

# The Only Shepherd Good and True

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 10:1-21  
**Preached on:** Sunday, October 19, 2014

I trust your hearts are prepared to receive the word of God this morning and it's my joy to minister it to you. If you will take your Bibles and turn to John chapter 10, we will be examining verses 1 through 21 and I've entitled my discourse to you this morning "The Only Shepherd Good and True." If you know anything about sheep, you will agree that it is not flattering to be likened to them. They are ignorant, frail, weak, helpless creatures and often quite smelly. They are unable to provide for themselves. They are powerless to protect themselves. They are easily frightened. In fact, if you get around them you'll find that if one gets nervous for some reason, others will see that and they have no idea why that one is nervous but they decide, "Well, we'd better be nervous too," and before you know it, they are all nervous and running and they can literally die because of panic.

Without a shepherd, sheep cannot survive. They require constant care. In fact, if they are not regularly cleaned, they will die. They cannot be allowed to drink near fast flowing water or they will drown. In fact, they are even unable to find pasture on their own. What a fitting symbol of us, especially believers in Christ. These are characteristics we all admit of ourselves yet in our weakness, we are strong because of our Great Shepherd and the more we are aware of our own inadequacies, the more we delight ourselves in Christ Jesus knowing we are sheep of his pasture. To be sure, our spiritual needs are many and we are unable to meet any of them and yet the Psalmist tells us that, "The Lord is our Shepherd. We shall not want. He makes us lie down in green pastures. He leads us beside quiet waters. He restores our soul. He guides us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

It's fascinating as you study sheep, you learn very quickly that they are easily led by someone they know and trust but they are driven with great difficulty. When pressed, each one of them will fight to get into the center of the flock. I've had the opportunity over the years to see cattle dogs being trained, having worked with them a lot over the years and they train them along with sheepdogs with ducks because ducks are like sheep and you'll see this especially with the sheepdogs when they ask a dog to herd the sheep or actually the ducks, all of the ducks fight to get into the center to get away from the edge so that they can find safety. That's exactly what sheep do. It's also interesting that sheep know the voice of their own shepherd but they are alarmed at the sound of an imposter. Without a shepherd, they are easily distracted. They will scatter in every direction to their own peril. In light of this, we have a new understanding of Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him," referring to Christ, "the iniquity of us all." How privileged we are to be sheep of his pasture. In fact, the Apostle Peter described Jesus as, "The Shepherd and guardian of our souls," in 1 Peter 2:25. He even went on to say in chapter 5 that the chief Shepherd of the church, referring to Christ, will one day appear at his second coming. And the writer of Hebrews exalts the Great Shepherd in his closing benediction in Hebrews 13, he says,

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"Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Dear friend, I have no idea what might be happening in your life right now but if you know Christ, if your faith is in him, he is your Shepherd and he is watching you. He is guiding you. He is guarding you. Indeed, he even may be chastening you. But it's a comfort to know how intimately involved the Shepherd is in our life. In fact, the old English preacher, Charles Spurgeon, said this, "Oh, what sweet music there is to us in the name which is given to our Lord Jesus Christ of the Good Shepherd. It not only describes the office he holds but it sets forth the sympathy he feels, the aptness he shows and the responsibility he bears to promote our well-being." John even tells us that he will be our Shepherd forever in eternal glory. In Revelation 7:17, he says, "the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd," referring to Christ, "and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

Dear friends, I have a magnificent subject to bring before you today as we look into the word of God and I want to draw your attention to three categories pertaining to our blessed Savior that emerge from this section of Scripture. We're going to see first of all: Christ, the true Shepherd. Secondly, Christ the door of the sheep. And finally, Christ the Good Shepherd. Each attribute will prove to be both profound and deeply encouraging in guiding our hearts with adoring worship.

Now, let me give you the setting. John 10 is a scenario that follows the occasion of Jesus giving sight to the beggar born blind. This beggar has subsequently come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ knowing that he is the Messiah of Israel and based upon his testimony, he has been excommunicated from the synagogue. He is banned now from the social and religious life of Israel. Knowing this, Jesus has sought him out to reveal more of himself to him and to comfort him but also the Pharisees, the religious leaders, have gathered around and he has rebuked them thoroughly. They want to kill Jesus and yet Jesus looks them in the eye and tells them who he really is and who they really are. So they are publicly humiliated at this point. They are apoplectic with rage. You might say that they are spitting mad and yet Jesus is unruffled. He is calm and he addresses those around him with loving authority. No doubt there is quite a crowd that has gathered around as Jesus is there with this blind beggar and the Pharisees that are looking at him with disdain.

