us that there is only one shepherd. There can only be one way of salvation. And the doorkeeper will only open to the true shepherd of the sheep. And it's only the true shepherd who can call the sheep to himself.

[ 16 : 02 ] It's only the true shepherd who can lead out the flock. That's what he says in verse 3, to him the gatekeeper opens, the sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And you know, the illustration that Jesus is using here, it was very common in ancient Israel that a traveling shepherd, he would leave his sheep in a sheepfold overnight.

And then in the morning, when the shepherd would come and collect his sheep, the doorkeeper would just admit the shepherd by simply allowing the shepherd to call his sheep to come. All the shepherd would have to do is call his sheep to come to him. And the sheep, they would hear the voice of their shepherd and they would know the voice of the shepherd and they would come and they would follow the shepherd out of the sheepfold. And you know, what's remarkable is that sometimes there was actually more than one flock that was kept in the sheepfold. And yet the sheep would know the voice of their shepherd. They would know the voice of the shepherd and they would respond to the voice of the shepherd and they would follow the voice of the shepherd out of the sheepfold. Of course, it's very different to what we are used to because when we try to get sheep to go in the right direction, we have to use gates and barriers and we have to block off accesses and we need sheep dogs to round up sheep. But in ancient Israel, sheep would go in the right direction simply when they heard the voice of their shepherd. They would respond to the voice of the shepherd.

And you ask the good shepherd, Jesus is reminding us about the call of the shepherd. Jesus is reminding us about the call of the shepherd because the call of the shepherd, it's not only powerful, it's also personal. The call of the shepherd is not only powerful, it's also personal.

And you know, as sinful sheep, that's what we are. We are sinful sheep. As sinful sheep, Jesus says that we hear the call of the shepherd through the preaching of the gospel and through the providence of God. Jesus says that we hear the call of the shepherd through the preaching of the gospel and through the providence of God. And it's a powerful and a personal call when we hear the call of the shepherd because the good shepherd, he calls us to come to him. He calls us to follow him through preaching and through providence.

And you know, the thing is, every time we hear the gospel, every time we listen to a sermon, every time we open the Bible, every time we do what we're doing this morning, the shepherd is calling us. The shepherd is calling us. The call of the shepherd, it comes to us through preaching. And the call of the shepherd, it also comes to us through providence. Because you know, my friend, when we're confronted by the reality of sin or sickness or suffering or sorrow, when we're confronted by these realities in our lives, we have to see that the shepherd is calling us. It's the call of the shepherd. The shepherd is calling us to come to him and to follow him and to trust in him. But like sheep who hear the call of the shepherd, we must respond to the voice to the voice of the shepherd. We have to respond to the voice of the shepherd. But you know, the

[ 19 : 53 ] Bible teaches us that through the outward call of the shepherd, through preaching and through providence, that outward call, it is made effectual. It's made personal by the work of the Holy Spirit.

It's made a personal and powerful call of the shepherd when the Holy Spirit is working in the heart and life of a sinful sheep. And you know, this is what I always find so wonderful about salvation. Because when the Holy Spirit is working, when the Holy Spirit is working in the heart and life of a sinful sheep, they hear that powerful and personal call of the shepherd.

And you know, my friend, when you hear that powerful and personal call of the shepherd, you know that he's speaking to you. You know that he's speaking to you in your providence.

You know that he's speaking to you powerfully. You know that he's speaking to you through preaching. Now, it's not that the voice of a preacher that you hear, it's not his voice that you hear, it's the voice of the true shepherd, the true pastor. And it's not even that the poor preacher who used to be maybe so boring in the past, it's not that he somehow got any better.

He's been trying his best the whole time. It's not that he knows what's going on in your personal life either or that the Bible has all of a sudden become more interesting and more alive.

[ 21 : 30 ] My friend, that is the powerful and personal call of the shepherd. It's the powerful and personal call of the shepherd. But maybe you're asking this morning, how do I know if the shepherd is calling me? How do I know that I've heard the voice of the shepherd? How do I know that I have experienced this powerful and personal call of the shepherd? My friend, you know that you've heard the powerful and personal call of the shepherd when you are convinced that you're a sinful sheep in need of a saving shepherd. You know that you've heard the call of the shepherd when you're convinced that you're a sinful sheep in need of a saving shepherd. You know, whenever I think about Jesus as our shepherd, I'm always drawn back to Douglas Macmillan's book, The Lord Our Shepherd.

And my friend, if you haven't read it, read it. And if you haven't read it in a while, read it again. It's a brilliant book about Jesus, our shepherd. It's a book called The Lord Our Shepherd.

