

Jesus the Good Shepherd

John 10:7-18

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This is a beautiful night in the life of our church. Greg and Cindy, we're glad to have you as part of the staff here and part of the church family and I picked this passage for tonight quite some time ago and then was delighted to find out that this would be the night when Greg would be installed. That's a lovely providence reading from John 10: 7-13.

If you want to know where we're going, look first at some Old Testament backgrounds and the good shepherds of Israel in the past and what God says about himself and others like David. And then we'll look at the good shepherd's names and how those names teach us to take all of our longings to Christ. Then third, we'll look at bad shepherds and how they behave and then finally, the ways of the Good Shepherd, which include defending his sheep, directing his sheep, laying down his life for his sheep. And then, of course, the call to trust him. So would you listen? May I ask you to stand for this? These are Jesus words describing his ministry to you, to all of us.

⁷ So Jesus again said to them, "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 listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by 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. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own 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 cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

Let me pray just for one moment, Lord, I pray that we would take to heart what it means that you are our shepherd one by one, that you shepherd us directly and through under shepherds

even like Pastor Norfleet and the other pastors and elders here in the church, the people who play the role of Shepherd in our life under you. So, give us encouragement by this part of your word. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.

Let me give you a couple of scenarios. One scenario would be a woman who has found a good job, maybe the job she thought she trained for. But then she gets into the job and after a couple of weeks she realizes - I'm going to like about 15% of my work. It's good for her to think the Lord is my shepherd. Or perhaps a man who is thinking about getting married and there's a woman he's interested in over here. But she would have to change a lot for her to be a good mate for him, although they connect nicely. And then there's another woman over here that checks all the boxes, but there's no spark. And so he should think *the Lord is my shepherd*. Or a person in a rapidly changing industry, like maybe somebody who's a horse breeder in the year 1899, when he's just heard about automobiles or maybe 1917 still breeding horses, or maybe somebody who sells records when Spotify breaks upon the scene, it's good to think *the Lord is my shepherd* in cases like this.

That, of course, the main thing this passage teaches us is that Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. I lead my sheep, I call them by name. They hear my voice, they know my voice, They don't follow other voices. I am the good shepherd. Not everybody wants to follow and not everybody wants to lead well. Jesus says there are hired hands. They don't really care for the sheep. There are lots of shepherds that are not good. All who ever came before me, he says in verse 7, we're thieves and robbers. That's hyperbole. Jesus is allowed to exaggerate this to mean there was never a good shepherd, but there are many who would lead us astray. And so we are wary. But Jesus says, I am the good Shepherd, even if we can't see it, we can't see it when life seems strange, you know your daughter is going to Iran, to Iraq, to Russia. She's going, You can't stop her. She's old enough. The Lord is her shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd. My daughters are grown. But I still remember when they first got their driver's license and took their maiden voyages in the least of the family cars going to parts unknown. cell phone? Yes. But Will Rogers, I think, rightly said good judgment comes from experience and a lot of experience comes from bad judgment. And so we send our children off into the night and we think the Lord is her shepherd.

Now, I just gave you points of contact with the idea that the Lord is her shepherd, and if you pay attention, they were all hard times. But it's important to realize that Jesus is our shepherd in good times. The Bible says that prosperity and everything going well could actually this astray too which enamored of our or status or wealth or or just forget the Lord as it says from time to time in the Old Testament. So we need a shepherd in time abundance. And we need a shepherd in times of clear cut problems. We need both.

Now. God has been the shepherd of Israel from the beginning. Jesus is the good Shepherd in the Old Testament. As far back as Genesis 49, it says that God is the shepherd and the rock of Israel. So the Lord is my shepherd, the Lord is our shepherd, the Lord is the shepherd of Israel, the Lord is shepherd of this this church and the shepherd of your family. He is the shepherd. At the

