

That You May Believe in the Good Shepherd

John 10

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, August 19, 2018

Well, did you enjoy the baby dedication service? Yeah? Was that neat? It's such a blessing to see these young families commit to raise their little ones to the Lord, and to see you as a church family commit to help them in that. Thank you so much for that. They're going to need your prayers and support, and I thank you for offering that.

Speaking of prayers, it reminds me of another thing you can pray for. Next week, as you can see in your bulletin, we're having a special Vision Sunday as a church. If you remember when I was at the Grace Advance Academy last summer, they had us put together a vision statement for our church, kind of a projection of what we would like the church to be and where we'd like to see it go in the days ahead. And the opening paragraph (which you can actually see in your pamphlet in the bulletin) ... If you have that with you, you can see the opening paragraphs.

Did you guys like this by the way? Is that neat? We're working hard to do this, to print things like this for you guys, for your own personal edification and also for any guests or anybody you know who would be interested in learning about our church. But the opening paragraphs here ... (These are on the table in the back foyer by the way. And there's plenty of copies. Take as many as you like.) ... And the opening paragraph, if you notice, it says, "Our vision is to proclaim grace upon grace to Chilliwack, British Columbia, and to the ends of the earth."

That's what we would like to see the church do and where we want it to go in the years ahead. We want to proclaim grace to people. God has saved us by grace, and we want to see Him save others by His grace as well. And next week, we're going to talk about what that looks like. And if you notice in the vision pamphlet, the statement there, there's several different ways we're going to proclaim God's grace. We're going to do it through the Bible, through worship, evangelism. We're going to proclaim grace upon grace through counselling, leadership, and equipping the saints.

What we're doing on these Vision Sundays is we're going through these points one at a time and just talking about them and kind of fleshing them out for you in the church. And so, we've looked at the first two so far. We've had two Visions Sundays where we've talked about the Bible and worship. And next week, we're going to talk about the third point there: "We proclaim grace upon grace through evangelism."

It's been said before that if you don't evangelize, you're going to fossilize. You guys heard that before? If you don't reach out, you're going to dry up and die. And we don't want to dry up and die as a church. We want to reach people with the good news of Christ. Next week, we're going to spend an entire Sunday talking about that. You don't want to miss that. Also, there's going to be a baptism service connected to that. So, if you haven't been baptized yet as a believer and you'd like to do that, please come, let us know, and we're going to talk about that as well.

But for this morning, I want to begin in our sermon time talking about this topic of evangelism. So, if you would, go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of John. You can turn to the Gospel of John and while you're doing that, I want to ask you a question. Have you ever missed an opportunity to evangelize? Everybody raise their hand. But I see a lot of heads nodding. Some of you your head's about to fall off your neck. You're nodding so hard. Have you ever missed an opportunity to tell someone about the grace of God? Just to encourage you, let me tell you about some opportunities that I have missed.

Several months ago, my wife and I were visiting the hospital and I got to talking with a doctor who wasn't a believer, he wasn't a Christian. But he was very interested in spiritual things. So, he started asking me some questions when he heard I was a pastor. He just started talking about pastor stuff and he said, "I would go to church or I would be a Christian I think, if I could understand the problem of evil." You know, I was just visiting, and going into all that, you know. I was hoping I'd get a lollipop after this or something, but you want to start ... He said, "I would probably be part of the faith if I could understand how a good God would allow so much evil into the world." What an opportunity, right? You know what I did? I changed the subject. I was caught off guard. I wasn't expecting that. Doctors in the States are not that friendly. And I said, "Yeah, that's a tough one." And to my shame, I changed the subject. You ever done that? Anybody ever done that?

I think of another time after church, over here in the gym when someone asked me if we do counselling here. They came in off the street, they were visiting. I don't think they were even in the service. They just walked in during the fellowship time and asked if we could help them with something. And I was distracted. I mean, I was watching kids, we were about to head home because we had company coming over. So I said (the first thing popped in my mind was) "Well, come back next week and we can help you with that." You know, "Come back next week and I'll counsel you." And I never saw him again, he never came back. I should have counselled him right then and there, right? Have you ever done that?

Now, let me ask you this question, why do we do that? Why do we miss opportunities like that? Why do we let those Gospel opportunities slip through our fingers? I think there's a lot of ways to answer that, but one reason I think (is a very simple reason), it's because we forget why we're here. We're here to counsel people. Amen? We are here to tell them about the Good News of Jesus Christ. That's why we exist, that's our purpose on this planet. That's why we're a church.

