

I am the Good Shepherd

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[0 : 00] Well, great to see you this morning. Grab your Bible and turn to John chapter 10. This is where we're going to be today. And friends, we have the most marvellous passage of Scripture that we're looking at this morning.

If you're here today and the question in your mind, the one that we've been thinking about over the past few weeks, who is Jesus? What's he all about? Who is he? Then this passage this morning is going to get right to the heart of who he is.

Wonderful passage of Scripture. So why don't we pause as we come to John chapter 10. And let's pray together. Father God, it's our prayer now that as we turn to your word, that your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, would walk off the pages of Scripture and become so precious to each one of us.

Father, it's something that we know we can't conjure up ourselves. We need your help. And thank you so much that you've given us your precious Holy Spirit to help us see. And so, Father, we ask that he would come now and do his work in our lives of glorifying Jesus in our sight.

In his name we pray. Amen. Well, here we are then at the third installment of this little series that we've been in over the past few weeks, looking at these I Am sayings as we find them in John's Gospel.

[1 : 18] And as you can imagine, in line with today's reading, I've been thinking a lot about shepherds this week. Now, I don't know who you first think of when you hear that word shepherd. But my mind immediately goes to a certain little lady who features in a nursery rhyme that one of my little girls came home singing about recently that she'd learned at nursery.

So, did anyone else think of Bo Peep? Viewers. Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep and doesn't know where to find them. Leave them alone and they'll come home wagging their tails behind them.

Now, she's singing this song. I've got two thoughts in my head. Here's the first one. I hope that your nursery teachers take better care of you than Bo Peep does of her sheep. Can you imagine if I turned up at the end of the day and I asked her teacher, where is she?

And I got the response, well, we went to Inverleaf Park earlier and somewhere between the trees in the duck pond, I lost her. Last time I saw her, she was poking some wasp's nest and she was throwing rocks at the swans.

But listen, it's okay because if I learned anything in my time in nursery care, it's that if you leave her alone, she will come home. I would have her out of that nursery pronto.

[2 : 36] There was my first thought. Second thought, there's the voice of a bad shepherd. John chapter 10, what we're going to hear today is the voice of the good shepherd.

As we hear his voice speak to us in the pages of scripture. You'll see Jesus' claim at verse 11 of chapter 10. I am the good shepherd.

It's a claim that's loaded with meaning and it's a claim that is packed with significance. And as we journey through these verses this morning, today rather, I just want us to see two things about John chapter 10.

Two things. Here's the first one. That there's bad shepherds in the background. So we pick it up at verse 1 of chapter 10. Jesus says, Truly, truly, or very truly, I tell you.

He says it twice, which should prick our sensitivities. What he's going to say next is very, very important. Truly, truly, I say to you. Now who's the you?

[3 : 45] Who is Jesus speaking to? If you glance back a few verses to verse 40 of chapter 9, you see that Jesus is still in dialogue with the Pharisees.

So it's not a dialogue with no context to it. Something's happened that's got Jesus talking. And what's happened, if you look at verse 25 of chapter 9, is that Jesus has just given sight to this blind man.

And it's not so much what's happened to this blind man that's angered the Pharisees, it's what this now former blind man is saying, what he's proclaiming, what he's telling everybody around about him. Because Jesus hasn't just opened his eyes so that he can physically see.

Jesus has opened his eyes so that he can spiritually see. The man's story is that this is no ordinary man who did this to me. No ordinary man. Look at it, verse 32. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.

If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. Verse 38, we read that Jesus has transformed this man into a worshipper of the living God.

[5 : 03] This man, he was blind. Now he can see worshipping the living God. It's a wonderful picture. This is not a lovely example of what happens to each and every single human being when they come to realise who Jesus is.

We become his disciples. We become his followers. We become worshippers of the living God. And so what do the Pharisees do? What do the religious leaders of this day do? Do they rejoice with him?

No. No. Verse 34. They throw him out of the synagogue. Get that. Declaring him unfit to worship God.