So, focusing primarily on the Pharisees, the penetrating eyes of divine omniscience looks into their eyes and he says this, verse 1,

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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."

Here, my friends, we see number 1: Christ the true Shepherd. Now, in order to understand what Jesus is saying here, we must get a full grasp of this extended metaphor that Jesus uses in his discourse especially regarding the character of a sheepfold in ancient Israel. I have seen them when I've been in the Middle East, when I've been in Israel. Many of them still exist; many of them are still used. Typically, each village in ancient Israel had at least one or many times several large corrals that they would put the sheep in. They would have fences around them that were about 10 to 12 feet high made of rock and briars and various things. Sometimes they are partially enclosed by a cliff, maybe with a cave in them, and the rest of it would be a large fence. Several shepherds would then bring their sheep into a particular corral at night. And the sheepfold, this corral, would only have one very narrow door. One entryway typically large enough for just one sheep at a time to come in and out. The reason they did this is so that the shepherd could take his rod, stop the sheep, check the sheep, make sure that the sheep was not injured, didn't need attention before they would go in and even go out to pasture. And in this particular little entryway, they would have a doorkeeper or a hired under-shepherd that would only allow the true shepherds into the sheepfold for their sheep, keeping others out. At night, each shepherd would again, stand in that narrow gate, inspect their sheep and then in the mornings, that shepherd would come, the doorkeeper would see the appropriate true shepherd and let that shepherd come through the gate and that shepherd then would call his sheep. All of the rest of the sheep that were not part of his flock would kind of back away. I've seen this before, it's a fascinating thing to behold. But the sheep that knew his voice would immediately make their way to get out and follow their shepherd who would then lead them to pasture.

In verses 1-6, Jesus identifies himself as the true Shepherd in contrast to the false shepherds that were glaring at him, those who did not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep but climbed up some other way. He designates them as thieves and robbers. You see, this is a direct attack on the false shepherds of Israel. They were unauthorized, selfish, self-centered shepherds who had unlawfully entered the sheepfold of Judaism through deception for the purpose of brutalizing the sheep for their own personal selfish interests unlike Jesus who entered the door as the true Shepherd of the sheep. And Jesus

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makes it clear that the doorkeeper, the watchmen, recognized him as the true Shepherd. Moreover, the sheep knew his voice and they belonged to him.

Now, in what way did Jesus enter by the door? The answer is: by way of the perfect fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures concerning the coming Messiah. For example, Micah prophesied where the Messiah would be born. We read in Micah 5, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity. And He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God." Moreover, Isaiah the prophet predicted that he would be born of a virgin and that she would call his name Immanuel, Isaiah 7:14. The prophet Ezekiel tells us what God said in chapter 34, verse 23, "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David," which was a reference to David's descendant, the greater David, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, "I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd," and here in John 10, we see the fulfillment of that. Zechariah even predicted his death in chapter 13, verse 7. He says, "'Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate,' Declares the LORD of hosts. 'Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; And I will turn My hand against the little ones.'" Indeed, when the Lord was crucified, his sheep scattered.

If you look at the genealogical records of both Matthew and Luke, you will see that Jesus had the proper lineage to be the Messiah, something that was never disputed even by his enemies. Other passages in the New Testament confirmed that he conformed to everything God required of him as an Israelite. He was born under the law, Paul tells us in Galatians 4. He was circumcised on the eighth day. He was presented to God at the temple by his mother for the appropriate ritual purification. But what a contrast to the religious authorities of Israel that he labels thieves and robbers who gained access to the sheep illegally to fleece them, Not to lead them; not to nurture them; not to feed them; not to protect them; and certainly not to die for them. Sadly, this was all too common among the shepherds of Israel as it is among the shepherds of the church today.

Even in the days of Ezekiel, we read of the wickedness of these false shepherds who refused to feed the sheep and therefore allowed them to die of spiritual malnutrition, a pandemic wreaking havoc even in Christian churches today. In Ezekiel 34 beginning in verse 2 we read, "Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock. Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. They were scattered

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for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock; therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: "Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.' For thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.'"" And that is precisely what is happening here in John 10.