We're not all here in this room because we like the same sports team. I'm learning a little bit about sports in Canada, but one thing I've learned is that you don't all like the same sports team. You're not all Canucks fans or Maple Leafs fans or Oilers fans. Some of you don't follow the Chilliwack Chiefs or the Surrey Eagles, and some of you don't even know what I'm talking about, because you don't follow hockey. And that's okay, because we're not here for that. We're here for something bigger than that.

We're not here because we come from the same background. I counted it up the other day and on any given Sunday, we could have people from something like ten different countries in our church. Ten different backgrounds, which makes it really hard to find a place to eat afterwards because we can't all agree on anything. Some of you want to eat healthy foods, some of you

want to eat Tim Horton's every day. And that's okay, because we're not here for that. We're here for something greater. We're here to seek and serve and follow Jesus Christ. We're here because we love Him. And when people want to talk about Him, that should be the first thing out of our mouth, is telling them about Christ, right?

To say this another way, because it ties into our passage for this morning, we're here because we have a common Shepherd. We have a common Shepherd. We have Someone who loves us.

A little girl was once asked, "Why are you worth anything?" And she said, "Because my daddy loves me." We can say the same thing. We're here because our Daddy loves us. Because we have a Shepherd who cares for us like a father would.

If you think about all the different titles for God in the Bible, you would have to admit that one of the strangest ones is the title of Shepherd. I mean, if you think about it, shepherds are dirty people because they spend all their time with sheep, right? They live outside, they live in the fields. Why would God be called a shepherd? And shepherds are poor because it didn't pay that well. It was a low paying job that was very demanding because sheep are helpless. You can't let them out of your sight. The Bible even says, there were certain people in ancient times like the Egyptians who wouldn't eat with shepherds because they found them disgusting. And yet the Bible says, the Lord is our Shepherd.

And you can add to this, that God took that title of shepherding so seriously that He sent His Son to live among us. He sent the Shepherd to become one of the sheep. Isaiah 53:7 says, "Like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so Jesus did not open His mouth." John 1:29 says this in reference to Christ, it says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." So, Jesus was a Shepherd and a Sheep, He was a leader and a lamb. Because God took this title that seriously.

We could add one more thing to this. I could tell you that there is no other religion in the world that can offer you this. There is no other religion in the world that can offer you this type of God, this type of Saviour, this type of relationship with heaven. Allah might've done some wonderful things for the Muslims, but he never died for them. He never went that far. Buddha might've done some wonderful things for the Buddhists, but he never left heaven for them. Jesus Christ did that, God did that. Because the Bible says He's a Shepherd.

That brings us to John Chapter 10. If you're joining us for the first time this morning, we're in the middle of a series called the "That You May Believe" series, which is kind of an unusual name. But it comes from John 20:30-31, which I just want to read to you. But John says in John 20:30-31 that, "There were many other signs Jesus performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name."

In other words, John says, "There was more I could have written, there was more I could have said, but these things have been written so that you may believe and be saved." And the way John does this (if you've been with us for the past couple of weeks), the way he tells you about Jesus is by giving you a story from the life of Christ and then giving you an explanation. That's

how the book is written. It's story, then explanation, story then explanation. John 10 explains a story that started way back in John 9. If you remember a couple of weeks ago in John 9, Jesus healed a blind man. We talked about that last time we were together.

In John 8, Jesus says, "I am the Light of the World." And in John 9, He gives the light to a blind man. He gives him his vision back. And as a result of that, the chapter says the Jews through this blind man out of the synagogue. If you look in John 9:32-33, it just gives you a little insight into how they treated this guy. The blind man said, "Since the beginning of time, it's never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind." He said, "If this man, if Jesus were not from God, He could do nothing."

Then verse 34 gives you their reaction. It says, "They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sin and are you teaching us?' And so, they put him out of the synagogue." And later on, the chapter says Jesus finds him and He witnesses to him and the blind man believes. And chapter 10 is just a continuation of that conversation. It's just an explanation of that story. In the original Greek, there's no break between John 9 and John 10. They go together. And this is just a continuation of that. If you look in verses 7 through 11 of chapter 10, I just want to read this to you because this is the explanation of the story. If you could put it into just a few sentences in John 10:7-11, it says,

7 So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door; If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. 11 I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

In other words, in the context of John 9 and 10, Jesus says to this blind man, "I'm the good shepherd, those guys or not. I lay down my life for you, I will die for you on a cross. Those guys won't even lift a finger, because they're thieves and robbers." You see that in verse 8. Verse 10 says, "They only want to steal, kill, and destroy you. That's why they put you out of the synagogue. They're not your friends," Jesus says.