It was an address that was originally given at the Aberystwyth Conference over 40 years ago. But it's still as relevant today. And Douglas Macmillan, he was a free church minister, but he was also a shepherd for many, many years. And he brings all these shepherd themes into and he applies it to scripture. And it's in that wonderful little book. And I'd encourage you to read it. The Lord Our Shepherd. Because there's a section in the book, when Douglas Macmillan, he describes the powerful and personal call of the shepherd. He describes that powerful and personal voice of the shepherd speaking into his experience. And he speaks from his own personal experience. He says, for 21 years, I listened to the gospel, but I hadn't a clue what the gospel was about. I had heard the gospel from my parents. I had heard the gospel from the pulpit. And I had heard preachers say, if you want to be a Christian, you must come to Christ.

And I used to think, says Douglas Macmillan, I used to think, what on earth does that mean? The gospel was just jargon to me. And words like come to Christ, trust in Christ, you must be born again. He says, they didn't mean a thing to me. Then all of a sudden, all of a sudden, the gospel began to have meaning for me. When a preacher said, come to Christ, I knew what he meant.

When he said, Christ died for your sins. I thought, that's wonderful. What had happened? He asks, what had happened? I was hearing with understanding. I knew the shepherd's voice. I had become a sheep of the good shepherd. And you know, my friend, that's what it's like when you hear that powerful and personal call of the shepherd. You recognize his voice and you respond to his voice. You recognize and you respond to the voice of the good shepherd. And it's when you, it's then that you can say with Douglick's Macmillan and also Horatius Bonar, another free church minister, where he wrote that him, I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. Lay down thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast. I came to Jesus as I was weary and worn and sad. And I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad. My friend, have you heard the powerful and personal voice of the good shepherd this morning? If you have heard his voice, if you recognize his voice, then you must respond. You must respond in faith and obedience. You must come to this shepherd. You must come to him.

[ 26 : 09 ] And he will make you glad as Horatius Bonar said. And so we've considered the contrast of the shepherd and the call of the shepherd. But then lastly, we see the cross of the shepherd, the cross of the shepherd. Now look at verse 14. Jesus says, 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, 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. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down with 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. Now in these verses, Jesus, our shepherd, he gives us a commentary on his own death.

In fact, Jesus has more to say in these verses concerning his own death than in any other passage in Scripture. But what's remarkable is that as Jesus preaches to the crowds who are gathered at the temple, Jesus preaches about Jesus Christ and him crucified. Jesus preaches to the crowds about himself. You could see that Christ is preaching Christ because Jesus is both speaker and subject. Jesus is both preacher and proposition. Jesus is expositing and expounding himself.

Jesus Christ, you could say, is the greatest preacher who ever lived and yet he's addressing the greatest subject that there is, Jesus Christ. But you know, as Jesus preaches on the subject of Christ and him crucified, we see that he designates and he describes himself as the good shepherd. He says it again. He said it in verse 11 and then he says it again in verse 14. I am the good shepherd. And he makes this statement in contrast to the godless shepherds in Israel who were the religious leaders. And Jesus is saying to the crowds, I am the righteous shepherd. I am the faithful shepherd. I am the obedient shepherd. I am the superior shepherd to these shepherds. I am the beautiful shepherd. I am the excellent shepherd. In other words, Jesus was saying, there's no other shepherd like me. There's no other shepherd like the good shepherd. And the thing is, my friend, he says, he says that he's not a good shepherd. He is the good shepherd. He's not one shepherd among a host of other shepherds. He's not the shepherd of the month or the shepherd of the year. No, Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. And he's the only one. He's the only one who can shepherd your soul.

[ 29 : 20 ] That's a beautiful thing about Jesus. He's the only shepherd who can shepherd your soul. My friend, he's the good shepherd. He's the good shepherd. But how good is the good shepherd?

How good is the good shepherd? And Jesus answers that question. He says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Do you know, in complete contrast to the godless shepherds in Israel, Jesus preaches Christ and him crucified. And he says, the good shepherd dies for the sheep. Jesus says, you've never had a shepherd love you like this shepherd.

You've never had a shepherd that would willingly lay down his life for the spiritual good of your soul. And Jesus says, I have not only come to stand in the gap between holy God and sinful man, I have come to bring reconciliation and redemption and restoration through my sacrificial death.

I have come, says Jesus, that you might have life and have it more abundantly. And you know, let's be clear. If Jesus, Jesus is saying here that he is not only he's not only going to die on behalf of the sheep, but he says he has chosen to lay down his life for the sheep. Jesus says that he willingly lay down his life. It was a voluntary death, which means, my friend, that the cross of the shepherd, it wasn't an accident. It wasn't a mistake. The cross wasn't a random chance event. It wasn't a bit of bad luck for this good shepherd. No, it was a divine appointment. It was the love of God being demonstrated towards us as sinful sheep like you and me. Do you know what was the 19th century preacher Octavius Winslow? He once famously asked that question, who delivered Jesus up to die?