The Lord spoke through his servant Jeremiah in similar fashion. In Jeremiah 23:1 we read, "'Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!' declares the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: 'You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,' declares the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; They speak a vision of their own imagination, Not from the mouth of the LORD. I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy falsely in My name, saying, "I had a dream, I had a dream!" How long? Is there anything in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, even these prophets of the deception of their own heart, who intend to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they relate to one another, just as their fathers forgot My name because of Baal?'"

My, what a graphic picture of what goes on in many ostensibly Christian churches today. Self-appointed predators in pulpits feeding themselves, not feeding the flock. Telling people what they want to hear, not what they need to hear. Religious entrepreneurs fleecing the flock for their own gain. Jesus warned, "Beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing." Sheep's clothing speaks of how shepherds used to wear the clothing of the sheep. They used to wear wool so he's saying beware of those that have the outward appearance of a pastor but he says, inwardly they are ravenous wolves. These are men who disguise themselves as shepherds. They've been around for millennia and these are the ones that Jesus is addressing in our text today and obviously they're going to be hard to detect. So how can you know them? Well, as we just looked at this passage, they feed themselves, not the flock. They do not preach the word of God. They tell people what they want to hear, not what they need to hear. They tickle their ears. They will preach deceptions from their own heart that will cause people to forget about

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the one true God and focus on themselves. And how many churches today do we see focusing on man and his needs, rather than God and his glory? And then what happens is only the ungodly will follow them so you have churches all around the world filled with people that will never enter the kingdom. Peter warned that they will "secretly introduce destructive heresies even denying the master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves," 2 Peter 2:1.

Well, unlike these, Jesus entered by the proper door as the Shepherd of the sheep. Now, who was the doorkeeper that gave him access? Who recognized him as the true Shepherd? I believe the direct reference was to John the Baptist and then ultimately to the Holy Spirit. We know for example in the very first chapter of John's Gospel, we see how that it was John the Baptist by the power of the Spirit who presented the Shepherd to the sheep of Israel yet in the end, it's the Holy Spirit that gave access to the true Shepherd to enter into the heart of each one that the Father had given him. As we look at verse 3, it says, "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." Isn't it interesting, he doesn't come to the flock and say, "Hey flock, come on." He calls each of them by name because they belong to him. What an amazing picture of the elect of the church of God and so each one of us follow him because we belong to him because he knows our name. What a blessed intimacy we enjoy, dear friends, to know that our names were written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world, that the Father chose us by name, gave us to the Son who knows us by name and Jesus says that, "All that the Father gives me shall come to me," John 6:37.

And here in this text we see Jesus coming to the lost sheep of Israel. Not to the nation as a whole but to the elect of God within that fold and for this reason he says to those who do not believe in him later on in verses 26 and 27, "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." And what a sacred blessing it is to see someone that we know and love come to a saving knowledge of Christ, to suddenly see the reality of their sin and acknowledge in humility that they are without hope and without help and to see how Jesus calls them by name and they are radically transformed by his grace. Do you remember when he called your name? I remember when he did mine. You know, we see many illustrations of this in Scripture. You can look at the Old Testament and you can see how God called Abram by name; he called Moses. I think of Saul on the road to Damascus, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And Saul radically repented when Jesus called his name. I remember in the Gospel that Jesus passed by Simon and by Andrew and said to them, "Simon, Andrew, follow me." The word of God says that he told them, "I will make you fishers of men." He passed by Matthew and said, "Matthew, follow me," and he arose and followed Jesus. He looked up into a tree, walking along, and he said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down." And then later Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to your house."

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While in Galilee, Jesus passed by Philip and said, "Philip, follow me," and Philip followed him. I think of Mary Magdalene who came to the empty tomb of Jesus and was mourning over the fact that he was not there. As you will recall from the text, Jesus slips up behind her and she doesn't know it is him talking to her until he finally says loudly, "Mary," and she turned and recognized the voice of her Shepherd. Perhaps he is calling you today. What a blessed day it is if he is calling you. Do you know why? Because when the Shepherd calls his sheep, his sheep will follow him. "How do you know?" you say. Because the word of God says that they were foreknown. They were fore-loved in eternity past and predestined to do so and whatever God decrees will come to pass. Romans 8:29 says, "For those whom He foreknew," which means intimately fore-loved, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined." The word goes on to say, "and whom He predestined, these He also called," and you could put in parentheses "by name." "These whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, these He also glorified." Dear Christian, I want you to be perfectly aware of this glorious truth: the only reason why you responded to his voice in saving faith is because you belonged to him. In eternity past, he knew your name. He came seeking you. He knew you before you were born, the word of God tells us. This should stir our souls to deepest humility and animate our hearts to adoring worship.