And prohibiting him physically from doing so. Now that is an absolute injustice. Are we not slightly angry as we read that there?

That's what these men have done to this blind man. It's an absolute travesty. And this is the episode that is the immediate context of John chapter 10. So in the reading earlier you might have noticed it.

[5 : 59] When Jesus refers to thieves and robbers. When he outs bad shepherds. When he refers to hired hands who don't care for the sheep. Jesus is not speaking allegorically.

This is not George Orwell and Animal Farm. This is a direct rebuke directed at the Pharisees.

Because of how they are currently living and acting as the leaders of God's people.

Now these men are schooled in the scriptures. These men know their Old Testaments as we have it in our Bibles today. And they would know for a fact that this is not the first time.

That God has had some chilling words to say about bad shepherds of his people. Prophet Ezekiel had delivered God's stinging message of rebuke to the shepherds of Hizdi.

Who were tasked with the privilege and responsibility of leading God's people. Ezekiel 34. Ezekiel outs those shepherds as being terrible shepherds.

[7 : 06] What are they not doing? They are not feeding the sheep. It's kind of the definition of a bad shepherd isn't it? You are not feeding the sheep. They are not caring for the sheep. They are not tracking down the sheep.

They are not leading the sheep to safe places where they can both rest and feed and find safety and pasture. They are not doing those things. And if that is what they are not doing.

Do you know what they are doing? They are treating the sheep harshly. They are looking after number one. They are making sure that they are well fed and clothed.

And all the while they are doing that at the expense of these sheep. And because of their utter neglect. These sheep who are supposed to be shepherding God's flock.

God's people who are supposed to be giving themselves for these sheep. God's precious people.

What's happening is that these sheep are scattered all over the place. And they are wandering right into danger.

[8 : 04] And right into the midst of wolves. That's what's happening. And what does God say? 34. I am against you. I am against you.

Now that is chilling. And it should strike fear into anybody who would be in Christian leadership today who is in it for themselves. In it for self-promotion.

In it for money making. And because of those things they are denying the truth of God's word. They are denying the reality of sin. They are denying the reality of people's need for a saviour. And they are denying people.

Prohibiting people from coming to worship this God rightly. And I am against you says the Lord. I am against you says the Lord.

But get this. What happens next. In Ezekiel 34. Is that God promises. Not only will he deal with these bad shepherds.

[9 : 05] But God promises. Gloriously and graciously. Not to hire a better shepherd. Not to kind of train up more shepherds. And send them out. God promises. To be. The good shepherd of his people.

The one that they so desperately need. And God will be. To his people. In the greatest and the most fullest way. Everything that David had spoken about in Psalm 23.

The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters.

He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths. For his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley. I will fear no evil.

For you are with me. Your rod and your staff. They comfort me. I don't know about you and your life. But that's the kind of shepherd that I want to follow. John chapter 10.

[10 : 02] There's bad shepherds in the background. But here's the second thing we need to see. That the good shepherd is in the foreground. Here is Jesus. The one who declares.

I am. As we thought about over the past few weeks. He's taking the sacred name of God. The one that God had used to reveal himself to Moses. When Moses said.

Whom shall I say sent me? To which God replies. Tell them I am who I am. Tell them that I am sent you.

The eternal one. The ever present one. The high and exalted one. The holy one. The majestic one. This is this God. And here he is in the person of Jesus Christ.

Here he is in the world. Here he is in our flesh. Do you see that he is not shouting. I am the good shepherd from a distance. He is right here.

[11 : 02] And he is the good shepherd. The one that God had promised his people. And what is Jesus doing? He is gathering a flock. It's kind of what verses 1 to 6 of John chapter 10 are about.

He is gathering a flock. This is what Jesus is doing. Verses 11 to 18. There are four words that Jesus uses that capture the essence of what it means for him to be the good shepherd.

We are just going to walk through these really quickly. Are you ready for these? Four things really quickly what it means. Verse 9. It means that the good shepherd saves. He is the gate of the sheep. It's an exclusive claim that Jesus is not one of many doors in life through which we can walk through and find safety. Jesus is saying that he is the only one. He is the only gate through whom people will find rescue and security.