It's a sad reality, but the point of John chapter 10 is that every shepherd is not a good shepherd. I mean every minister is not in it for the right reasons. I've told you guys before, Satan calls as many men into the ministry as God does. The Devil owns as many pulpits across Canada. So, you need to be careful who you listen to you. You need to be careful who you follow. That's what Jesus is telling this man.

If you were watching the news this past week, we saw another Christian leader get caught in a scandal. It was a sexual scandal. This guy was leading a church of thousands of people. And I don't want to comment on that, other than to say you just need to be careful who you follow. Satan has his ministers too, and I don't know if that guy was a minister of Satan. That's not my point. My point is just to be careful. You need to pick the right shepherd, you need to follow the right kind of leader.

To help you with that, I want to talk about this subject this morning by looking at the kind of shepherd Jesus was. So, if you're taking notes in John 10, I want you to see three characteristics of the true shepherd in this passage. Three characteristics of the true shepherd. That's what this passage is about. Jesus is contrasting the true shepherd from the false one. He is contrasting true religion with false religion. He's basically comparing Himself to all of that and showing how He stands apart from false religion. And He gives us three characteristics to look for.

The first one is this: the true shepherd is a good shepherd. It may sound kind of simple, but I'll explain that. The true shepherd is a good shepherd. Which means He's in it for your good. He's trying to help you and give you life. He's not in it to hurt you. If you look in verses 1 through 6 ... I'm going to read all of this, kind a little bit of a long section. But I want to explain it to you through John chapter 10:1. Jesus says, He says,

“1 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. 2 But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” 6 This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.

If you notice, as you read that in chapter 10, John doesn't give you any background for that because he's already given the background in chapter 9. He just carries it over from that, and he calls this a figure of speech. If you notice in verse 6, he says, “This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them.” We've talked about this before, but there's no parables in the Gospel of John. There's no stories that start out with “like”, or “as”. So, this is not a parable, it's a word picture that the Jews would be familiar with.

Because the central part of Israel was too rocky to grow crops. It was too barren and dry for that. So, what they would do, is they would grow sheep there. From Bethel to Hebron and the middle part of the country is a plateau, about 35 miles long, 15 miles wide that was barren of any good soil. Very different from British Columbia. You could grow anything in British Columbia, I think, right? I grow stuff in my backyard I'm not even trying to grow. I cut down crops all the time. Watermelon? That's great. You know, or whatever the ... It's amazing.

They couldn't grow anything there, so they would raise sheep. So, many people in the Bible were shepherds, if you've ever thought about this. But Abraham was a shepherd. Remember that? Father Abraham was a shepherd, so were Isaac and Jacob. Moses served as a shepherd after he left the courts of Pharaoh - 40 years doing that type of work. David was a shepherd before he became king. Amos was a shepherd before he was a minor prophet.

In fact, it was so common that we forget how dangerous the job was. Because there were no walls on that plateau to keep the sheep from wondering off of high places. There're some stories (you guys have probably heard these stories before) of shepherds falling asleep and they wake up and their sheep are all gone. And they hear them calling out from over a cliff and they go look

over the cliff, and all the sheep have jumped off. There wasn't much grass on that plateau, which means you had to keep moving. You couldn't sit still. And there were predators all around who wanted to get at the sheep and eat them.

If you remember, when David was fighting Goliath, he told King Saul, "This is a piece of cake." Why? "Because I've been fighting lions my whole life." So, what the shepherd often did at night to protect the sheep, is he would put them into a fold. That's what verse 1 is referring to here. They would put the sheep in pens to keep them from wandering off, and then they would go get some sleep.

The fold here, it's often taken as a reference to heaven or the church, but that's actually not what this is referring to, because verse 3 says that Jesus takes the sheep out of the fold. And He wouldn't do that if this was referring heaven, right? He wouldn't take us out of heaven or out of the church. So, this must be referring to something else. And in the context, it appears it refers to Israel or the religion of Israel. It refers to Judaism.