Back to the text, verse 4, "When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. "A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." You see, true believers will never reject the true Shepherd and follow a false shepherd, at least not for long. Jesus said in Matthew 24:24 that it is impossible "for false Christs and false prophets to mislead the elect." Oh, you may be snookered for a while, you may be deceived for a while, but if you truly belong to the Lord, you will eventually catch on. I might add that false believers will not respond to the true Shepherd for long. I've witnessed this many times over the course of my ministry. I've seen unsaved, professing Christians, people that think they know Christ but they are self-deceived. They are kind of playing that cultural Christianity game. Those people simply will not respond to the word of God in a way that forever changes the disposition of their heart. They will only tolerate the light of truth for so long. They will only sit under sound biblical teaching for so long. They will only mingle with real sheep for so long. And then finally because they hate accountability and they hate the light of truth, they have to get away from it. They cannot stand it so they will come up with some harebrained ridiculous excuse why the church isn't this or these people aren't that or whatever and then you'll see them running to some other church that will make them feel comfortable in their sin or they abandon the faith altogether.

Then Jesus speaks to them and John says in verse 6, "This figure of speech," in other words, what we've been talking about here, "they did not understand." They did not

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understand "what those things were which he had been saying to them." In other words, they had no grasp of the symbolism here especially with respect to them but how could they? They're not part of his flock. They don't know his voice. Like other parables, Jesus here intends to reveal truth to his sheep while at the same time concealing it from those whose hearts are hardened against him. A fascinating thing we see throughout the New Testament.

Well, next he shifts the focus here, John does, from Christ the true Shepherd to Christ the door of the sheep in verses 7 through 10. Now, I want you to understand that John is not giving us every word of the discourse so don't think of this as a cohesive narrative where each section explains the previous section and so forth because, for example, here Jesus is not the Shepherd who enters the door, he is the door. Alright, so we see a shift here. Verse 7,

7 So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

Now, there's something technical that I need to share with you here but it's of profound importance. This is the third of seven "I am" statements used in John's Gospel. "I am" being the Old Testament name of God that God used to refer to himself, remember with Moses. "Tell the people I am sent you," and so forth. I am the present continuous tense. In other words, "I am the one who has always and will always exist."

So what's happening here is that Jesus is appropriating for himself the name of God in this conversation, I should say more of a discourse. They're not talking with him very much here. Here in verse 7, we have another very unique grammatical construction, the technical name for it is a predicate nominative. But what you have is a noun that follows a verb. The verb is "I am," and this describes or renames the subject. Let me give you an example. What's happening here is that great I am, the name of God, Jesus being God, that name is joined with metaphors to express Christ's work as Savior. For example, later on in verse 11 he's going to say it again, "I am the good shepherd." In chapter 6:35, he says, "I am the bread of life." In chapter 8, he said, "I am the light of the world." In chapter 11, "I am the resurrection and the life." Chapter 14, "I am the way and the truth and the life." Chapter 15, "I am the true vine." Now you say, "Why is this technical stuff so important?" People, because this is the infallible, inspired, authoritative, all-sufficient word of the living God, that's why and you need to understand these things. You need to hang on every word, every phrase, every sentence, every chapter. Meditate on it because these are the words of eternal life. Moreover, this is important because Jesus is once again claiming to be God, something that most of the world today thinks is absolute foolishness. Not only that, in so doing, he is describing his saving work. "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep." What is he saying? That the sheep can enter

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safely into the presence of God only through me. This is how the elect of Israel must pass out of apostate Judaism into the New Covenant of grace. He's going to say this differently later on in chapter 14:6. He is going to say, "I am the way. I am the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me." It's the same concept.

Verse 8,

8 All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

In other words, all the false shepherds, all the phony prophets, all the wicked priests, all the false Messiah's, they are thieves, they are robbers but the elect sheep of my pasture did not hear them.