It's an absolute claim. An exclusive claim. I am the gate. And because, verse 14, he won't just have a go at defending the sheep. He will lay down his life for the sheep.

[12 : 09] He will take the teeth of the wolves. He will bleed for his sheep so that they can live. Isn't that a great shepherd?

Stunning imagery. But it's not just imagery. It's a stunning reality. That's what's going on as Jesus journeys to the cross, as he goes to the cross, as he takes the death that his sheep deserved, as he bears the punishment that straying sheep should have borne because of their sin against this holy God.

But, Isaiah would write, we all like sheep have gone astray. Each one of us has turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Now listen, history is full of people who stand up for good causes. Emily Pankhurst, Nelson Mandela. History is full of people who stand for right causes. History is even full of people who give their lives for noble causes.

Think recently of the Navy SEAL who died rescuing the boys in that cave in Thailand. Dying for a noble cause. Dying for people. Giving your life for people. What makes Jesus any different?

[13 : 21] And to be honest, what good is a dead shepherd anyway? We'll see what Jesus says at verse 18 about his life. No one takes it from me.

But I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. You see, anybody can say I lay down my life for a cause. Anybody can say that. But only Jesus can claim. Speaking of his resurrection, I will take it up again. God raised him from death to life to be, as the writer to the Hebrews says, the great shepherd of the sheep.

Our shepherd, the shepherd, is not dead. He is alive forevermore. And he is leading his sheep. He is protecting his sheep. He is feeding his sheep. He is praying for his sheep at the right hand of the Father.

Get that one. And he will never stop being a good shepherd who lives to intercede to lead his people until his work is done. What a shepherd. The good shepherd saves.

[14:30] Secondly, the good shepherd gives. Verse 10. He's come so that his sheep may have abundant life. Not, as we say in Scotland, a dour existence.

Not a miserable existence. Rather, Jesus has come so that his sheep would know true joy as they live in fellowship with him, their good shepherd. Their true shepherd.

To see Jesus is saying protection, plenty, and deep soul satisfaction. That's what I've come to give my sheep. Abundant life is not about having stuff.

Abundant life is not about life going smoothly and well and getting every dream that we have.

Abundant life is life knowing the God who made us and being in a right relationship with him.

This is life. As John Piper puts it, Jesus' life was abandoned so that my life could be abundant.

What a shepherd.

[15:32] Good shepherd gives. Thirdly, verse 14. The good shepherd knows. See, in terms of his relationship with his sheep, Jesus doesn't just know of his sheep. Jesus doesn't just know about his sheep.

Do you see that Jesus knows his sheep? You've had that experience in your life when you get those calls at 6, 6.30 in the evening from cold callers.

Phone you up and they say, Good evening, Mr. Shanks. How are you today? Let me tell you about an offer which I heard about recently. I didn't think it would be perfect for you. Do you know what my first thought is? You don't know me.

You don't know me. Friends, Jesus' words here, They're not the claim of a cold caller. This is a wonderfully intimate word, knowing that Jesus knows every detail of his sheep's lives.

He knows every struggle in their hearts. He knows every fear in their minds. He knows every need of their soul. What a shepherd.

[16:39] The good shepherd knows. And fourthly, verse 16, the good shepherd brings. Jesus calls his sheep, and his sheep respond to him.

That's what he's doing. And his bringing work is not finished with that generation of God's people. He has other sheep that he must bring in.

Other sheep who are not standing in front of him, who in the years to come will respond to Jesus' voice as it's proclaimed from the pages of Scripture, and who in the years to come, Jesus will call mine.

It's a wonderful thought. He said, not if you're a Christian here this morning. What a wonderful thought. That I was in Jesus' mind when he spoke those words.

You were in Jesus' mind as he spoke those words. That Jesus called me. Jesus bought me with his blood. Jesus called me to himself. Jesus took responsibility for my failure of a life.