In verse 16, if you look on down, it also says in verse 16, "I have other sheep which are not of this fold, I must bring them also and they will hear My voice and they will become one flock with one shepherd." And that's a reference to the Gentiles there, the non-Jews. We could call that the religion of paganism. But the idea is that Jesus will take us out of all of that. He will take us out of our former way of life, out of our false religion, out of the fold, whatever the fold is in your life, and bring us into heaven.

But going back a little bit, verses 1 through 2 says (let me read that again), "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep."

At night, the shepherds would put the sheep into the fold and they would pay someone to protect them while they slept. They would pay a guard or a night watchman to not let the robbers in, to not let a stranger in. But Jesus says in those verses, He says, "They'll let Me in because I'm the shepherd. He'll let Me in because I'm not a stranger, I'm going to walk straight through the door."

Just a few other things to point out here in the passage we read. Verse 3 says that, "As He enters the door, the sheep hear his voice and they come out." Which means He doesn't have to drag them out, kicking and screaming. He doesn't have to take them out by the wool. They want to come. They just hear His voice and they go. Just like any pet, the sheep recognize the voice of their master. And also, just like any pet, verse 3 says, "The Master calls them by name."

We name our pets, don't we? We're babysitting some goldfish this week and you know, I've already given names to the goldfish. That's Righty and that's Lefty. You know, one on the right, one on the left. My son keeps mixing them up. I can't remember which one's which, you know. Maybe call it Orange Fish and White Fish. I don't know, something like that.

Also, shepherds were typically poor back then, which means they didn't have a lot of sheep. They only had a few of them, and so they knew them intimately. A poor Indian shepherd was

once asked, "How many sheep do you have?" And he said, "I don't know because I can't count." So he was asked, "Well, how do you know they're all there?" And he said, "Because I know them by name."

That's what Jesus says here. He says, "I have a close relationship with these sheep. I know them and when I call them, they listen." And the passage doesn't say (at least right here) what He leads them to. But verse 9 says, "He leads us to pasture or to green grass." Verse 10 mentions abundant life. Later on, verse 28 calls this eternal life and says we will never perish there. So, this is all a reference to heaven. Jesus takes us out of the fold and leads us into heaven.

Verse 4 says that He will go ahead of us, which means that He will show us the way. Not only does He call us, but He goes out in front of us. He clears the way of danger. He shows us where to go. But the point the Lord is making through all this to this blind man, is that He is a good shepherd. The point is that He is a good master to follow. Unlike the thieves and robbers, Jesus is not out to hurt you, He's out to help you. Unlike these leaders who threw this man out of the synagogue and tried to destroy him Jesus is giving him life.

I want to stop here this morning and ask you the question, do you know this good shepherd? Are you following this type of Saviour? Has He entered your life and called you by name and brought you out of the fold? Let me ask this another way, how are you getting to heaven? How are you going to get eternal life? Are you going to get it all alone? Are you going to try to get it by yourself, or you're going to get help? I don't know how you could go through this life alone, but I really don't know how you could get to heaven alone. I don't know how you can make it through this world without help, but I really don't know how you can make it into the next world.

I was doing some study on this this week, and I would have to say we live in a very lonely place. We live in a world where people live alone. According to a study on the Globe and Mail website, the percentage of single person homes in Canada has quadrupled in the last century or so. And in 1951, only 1.8% of the population lived in single person homes. And by the time you get to 2016, the number had quadrupled. And the study said there are more people living alone in this country now than living any other way. Above the age of 15, there are more people living by themselves than living with family or loved ones or friends. And it's not just Canada where you see this.

Several years ago, in the States, there was an article that appeared in a Kansas Newspaper that said that ... the article said this, "I will listen to you talk for 30 minutes without comment for \$5." I got to admit, I don't think the price is worth it. That's supposed to be a joke, but I'd have to raise the stakes a little bit. But the funny thing about that is, within a short period of time, that person got 20 calls a day because people are lonely, aren't they? They feel like no one loves them or cares for them. Which is scary when you think about going through this life. But it's frightening when you think about going to the next life. It's terrifying when you think about trying to go to heaven all alone, because who's going to help you, and how are you going to get there? And who's going to show you the way?