Who delivered Jesus up to die? And Octavius Winslow said, it wasn't Judas for money. It wasn't Pilate for fear. It wasn't even the Jews for envy. But it was the Father for love.

[ 31 : 52 ] It was the Father for love. And that's what Jesus says here. He says in verse 17, 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. You know, Jesus, he repeatedly explains that the cross of the shepherd is all about laying down his life for the sheep. He lays down his life for the sheep. And that little word for, it's a major theological truth. It's often said that large doors swing on small hinges.

And when you know, when it comes to the Bible, major theological truths, they swing on small words. And that's what we see here. Jesus says the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

I lay down my life for the sheep, meaning for the benefit of the sheep, for the sake of the sheep, in the place of the sheep, for the good of the sheep. The good shepherd laid down his life so that we could have abundant life, eternal life. My friend, this is the central truth of the gospel.

This is the cross of the shepherd. The cross of the shepherd. You know, Jesus is reminding us about what will take place from this point in three months time. And it will be Calvary's great transaction. We're on the cross. Jesus, our shepherd, bore our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Jesus, our shepherd was wounded for our transgressions. Jesus, our shepherd was bruised for our inequities. Jesus, our shepherd, experienced the justice meant which brought us peace.

[ 33 : 59 ] Jesus, our shepherd received stripes so that we could be healed. My friend, on the cross, Jesus, our shepherd was our sinless substitute and sacrifice. He was slaughtered in our place.

On the cross, our shepherd took the penalty and punishment for our sin. It was Calvary's great transaction. He who knew no sin became sin for us. Also that we through, we might become the righteousness of God in him. It was Calvary's great transaction. And because of the shepherd, my friend, we can say this morning on the cross, on the cross, the worst about me was laid upon him.

And the best about him was laid upon me. My disobedience was reckoned to him. His obedience was reckoned to me. My sin and shame was transferred to Christ. His salvation and security was transferred to me. My ruin was all credited to him. His riches were all credited to me. My righteousness, my unrighteousness, my filthy righteousness was imputed to him. His beautiful, glorious, perfect righteousness was imputed to me. My friend, he is Jesus, our shepherd.

Jesus, our shepherd, it was Calvary's great transaction. It was the cross of the shepherd. That's what Jesus is talking about here, the cross of the shepherd. And Jesus is saying to you this morning, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd laid down his life for the sheep. It's powerful and it's personal. It's so personal. Jesus is speaking to us this morning, my friend.

He's speaking to us powerfully and he's speaking to us personally. And he's reminding us that we need to recognize his voice and we need to respond to his voice. We need to recognize his voice and respond to his voice. It's powerful and it's personal. And you know, my unconverted friend, all I want to say to you in conclusion this morning, all I want to say to you is what the Sammet said about the shepherd in Psalm 95. Because the Sammet in Psalm 95, he invited us to come as we sang earlier this morning. He invited us to come. But he also warned us today today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. If you recognize the voice of Jesus, our shepherd this morning, then respond to the voice of Jesus, our shepherd. Respond by coming to him and calling upon him and committing your life to him. My friend, respond to Jesus because Jesus is saying to you this morning, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

[ 37 : 49 ] Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us and let us pray together. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for such a wonderful shepherd.

A shepherd who not only calls sinners to himself, but a shepherd who lays down his life in the place of sinners, that we are a sinful people. We are like sinful sheep. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. And yet thy word reminds us that the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. O Lord, our plea this morning is that those who are hearing the voice of the shepherd, that they would recognize his voice and that they would respond to his voice, that they would come and follow him and that they would walk with his shepherd because this shepherd promises that goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me and in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be. Go before us, we ask, cleanse as we plead, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

But we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning. We're going to sing the words of Sam Atee. Sam Atee in the Scottish Salta and we're going to sing the opening three verses.

Sam Atee from the beginning and Sam Atee it begins with this call, this call to hear, to hear the voice of the shepherd, to recognize his voice and to respond to his voice.

Sam Atee from verse one, here Israel's shepherd like a flock, thou that does Joseph guide, shine forth, though thou that does between the cherubim's abide. We'll sing on down to the verse marked three of Sam Atee to God's praise.

[ 40 : 26 ] In Ephraim's and Benjamin's and in the Nazteh's side O come for us the vision, dear of thy strength and might.

Thine arms again, O Lord our Lord, and upon us the same, to make thy countenance to shine and so we shall be saved.