[17:39] Jesus gave me his righteousness. Jesus made me his own. This is what he's done. And Jesus pulled out all the stops to make me his sheep. And do you know what that means?

That means this morning that this shepherd, he's got me. He has got me. How does that make you feel? As you think about it, as you think about the direction of travel that our society seems to be going on at the minute, I know that some of you have it really hard at work, standing for Jesus, following him in your workplace.

It's really hard. I know that some of you are making really costly decisions in your life right now because you say no to the world and yes to Jesus. And I know that some of you are worried about your health.

What is that going to mean for me in the future? What happens beyond the grave? Well, truth be told, friends, the world that we live in is a dark and a scary place.

And one little encouragement would be that it's always been like that. Every follower of Jesus takes up the cross, denies himself and follows him. Doesn't sound like an easy road to me. But the greatest encouragement I can give you this morning to keep going is that we have every reason this morning not to fear.

[19:04] Because as dark as the valley gets, as painful as the path may be, as long as the road is, even in death, friends, get your head and your hearts into the truth that this shepherd has you.

He has you. And he is going nowhere. And you read on just a little bit in John chapter 10 and you'll find Jesus say that not one of his sheep will be snatched from his hand.

If you are his this morning, if your confidence is in him, you can trust that your life is in the greatest hands possible. Jesus, the good shepherd, friends, he has us. He has us.

As dark as this world gets, Jesus has us. What a shepherd. What a shepherd. And I found out this week that John 10, 16, that Jesus is doing his calling work.

He's got more sheep to bring in. Do you know what's written on the gravestone down in London of the famous Scottish explorer and missionary, David Livingstone? That was pretty cool. It's written on his gravestone.

[20 : 12] And it's a truth, if you think about it. It should drive mission. That Jesus is still doing his calling and bringing work today.

I don't know how that makes you feel, but for me, it inspires me towards perseverance and evangelism. To keep on going, telling my friends, to keep on telling those people who come into my path about him.

Because Jesus, as his voice resounds from the pages of scripture, as people respond to his voice, Jesus is calling people to himself.

What a shepherd. He saves, he gives, he knows, and he brings. But why?

What's driving all of this? Well, Jesus gives us a glorious answer in verse 15 and 17. What is the reason? Because of the loving relationship that exists between the Father and the Son.

[21 : 17] Jesus, the Son, is obedient to death, and the Father loves him for it. You see, salvation is the overflow. How can we say that God is loving?

How can we say that God is gracious because of who he is? Salvation, the overflow of that loving relationship. Father, Son, and Spirit that's existed from all eternity.

And the Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, brings us into that love as he applies the work of the Son to our lives and as he brings us to the Father. What a shepherd. What a shepherd.

Verse 20. Some in this crowd think he's insane. Others say, verse 21, he couldn't open the eyes of the blind man if he wasn't who he says he is.

So what do you make of the good shepherd this morning? What do you make of him? Realize we've been sprinting for a bit, so let me just tell you a little joke that I heard recently, okay, that hopefully will tune us back in to where we're going.

[22 : 26] Heard this preacher tell a joke recently about Tiger Woods, the world's former number one golfer, and Stevie Wonder, the blind singer, and about how they met in the changing room of a golf club.

And Tiger Woods, he says to Stevie Wonder, Stevie, I didn't know you played golf. To which Stevie Wonder replies, yeah, I love playing golf. Tiger says, Stevie, if you mind me asking, how do you manage to play golf?

And Stevie Wonder says, listen, it's really easy. What happens is I've got a caddy, and I get the caddy to run up the fairway to where he wants me to hit the ball, and I just listen for his voice, and I hit the ball in that direction.

I just follow his voice. That's what I do. Tiger Woods says, that seems fair enough. Are you any good? And Stevie says, well, I'm a scratch golfer, I'd have you know, which if you don't know golf, scratch is pretty good, okay.

Do you think you could beat me, says Tiger Woods. Yes, I'd put money on it, says Stevie Wonder. I'm pretty good, Tiger, honestly. I'd put money on it. Tiger Woods says, well, Stevie, sounds like I'm going to have to accept your challenge.