You see John chapter 10 says, Jesus came to show you the way to heaven. Jesus is here to be your good shepherd. We often say Jesus will meet us on the other side, and that's true. But it's a

little misleading because Jesus will meet us on this side, and take us to the other side. He'll meet you in heaven, but He'll meet you here on earth and bring you to heaven.

A little girl (or a young lady) was once asked, "Are you scared walking through the cemetery at night?" And she said, "No, because my home is on the other side." And we could say, our home is on the other side and Jesus is here to take us there.

Which leads to another characteristic the Lord gives about the true shepherd here. First, He's a good shepherd. He not only works for our good and leads us to greener pastures and eternal life, a second characteristic of the true shepherd here is that he has enemies. The passage here says that the true shepherd has enemies. You would think if a shepherd is working for your good, he would have no enemies, right? Would make sense. If a shepherd is trying to help you, like Jesus is describing here, he would only have friends, but that's not the case. The passage goes on and it says that Jesus has enemies.

If you look in verse 7, it says,

7 So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

To unpack this a little bit, there was such a close relationship between the shepherd and the sheep that they wouldn't follow anybody. They wouldn't leave the fold for just any voice. Because for one thing, the fold was pretty comfortable. It's nice and warm in the pen, and they didn't want to leave it. And for another thing, sheep are pretty suspicious creatures. They're very skittish. So, if a stranger wanted to grab a sheep and steal it, there was only one way to do it, and that was to kill it. You would have to sneak in through the side like the passage describes, cut the sheep's throat, so it won't cry out, and then throw its dead carcass over the side. It's the only way to get one.

But to emphasize the protection over the sheep, Jesus says in verse 7 that, "I am the door of the sheep." If you notice the definite article is used there. That means, "There's not many doors, there's not lots of doors - I am the door for the sheep. And the only way in and out of the fold is through Me. You don't get to them without getting through me," Jesus says. "You don't get to the sheep without going through the shepherd."

Some commentators have pointed out that if there was no door in the fold (and some of you have heard this), shepherds would often lay down in the doorway and they would sleep there at night. And this could be a reference to that. But verse 8, it says, "All who came before me are thieves and robbers." In other words, all the Pharisees and leaders of the Jews, all those people who got to this blind man first are thieves, because they tried to hurt him. And if you read on in verses 11 through 13, the Lord says,

“11 I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.”

The phrase “hired hand” in verse 13 is another way of saying the doorkeeper. So, the person who's paid to watch the sheep at night, apparently the pay is all he cares about, because when danger come, he flees. When the wolf comes or the Devil comes, he runs away. But on the other hand, Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd and I'll never run away from the sheep. I lay down my life for them. I'll sleep in the doorway and I'll die there,” He says, “for the sheep.”

But the point Jesus is making in this passage (and you see the contrast here) is that not everyone does that. Not every shepherd is a good shepherd. Not every leader is a good leader. Some leaders are bad. There are wolves and thieves and robbers in the flock, in the church. And you guys can see the consequences of this. If you follow the wrong man, you'll go the wrong way, right? It's pretty simple. Follow the wrong shepherd and you won't get to greener grass. Choose the wrong religion and there's consequences.

Charles Spurgeon said, “Discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between right and wrong, but it's telling the difference between right and almost right.” Do you guys get that? I mean, some religions are almost right. Some churches are almost right, because they get everything right, but one thing, Jesus Christ. They get everything right, but the way to heaven. And therefore, they are wrong.

Look, it doesn't matter what the shepherd's wearing and what he has in his hands, and how nice he is, if he's taking you in the wrong direction. All that doesn't matter if he's not taking you to heaven.

J. C. Ryle said, “Some men have ministries that have no door in them. They have no access to God.” He said, “Jesus is the door and the true shepherd is he who enters the ministry through that door with a single eye to Christ, desiring to glorify Christ, doing all in the strength of Christ, losing all for the name of Christ, pursuing Christ's doctrine, walking in Christ's shoes and bringing men and women to Christ, and nothing else. And when a man forgets that,” J. C. Ryle says, “he has no door in his ministry. He has no way to get to God.”

You guys have seen this before, or maybe you haven't. But a church can be going along very well, doing very well with people getting saved, people being blessed, and then the minister gets a burr in the saddle and the whole thing falls apart. He gets some kind of issue that he can't let go of, whatever it may be, music or parenting or politics, and then the church dies. Why? Because he's lost his way to the door. He's lost the way to heaven or he's forgotten about it, because he makes those things more important than Christ.

