

John 10:1-21  
January 7&8, 2025  
Speaker's Notes

As I reflected on Christ's coming this Christmas season I was struck by the enmity that was his even as a baby. Jesus' presence in the world brought fear to a powerful king and even as he hung on the cross the debate continued over his identity. In Chapter 9 verse 16 the healing of the blind man brought this response "Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God for he does not keep the Sabbath." The opposition continues in Chapter 10 verses 19-20, "There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, "He is a demon, and is insane; why listen to him". Let's look at Jesus' response as he tells us who he is. He is the Good Shepherd. This figurative language invites us into his love for us and provides his invitation into a more intimate relationship with him. His response to the reviling, the persecution, the false accusations is found in verse 11, "The Good Shepherd lays down his own life for the sheep." It is my hope that we might know today Jesus is not only the Good Shepherd but we can affirm with David, He is MY Shepherd!

While I rejoice in Jesus as My Shepherd I must confess to you that the implications of this knowledge bring us to a truth about ourselves that is not easy. We are as sheep in need of a shepherd.

I wonder do we really believe we are in need of a shepherd?  
Do we see ourselves as sheep who are vulnerable to follow  
after another and even another after that?

I do not often see my own need. Our world with its  
doctrines of individualism and self sufficiency enhanced by  
our pride encourage us to seek after freedoms,  
independence, and control ingeniously deceiving us about  
our real needs. In our pursuits of these things we follow  
another.

In Ezekiel 34 our condition is made clear.

We are scattered.

We are lost.

We are vulnerable to enemies without the protection of a  
shepherd.

John Piper helps us examine ourselves further...We are  
scattered as we seek security in our performance, our  
wealth, our position or power. We are scattered by our  
busyness and our pursuit of pleasures following the winds  
and waves of popular opinion and even doctrine. We are  
often lost as we try to meet the ever changing demands of  
our world. In one setting we are honored and in yet another  
considered a total failure. We are vulnerable to doubts,  
fears, even being deceived by those who purpose to lead us  
astray or take from us. This idea of enemies and bad  
shepherds, AKA thieves and robbers, is one I personally  
have been naive about and have often instead found  
reasons to justify my friendship with the world and it's  
ways. Jesus warns us of the thieves and robbers in verse 10  
that threaten us. Identifying clearly their intent to kill and to

destroy. In other words, don't fool yourself! They are harmful to us and to the body of Christ, His Bride.

Who are they? Specifically, the unfaithful shepherds of Israel are being called out here. Bruce Milne draws us to Ezekiel 34 as a help in identifying areas that define their poor care for God's flock.

They think of themselves first.

They ignore the needs of the needy.

They do not pursue the lost.

They are hardhearted rulers.

They leave the flock scattered and vulnerable.

These characteristics we sadly find elsewhere in our world.

So, how can we be protected in our exposed condition? We must know his voice. Jesus tells us in verses 4 and 5 his sheep know his voice and follow him and even that they will not follow another. My husband reminded me of the training that federal agents receive in learning to spot a counterfeit bill. They study the real bill. They learn its every detail, the cotton linen blend's crisp feel and how it ages with wear, the security thread, color shifting inks, watermarks, etc. When these agents are completely familiar with the real currency a counterfeit is easily detected. His sheep know his voice and follow him. They will not follow after another.

As we get to know our shepherd we begin to understand the riches of his love for us. Jesus, our Good Shepherd knows us, he knows our needy condition and sets His love

on us as He has known and knows the Father's love for Him and for us.

He enters the gate  
to pursue,  
to provide,  
and to protect us.

He shepherds us out of love for us. In verse 10 his intent is revealed,  
"I came that they might have life and have it abundantly."

In Psalm 23 we see the good shepherd actively cares for his sheep. David Gibson directs us to the simple truth that he is the subject in each phrase and it is clearly all his work.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures where there is food.

He leads me beside still waters where my thirst is satisfied.  
All my needs are met so there is no lack or need to go looking elsewhere.

He restores my soul with deep rest in this wearisome world.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness, WHY? for His name's sake! He loves us and it delights him to care for us.