[23 : 40] And Stevie Wonder says, that's great, Tiger. You just named the knight. But friends, in all seriousness, what we're being asked to do this morning is to listen for a voice and to follow a voice and to know a voice.

This is what we're being asked to do this morning. If you think about it, that's all the sheep do in this passage. It's all they do. They listen and they follow and they know.

It's all they do. Listen, follow, know. In our dark world, not just any voice, because there are millions of voices trying to tell us how to live our lives in the world.

But it's Jesus' voice that we're listening to this morning. Our good shepherd. Think about it in your own life.

Let me ask you, do you know the voice of the good shepherd? Do you know his voice in your life right now? Maybe some of us, we've never heard nor responded to his voice.

[24 : 46] Well, I take it that as Jesus has walked off the pages of John chapter 10 this morning, as his voice has gone forth, friends, you need to stop and do some thinking about what he's saying about him.

And you need to stop and do some thinking about what he's saying about you. But for many of us that know Jesus our shepherd this morning, I just wonder if some of us need to be still and remember who he is.

Let me ask you, what role does the Bible play in your life? Are you letting the good shepherd feed your soul as he speaks in his word to you?

What are you doing to cultivate that deep sense of trust in and love for the good shepherd as he leads you through life and all of its ups and downs? No wonder if it's here today, we need to recapture the posture of a sheep who is utterly dependent on and ever looking to the good shepherd, Jesus Christ.

You know, we were away as a team of elders yesterday, we were thinking through this exact same thing. See, before we are ever shepherds, we are sheep. We have not graduated from being sheep, we will always be sheep.

[26 : 08] We have to fix our eyes on the good shepherd whose church this is. That's what we're to do. Friends, I was asked all of us this morning, today, I keep saying this morning, you know what I mean, right, today, let's fix our eyes on the good shepherd.

You hang around Brunsfield long enough, you'll realise that there's only one sermon that comes from this pulpit and it's don't look to you, don't look to the world, don't look to me, look to Jesus. Look to Jesus.

One of my favourite hymns, the Scottish minister Horeas Bonner, 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. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad. This is our good shepherd this morning.

Confession time, maybe I was a bit harsh on both people at the beginning. I don't know if you knew this, do you know there are more verses to that nursery rhyme? I googled it this week. This is what the third verse goes like.

[27 : 16] Little Bo Peep began to weep and lay down to rest for a while. She fell fast asleep while counting her sheep then dreamt they came home with a smile. Isn't that nice?

Do you know what strikes me as I think about it? Bo Peep, she loves her sheep. I think so, she loves her sheep. But Bo Peep's problem is that she lacks the power to do anything for her sheep. It strikes me that the Pharisees, the bad shepherds who are in the background of John chapter 10, they're the opposite of Bo Peep. They have got all the power in the world. They have got all the authority they need to be able to help the sheep.

But because they don't love the sheep, they don't act to save them. But what I love about Jesus Christ is that he makes this claim as one who has both the power to help and lead and feed his sheep and he has the love for the sheep that moves him to act.

See, in John chapter 10 there's some bad shepherds in the background but what we need to see is that the good shepherd is in the foreground. The one who said, I am the good shepherd.

[28 : 29] I know my sheep and my sheep know me just as my father knows me and I know the father and I lay down my life for the sheep.

What a shepherd, friends. Look to him this morning. Look to him. Let me pray. So, Father, we would thank you so much for today.

would you help us this week by your spirit to know Jesus as our good shepherd and I pray particularly for those here today who are walking in some dark paths.

Father, that they would be so aware of your rod and your staff in their lives as you lead them and as you love them. thank you so much that we have the Bible that tells us about Jesus the good shepherd.

Father, may we be so aware of his voice in our lives this week. Father, we pray to you knowing that you hear us in Jesus' name. Amen. Father, we pray to you as he may be your and then we pray to you when you're by your sins Yan