Verse 9,

9 I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

In other words, when you place your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your only hope of salvation, your sins will be forgiven. You will be declared righteous and delivered from eternal separation from God and hell. Now people that are not a part of his flock, shall we say, will never hear those words and never follow Christ but those who he has known in eternity past, who he has set his love upon, will hear them and follow him. "They will be saved and will go in and out of pasture." What gracious provision God has made for his sheep, right? Those of us that he has called by name. And oh, what a terrible barricade this thing of sin, one that can prevent a man from ever entering into the presence of a holy God and what a blessed door is the Savior who leads both Jews and Gentiles into glory.

Verse 10,

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Now, we can't say for sure but here Jesus seems to be speaking of a particular thief. Notice it's singular; a specific individual. I think that perhaps this may be speaking of the murderous violence of the coming antichrist of Daniel's 70th week described in Zechariah 11. Which by the way, remember, these are Jewish people that understand these things. It might be foreign to you but it wasn't to them. Zechariah 11:16, God says, "Behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing,

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seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat sheep and tear off their hoofs." The context here is, you know, the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the judgments that will come upon the world and come upon Israel that will ultimately culminate in a remnant of Israel being saved along with many, many Gentiles.

Now, by implication here this is going to be a shepherd that's going to come and is going to deceive the people. Eventually they are going to discover it but he's going to wreak havoc upon them. I find it fascinating how history repeats itself over and over again. You have foolish sheep of this world following spiritual and political false shepherds. There are so many examples of this. In the religious world, we see millions succumbing to the lies of the prosperity Gospel. You see many others buying into this superficial man-centered Gospel that insists that we've got to become like the world in order to win it. Millions more believe the deceptions of humanistic politicians, political saviors peddling their version of utopia. With big winsome smiles, they offer the naïve masses hope and change and like all the others before them, they are thieves and they are robbers. They strip our freedoms. They confiscate our property and ultimately as Jesus said, they kill and destroy. But for those who enter in through the door of the true Messiah, through faith in Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ, they will have Jesus as life and have it abundantly. Again, given the Jewish context here, this may be an allusion to the promised glories of the messianic kingdom that they were all waiting for desperately to be freed from Rome not knowing that it's coming later at his second coming, that kingdom that will be the consummating bridge between human history and the eternal state. But certainly this abundant life includes a life filled with unassailable joy that we have as believers regardless of circumstances because we are united in an intimate, personal relationship with God through Christ. Of course, it will include the ultimate bliss of heaven that we will experience some day. Eternal life available only to those who come to God through the door of faith, through the person and the work of Christ.

We've seen Christ the true Shepherd and Christ the door of the sheep. Finally, Christ the Good Shepherd. Here in verses 11 through 21 which completes our Lord's discourse with the Pharisees, John reveals to us four characteristics of our Good Shepherd which really underscores the intimate love that he has for his own. I want you to notice number 1: he lays down his life for his sheep. Verse 11,

11 I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

You see folks, there's no self-interest here. There is no self-preservation. There is no selfishness. No personal or political agenda. And he doesn't just risk his life for his sheep, he gives it unlike verse 12, the hired hand. He is not a shepherd. Who was not the owner

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# The Only Shepherd Good and True

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 10:1-21

**Preached on:** Sunday, October 19, 2014

of the sheep. He sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he's a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. Once again, this is a direct attack on the Pharisees.

But beloved, don't miss this: as his sheep, we were once in mortal danger and were it not for the Shepherd, we would still be. We were in mortal danger. The eternal destiny of our souls was at stake and in order to save us, our Shepherd voluntarily, sacrificially gave his life for us. My friends, this is the magnificent truth of the Gospel. Without Christ, the wrath of God abides on you because of your sin and unless you repent and place your faith in him, you will be eternally separated from him in hell. But because of what he has done, when we embrace the Gospel, when we embrace that truth and humbly cry out for salvation, he will save us. He will call us by name because he laid down his life for his sheep.

Secondly, he intimately loves his sheep. Verse 14,

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.