end of his life, Jacob says, The Lord has been my shepherd all my life. That's in Genesis 48. Their promises in the Old Testament that God will lead his people out. And in Jesus echoes that out. And then that means in all the events of life, I'll lead you out. I'll lead you back in a lead. You as you go. I lead you to come back. I lead you as you go on an adventure and I lead you as you meditate on what just happened in that adventure. Out and in. Of course, shepherds do more than one thing. They direct and they also give care. And so God gives us himself and he also gives us under shepherds. Ezekiel 34, is largely about the under shepherds, and David is the shepherd king of Israel. In fact, when David finally took the throne after Saul was a disastrous shepherd king, the people came to him and they said you were the one who led Israel on her military campaigns. When Saul was off going crazy and trying to kill David, David protected the people, he said. They said, You're the one. And the Lord said to you, The people say, you will shepherd my people. Israel. Now the difficulty is that David didn't always shepherd the people of Israel because every shepherd fails. That's why Jesus could say they're all thieves and robbers. It doesn't mean every shepherd is a thief and a robber all the time but every shepherd fails. There are evil kings like Ahab, whom I heard about in one of the Sunday school classes this morning for 10 minutes or so. And evil shepherds don't care for the flock, and they let the flock scatter in one place. It says, I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus echoes that when he laments the status of Israel in his own day. I saw Israel scattered.

We need shepherds of all kinds. We need spiritual shepherds. We also need shepherds in business places to take care of people. We need political shepherds. Do you know that Christianity was almost as widespread in Asia and Africa and Europe in the year 1300, almost so far as people could tell same number of people who believed. But in North Africa, Christianity had been under mild oppression by Muslims for a long time. And then there was a series of droughts and then the Bubonic plague you've heard about struck North Africa. And people wanted to blame somebody. And people in North Africa blame the Christians. We shouldn't have tolerated these Christians were not pure and no one was there to defend the Christians. They were slaughtered in the millions. We need politicians and military leaders and business leaders to stand up for people who are unprotected. They need to be under shepherds under Christ. If you're in a position of leadership, you may not be an elder in the church, but you can still be a shepherd in your place of work, even if there's only three or four people under you. If you can protect people, you should, because the Lord ordains under shepherds.

Now, the big idea in the Bible about shepherding is that God is a good and strong shepherd. Isaiah says, See, the sovereign Lord comes with power in his arm, rules for him and he tends his flock. He is a mighty shepherd. That's why under shepherds also need to be bold and strong, because the good Shepherd is strong.

And you know, the most famous passage about shepherding is Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He feeds me, clothes me, leads me. Besides still Waters and his rod and his staff comfort me. That's also an issue of strength beating back the wolves when they come after the flock. Now Jesus says I'm the good shepherd. If you notice, when I read to you,

there's actually a number of I am statements in John chapter ten. I am the gate in verse nine. I am the Good Shepherd in verse 14 and another one. I can't see the verse right now, but twice Jesus says, **I am** the good shepherd. Once he says, **I am** the gate. And that reminds us that though **I am** statements of the gospel, John teaches us essential things about the faith and our life before him. So of course, in Exodus 3 God says **I am**, I am, that **I am** and **I am** the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And **I am** the one who blots out your sins and **I am** the one who comforts you. There are many **I am** statements in the Old Testament. Jesus gives the absolute **I am** before Abraham was born, but then he gives us particular **I am** like **I am** the light of the world. Which means while the law gives light, Jesus is the light. And so we look for many lights, like all people do, many sources of direction. But above all, we have the Word and Jesus himself, who is the light? And the Bible says that it shows us the way. And Jesus says, **I am** the way. And there's a path people point out to eternal life for Jesus as **I am**. I turned to me for direction and I am the good Shepherd. And so the Bible's teaching us to take our proper longings to Jesus. If you want light, turn to Jesus. If you want protection, turn to Jesus, if you want direction, turn to Jesus.

We turn to other places, return to temporal things for hope and direction in life. And we take our eyes off the shepherd who guides us the most. We look for happiness and satisfaction and protection, things that don't finally satisfy. Jesus says Take your longings to me.