Or you could take it one step further and the minister says, “You can't come to Christ without going through me first. You can't come to the shepherd until you adopt my ideas on music or parenting and those things.” Jesus says here, “That's the ministry of a wolf.” He says, “A true shepherd leads people to the good Shepherd.” Amen? A true shepherd leads people to the door.

A matter of fact, it's his job to make the door as open as possible. It's his job to make access to the door as clear as possible, to remove all the obstructions.

You know, the story is told of a Christian who was walking along the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, when he saw someone about to jump over the side. And he ran up to him and he said, "Excuse me friend, but are you a Christian?" And the man said, "Yes, I am." And he said, "Well, are you a Protestant or a Catholic?" He said, "I'm Protestant." The man said, "Wonderful, what denomination do you belong to?" And the guy who was about to jump said, "I'm a Baptist."

The visitor said, "Me too." He said, "Are you a Northern or a Southern Baptist?" He said, "I'm Northern." He said, "Are you a Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist or a you a Northern Conservative Reform Baptist?" The man said, "Fundamentalist." The visitor said, "Great, this is wonderful! We can have fellowship and I can help you and we'll get through this." And he said, "But I have one more question. Are you a Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist of 1879 or are you a Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist of 1912?" The man said, "1912." And the visitor said, "Die! Heretic!" And he threw him over the side.

I was really looking forward to telling you guys that story. I hope we don't have any Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptists here of 1912. I tried to pick a denomination I couldn't find in Canada. So, that was why.

You don't want to follow a man like that. You don't want to follow a man who will say, "Die! Heretic!" and throw you over the side. You want to follow a man who will take you to Jesus. Whether you're part of our church or another church, you live in Chilliwack, Abbotsford, wherever you are, you want to follow a man who will take you to the door and to the Good Shepherd. Any man who doesn't do that, is an enemy to Christ. Any man who doesn't do that is a wolf and a hired hand.

That leads to one more characteristic about the true shepherd in this passage. The first is that the true shepherd is a good shepherd. He only has good motives and good reasons for what He does. He's only trying to help you. No matter what the world may say about Jesus Christ, He's only here to help us get to heaven. The second one is this, the true shepherd has enemies. There are people who stand against Him, who bar their way to heaven, they block the door. You don't want to be part of that. All this leads to a third characteristic Jesus gives us about the true shepherd. And this one's very simple: the true shepherd has sheep. You can't be a shepherd without sheep. So, the true shepherd has sheep. He has people who follow Him, who hear His voice and come out of the fold.

If you look in verses 14 through 16. Verse 14 says,

14 I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

Now, I don't have time to go into everything here, but just a few things in this passage. For one, verse 14 says that the sheep know the shepherd. I can't emphasize that enough. They can identify Him, they know who He is. And they know the difference between His voice and the voice of strangers. They know the difference between His ministry and the ministry of a thief. Sheep have discernment. You can say what you want to about sheep being stupid creatures and all that kind of stuff. There's lots of jokes about that. But sheep have discernment. They know the difference between the real thing and the fake.

Verse 15 also says, "Even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father." In other words, the sheep know the shepherd very well, as Jesus knows the Father. They know the shepherd intimately, personally, closely. Those of you who have been following Christ for some time, you got to admit you get closer to Him every day, don't you? That's the way it works. You follow closer and closer on His heels as life goes on. Verse 15 says, Jesus says, "I lay down my life for the sheep," which means that Jesus knows His sheep as well. He loves them dearly enough to die for them.

In verse 18, if you go further down, He says, "I do this with My own initiative," meaning "I do this willingly." And as a result of this, just to tie off the story here, further down, verse 31 says, "The Jews picked up stones to stone Him again." Now, that happened a few months after what's going on in verse 18. But verse 22 says, at that time, the Feast of Dedication took place in Jerusalem. And that was a feast that was held around December, around Christmastime. The Feast was held several months after the events in John 9-10. But apparently, all this stuff about shepherding is still on everyone's mind.

Jesus says in verse 26 to these people that are about to stone Him. He says,

26 But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 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. 30 I and the Father are one.