The term "know" here is very important. In Scripture it speaks of the deep intimate love relationship between a husband and wife. So Jesus is here describing the relational intimacy between those who belong to Christ and Christ himself, an intimacy that is anchored in the intimate and eternal relationship that the Son has with the Father and the Father with the Son. You see, those who profess Christ but do not love him, those who say they are a Christian but they do not experience the soul-satisfying joy of being in communion with him, they don't experience his presence in their life, those people simply do not belong to him. They just don't. And unless they humble themselves and repent in faith, some day Jesus will say to them, "I never knew you. I never knew you. Depart from me you who practice lawlessness."

Thirdly, the Good Shepherd unifies his sheep. Verse 16,

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.

This is speaking about the Gentiles that would be brought into the fold. I'm so thankful for this verse otherwise I wouldn't be here nor would most of you. You will recall that God promised Abraham that through him, "all the peoples on earth would be blessed,"

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Genesis 12:3. And thankfully, the New Covenant resulted in the incorporation of these "other sheep" that Jesus talks about, Gentiles along with Jews.

Fourthly, the Good Shepherd obediently mediates between of Father and his sheep. Verse 17, Jesus says,

17 For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.

In other words, in order to take it up again speaking of his resurrection and his ascension into glory, that we might have eternal life. You see, Jesus loved the Father therefore he obeyed the Father even by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.

Verse 18 Jesus says,

18 No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.

And why did the Father gave him that commandment? So that we might be reconciled to God through faith in Christ. Paul says, "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." In other words, Christ alone can bring peace between God and sinners and he did this in direct obedience to the Father's will.

Folks, I want to leave you with the big picture here. The big picture is this: in eternity past, the Father chose by name those sheep that he would give his Son and the Son because of his love for the Father and the sheep that the Father had given to him, laid down his life for those sheep, dying for each one of them specifically by name. So you see, our salvation is not all about us. It's ultimately about God and his glory and all that is going on within a Triune Godhead. We were a love gift from the Father to the Son who purchased our redemption, who reconciled us unto God through justification and who will one day because of God's plan of redemption, when that plan is complete, the Lord Jesus will return that love gift of a redeemed humanity back to his Father as a reciprocal expression of his love. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:24, "Then comes the end, when He," Jesus, "delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power." Verse 28, "When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all." And to think that we are a part of this magnificent plan. It is absolutely mind-boggling.

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Well, as a result of this, verse 19,

19 A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. 20 Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?"

You know, people are still saying that. Verse 21,

21 Others were saying, "These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?"

Folks, I want to leave you with this challenge: examine your heart today. Do you really truly love the Lord Jesus your Shepherd? If so, you will obey him. When you hear his voice through the word, when he exhorts you in some area of your life, do you find yourself responding with joyful obedience or kind of a resentful indifference? Said differently: do you follow Christ or do you just follow yourself? Or do you follow the crowd? You say, "Well, you know, I'm not real sure at times." Then go before the Spirit of God and ask him to bring conviction to your heart because if you belong to him, he will do that and what you will find is little by little, you'd like to step away from the flock. I've seen this in the church. Some of you probably here today are like that. "Ah, I just don't really like what the pastor has to say. I don't really like with the elders are doing. I don't really like some of these people in the church." So you step a little further away and some of you are way out there somewhere. But if you belong to the Lord, the Shepherd is watching and because he loves you, he is guarding you but he will also chasten you and many times shepherds would literally break the leg of a sheep that just constantly wandered off. So look for these things. Confess them. Walk in a manner worthy of your calling.

I want to leave you with a passage of Scripture that my grandson Benjamin brought to me. I don't know if Benjamin's around here today. He's over there half asleep. It was Friday night. I had been in the word of God in prayer for about 12 hours. I was tired. I went and got a hot cup of tea, sat down on the couch to look at the news and get depressed. Benjamin came to me with his little Awana book, you parents are familiar with that. "Papa, I want to quote my verses for you. Will you listen to my verses?" "Well, of course, I'll be glad to do that." This was the verse, Psalm 100:3, "Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." That was just from the Spirit of God, wasn't it? It just blessed my soul. I hope it does yours as well. What an amazing passage of Scripture. Folks, that's an imperative: know that the Lord himself is God and that he made you. You didn't make yourself. Acknowledge the fact that God has chosen you by his grace. That he is your Shepherd. That you belong to him. You are part of his pasture. He is the only Shepherd

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good and true. Amen? What a motivation to love and serve him and to love and serve each other.

Let's pray together.

*Father, thank you for these eternal truths. May they bear much fruit in our hearts to the praise of your glory and grace for a it is in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

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