I'll speak personally. When I was a little boy, when I was a boy, I think from the age of five, I was enamored of the idea of hitting a ball with a stick or a bat. I thought that was just a marvelous thing to do. And I played baseball. I played stickball in New York City where I was a little boy. That's hard. And then I played Little League baseball in high school and Babe Ruth League, and I was pretty good. Not great. I was almost a good player, but I wanted to be an All-star. And finally I made the All-Star team at the age of 15, Babe Ruth League. I thought, really? This is it? I mean, I've longed to be a baseball All-Star as long as I could have been alive. And it's just the balls come in a little harder and the pitcher has a slightly better curveball. I mean, this is what I was living for? That's the human lot. We shepherd ourselves. The Bible says we tell ourselves, I know the best way to live. And it appears a couple of times in the Bible and in Ezekiel 34. I told you 34 is a passage about shepherds. But in Ezekiel 34, it says there are shepherds who do not search for the sheep. They shepherd themselves, take care of ourselves sometimes. And in Jude verse 12, it says, There are shepherds who feed only themselves. Can I just ask you this question? Is Jesus your good shepherd? Are you trusting him to lead you the right way? Or are you tempted to shepherd yourself and think? I thought if I make the all-star team, my life will be fulfilled. That was my thought when I was nine. And then everybody has thoughts like that. If I reach this, then I will have found what I need to find. Some people look to things like wellness. My children love to mock wellness. It makes me so happy when they mock wellness. You know what you need to do is sleep enough. My watch tells me, Dan, have a little time. My watch tells me it's time to relax. My phone and my watch. They're my shepherd. They want to tell me how

to live, how to, you know, have a little meditation, be calm, when to drink my Metamucil powder. Your life will be wonderful. These devices will shepherd you. 😊

Jesus is the good shepherd. We do tend to shepherd ourselves, don't we? In a place like this a lot of professional people. People with degrees, college degrees, graduate degrees. People who know how the world works. They know how to rise in the world. I can take care of myself. I have the skills, I have the degrees. I'm getting the right mentors and I'm following the plan. I'm starting low and building high. I'm being responsible. I will shepherd myself. Jesus says, I'm the good shepherd. I'm not against plans, but don't think that your plans are going to carry you through to the end of life. Peter calls Jesus the chief Shepherd. Everybody else is an under Shepherd. Parents or under shepherds. Jesus says, I'm the good shepherd. He says this in chapter ten, which believe it or not follows chapter nine of John. I said that for a reason. The reason is that in John, 9, Jesus heals a man who was born blind. Jesus heals him and heals him on the Sabbath day. And the Pharisees come by and say, Hey, what's the deal? You know, we're not supposed to do any healings on the Sabbath day. Who did this? And he says, Well, you know the man, we know who he is. You know, the man who heals people. We don't know who he is. They say he says, well, you know, go find him for yourself. I'm not going to incriminate him. Thank you very much. He healed me. I know that. I know that I'm not going to turn him into you. And then they said, you're going to lecture us. What? You were born blind. You were born steeped in sin. So here, the day a man is delivered a blindness his whole life, they're lecturing him, berating him, and they kick him out of the synagogue. That's bad shepherding. And then Jesus says, I'm the good shepherd. At the end of John nine, he says, Let me tell you all about it. Let me tell exactly who I am. And he comes to faith and Jesus says, That's what I'm here for, to shepherd you. Well, unlike the thieves and the robbers, I don't need to explain. A thief, somebody who's a thief just wants to plunder the flock. That doesn't require explanation. The robber doesn't require explanation. Bullies, heretics, abusers, liars who claim to be shepherds. The interesting one is the hireling. A hireling is a good shepherd as long as everything is easy. It's so easy to be good at things when everything is easy. Isn't it so easy to be an accountant when everything's straightforward? So easy to be a doctor when you tell people, mam, you just have a cold. Go home and take a rest. It's easy to be a good doctor at a time like that. It's hard when it's hard and some people run away the minute it's hard. The analogy is a wolf is coming. The hired hand said, I'm not getting paid enough for this. I'm out of here. He runs because he doesn't care about the flock.

Jesus says, I am the Good Shepherd. Crises reveal who's genuine, who isn't. I don't know if you heard about it, but a titanic snowstorm hit Mt. Everest. You know, people try to go up Mount Everest a lot and a big storm hit on a day when it was supposed to be calm. Everybody thinks they're going to make it to the top. I got the top of Mount Everest. Everything's to be good. And the storm hit sudden blizzard. And it's been written about many times. And some of the guides just saw the storm coming and said, I'm getting out of here. If you all want to follow me, go ahead. But I'm not waiting. Boom, They just left and others stayed with the slow and the weak

and the tired, even when their life was on the line, even when the oxygen was running out for everybody, they were good shepherds. They were good shepherds.

Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. Now I'm going to talk about Greek for a minute. Just now, there are two main words for good in the New Testament. They're agathos and kalos. Agathos means good as in morally good. Kalos -we get the word calligraphy from this and it means good in the sense of beautiful. Now, here he says, I am the kalos, so I am the beautiful shepherd.

A man named William Temple about 100 years ago said this -- Our vocation -- our calling from God is so to practice virtue that men are **won** to it. Our vocation is to practice virtue in a way that men are won to it. It is possible to be morally upright, repulsively. That's sad but true. We want to be upright beautifully. Jesus says, I'm the good shepherd. He's good, agathos good morally, but he's also beautiful. He is a beautiful shepherd. He takes care of his people. It's a sad thing to be without a shepherd. So, Jesus is our shepherd.

When we're thinking about the course of an illness, when we're looking for a job, when we are trying to decide what to do with the relationship, he shepherds us. We're not sure what the future holds. But beyond that, it's important to know that Jesus delights in his sheep. Verse 14 or 15 say, I know my sheep and my sheep know me. He knows us perfectly.

I was interim pastor at another church, vaguely like this one about, I don't know, year and a half ago there was a man, 75, 78 years old, one of the most wonderful elders I've ever known. A man of prayer and kindness. And his daughter, who was 48, got cancer and she died 18 months later. I said, Brother, how are you doing? He said, The Lord is my shepherd. He was the shepherd to my daughter till the day she died. I did not lose confidence in my shepherd.

It's, for some of us, easier to believe that Jesus is our shepherd. In times like that, when life is really hard and sometimes it's easy to trust Jesus a shepherd when life is really good. For some of us. The hard time is the middling territory. And when we think we've got it under control and we're just kind of working hard, everything's working out. But Jesus explodes the idea of occasional meddling 'thank you very much for a little bit of help' with the last things he says in this passage. And he hits it hard. He tells us repeatedly that *I laid down my life for the sheep*.

I lay my life out of my own accord. No one takes it from me. I lay it down, I pick it up. The father gave me this command that I can lay down my life and take it up. He says it over and over so we don't miss it when we're thinking about Jesus as shepherd, we're delighted that he guides us. But he also explodes the boundaries of ordinary shepherding because in ordinary shepherding, you know, the sheep exist for the shepherd. I mean, the reason why a shepherd has sheep is because you get wool from them, and when time passes, you might get meat from them. That's the way it works. I don't want to alarm anybody here, but that's what happens. And Jesus says, Actually, I've got to blow up the metaphor because while the sheep live for the shepherd, and the shepherd only risks his life for the sheep because they give him a living. The metaphor can't possibly reach all that I am and all that I do. I reverse things. I give my life for my sheep and I give my life for my sheep willingly. I gladly give my life for you. That's how much I love you as my

sheep. I know you. I know my sheep. I could be a frightening thought, can't it? I know the worst thoughts You have, the most selfish impulses you have, how little you really reach the spot you want to you want to inhabit in life. I know you, he says. And I love you enough to lay down my life for you. I know you and I love you so I shepherd you So I won't encourage you with that.

The Lord is your shepherd. The high moments, the low moments. The Lord is our shepherd. And if God has given you a position and the ability, then shepherd the people around you under the Good Shepherd, let him guide you. So my friends believe that Jesus is your shepherd. Rest in Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. Pursue the Lord as your shepherd. Seek his guidance in the Great, the hard, happy, the middling spots in life. The Lord is your good Shepherd.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your teaching, Your Word, for your self-revelation. Now, Lord, as we transition, I thank you that we have this beautiful opportunity to celebrate the way in which you shepherd us here in this flock even tonight, we're going to celebrate receiving, installing Greg Norfleet. We pray that God bless him. May he be a good shepherd to the people in this church who need his counseling ministry and Lord, that this time would encourage all of us that you are our shepherd, and you shepherd us through our leaders. And we pray it in Jesus' name, Amen.