In other words, what the Lord is saying here is, He's saying, "Not only am I your shepherd, but I'm also your God. And not only am I the doorway to heaven, but I'm the One who rules in heaven and on earth. And just as you can't snatch something out of God's hand," Jesus says, "You can't snatch it out of mine. And just as you can't take someone away from the Father, you can't take someone away from Christ." The phrase "no one" means "no one" there. No angel, no demon, no devil, no false teacher can never snatch anyone out of Christ's hand. "Because I and the Father are one." Jesus goes on and says that in verses 34 through 38 as well.

But let me ask you this, do you believe that this morning? Is this the kind of shepherd you have? You know, we've looked at this from several different angles. We've talked about what the shepherd does - He loves the sheep. We've talked about who His enemies are; the thieves and robbers. But let's talk about who the shepherd is. The shepherd is God Himself. That's who Jesus is. And the implication of this is huge.

Listen, friends, God doesn't lose anything. Do you get that? He loses nothing. I lose my keys, I lose loose change, I lose my children sometimes. (Usually not both of them, just one.) God loses nothing. And God won't let the devil come in and take you away from the flock. I don't know where everyone's at on this, but I know I've talked to some people in our church, they're scared of losing their salvation. Listen, you can't lose it because it doesn't rest in your hands. It rests in God's hands. You can't lose it because you're not your own personal shepherd. Your shepherd is God Himself.

In this world of false religion, that's so encouraging, isn't it? I mean, listen guys, with the Internet, there's no telling what you can read. Someone sent me an email the other day about ... I won't get into all of that. But just the pictures were alarming about the religious stuff on there. I didn't read all the content. No false teacher will ever snatch you out of the shepherd's hand. If you trust in Him, the Son of God will keep you safe until the end.

I can say it this way. You know, the only way to be a sheep is to follow. So, are you following Christ today? The only way to be saved is to hear His voice and go. You can't be saved by staring at the door. You got to go through it. You can't be saved by just looking at the shepherd, you have to walk towards Him. Will you do that today? Will you follow Christ?

I just got a new Bible recently because my old Bible was coming out of its cover. I brought this here today to show you guys. You know, it kind of came out of its cover. And I noticed this because as I was studying this. I opened my old Bible up to Psalm 23, because I was going to read that to you. And I remember that the pages were all crinkled. I hope you guys can hear that from way back there. Everybody hear that? They're all crinkled because I was reading this in a funeral in the rain in Indiana. We did the funeral actually inside. But then we went outside for the graveside ceremony, and I was reading this to the family in the rain.

And it was the strangest funeral I'd ever done, because the man was buried with a beer can in his hand, a pack of cigarettes in his pocket and some Jack Daniel's by his hip. That's how he was buried. That's how he was put under ground. Because that's how his family remembered him. He was into those things.

In the midst of that, you know, the family was really grieving over him. The only thing I could think to read to them was Psalm 23. And this is what I read to them in the rain in this funeral. Psalm 23 says,

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; and He leads me beside quiet waters. 3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Can I just point a few things out there to you? Let me point out to you that that rod and staff comfort you in the midst of evil and death? You know, it wouldn't mean a whole lot to me personally if David said, "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me when I'm lying down in green pastures." Okay, what do I need comfort for in green pastures? The rod and the staff

comfort you in death and in evil. And the reason David says that here is because we serve a God that is sovereign over death and evil. Amen? And we serve a God that goes with us through whatever life brings.

Do you have this kind of Saviour this morning? If not, you can follow Him today and all of this can be yours, salvation full and free. Let me pray for you now and then we'll have our time in the Lord's Supper.

Father, we thank you, Lord, for this good, good shepherd that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. I can't really say enough about Him, because the Bible talks about Him from start to finish and He talks about Your amazing work in our lives as our personal shepherd. Father, thank you for Christ, thank you for all that He teaches in this passage. Thank you that He would come alongside a blind man, a destitute man, a poor man, like what we see in John 9, and say all of this to Him, and then to us.

Lord, I don't know where everyone's at this morning. I'm sure there may be some here who are lost and they don't know the Shepherd. If that's the case, Lord, I pray that this sermon, that this passage would be an encouragement to them and a conviction to run to Christ, and be forgiven of sins.

Father, for the believers who are here, for those who are following the Shepherd, I just pray that this would make them follow Him harder. I pray that they would have discernment in the midst of an evil world. I pray they would flee from Christ's enemies and run to Christ's friends. But that Christ would be glorified in all.

As we take the Lord's supper here this morning Lord, may You be honoured in that and may this ordinance be pleasing to You. We pray in Christ's name and for His sake, amen.