He knows His sheep. Verses 14 and 15 tell us He knows his sheep as he knows the Father and the Father knows him. He calls us by name. We are known completely. Our ways, our needs, our desires, and our weaknesses are embraced in their perfect love. A love that is complete without us simply envelopes us. His loving care meets our every need. This is how it feels to be shepherded by the Good Shepherd who

makes, leads, restores and knows us. Selah! (Pause and think calmly about this God and his provision, given for his name's sake)

“The Shepherd carries a rod and staff and they comfort me,” because He is handling them. Dale Ralph Davis describes Him this way, “Jesus Christ, our Shepherd, is no emaciated weakling. Our Shepherd is a warrior as a shepherd had to be. No one can snatch His sheep out of His hand. The muscles of His arm are flexed to defend His flock; he doesn't carry a club for nothing. He is obviously enough for whatever the valley throws at us.”

We are safe in His arms! Now, this is good news!

There are enemies and there are valleys, but we are not alone and He is a good shepherd who is equipped to defend us and to deliver us! He leads us in paths of righteousness that go into and through valleys but He will go with us.

Deuteronomy 31: 8 says “It is the Lord Who goes before you; He will march with you; He will not fail you or let you go. Fear not, neither become broken in spirit or dismayed.”

And here we find another important provision of the good shepherd, he will not fail us and he will not let go of us. The valleys in this life are dark places and when we are in them it is tempting to look for a way of comfort or escape that leads us into further darkness. We can get lost. In these times I have sought my own way of comfort in self-righteousness and anger feeding my position as a victim. I have sought escape in busyness and good works distracting me from the peace and joy of knowing my shepherd's care. Can I ask you to consider, where do you seek comfort and

escape in hard times? Even as I sought my own way, I have known the mercy and faithfulness of the good shepherd to seek me,  
to find me,  
to restore me,  
to lead me toward himself.

He bandages us when we have been hurt, he restores what has been taken from us. He leads us in paths of righteousness. This is our sure hope and his promise. I wait with many of you for loved ones to be restored. We do not hope in their ability to navigate the valley but in the good shepherd who came to rescue each of us and each of them and give life abundant. Ezekiel 34:16 says, "I will seek that which was lost and bring back that which has strayed and I will bandage the hurt and the crippled and will strengthen the weak and the sick". Jesus shares the parables of the lost in Luke 15, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them does not leave the ninety nine in the open country and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?..." David Gibson reminds us that "The rod in Jesus hand brings strength to the failing heart because he will lead us through the valley and on the other side we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." God's vision is for a new flock united by one shepherd's sacrifice given in love. He is going to make all things new!

How is this accomplished? Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will lay down His life for us. He gives us a very clear understanding of his purposes in John 10:14 and John 17:24.

God loves Jesus before the foundations of the world. Jesus delights in the Father's love for us and so he willingly lays His life down for us.

The Father loves the Son.

The Father loves us.

The Son loves the Father.

The Son loves us.

And the Father loves the Son for loving the ones He loves!

Our Good Shepherd is motivated and acts out of love for His Father and their love for us.

How will He lay down His life? He will do it according to the authority and provision of the Father.

No one will take it from Him, verse 18.

Not Judas' betrayal

Not the mob's overwhelming number.

Not Roman soldier's force or authority.

Not Pilate's power.

Not the High Priest's laws.

No one will take His life. He will lay it down as it has been planned from the beginning because He loves us. But He is not finished. Sheep without a shepherd are in trouble, remember? He tells us He will take it up again! He will conquer the enemy of his flock for all eternity. He will provide us with freedom from eternal death through his love. His spirit is given so that we will know his comfort, security and care and be able to say with David,

"The Lord is My Shepherd."

Would you pray with me using a prayer by Scotty Smith found in Everyday Prayers?

Today, we “worship you Jesus for being the Shepherd-Savior that you are. Having laid down your life as the Lamb of God, you’ve risen and are now the Standing Shepherd—relentlessly caring, vigilantly protecting, and faithfully providing for us. You never sleep or slumber. You are constantly caring for us. Be praised and worshipped, O good and engaged shepherd.

Jesus because of your great love for me in the gospel, I lack nothing that I need. I don’t get all my wants, but I do have everything I need for life and godliness....and a whole lot more! I praise you that it’s green pastures and quiet waters to which you lead me—all for the restoring of my tired, weary, broken, rebellious soul.

For your glory and my good, you guide me along paths of righteousness, goodness, truth, and grace. And even as that journey involves traversing places marked by decay and death, you are with me, and that’s really all I need to know. I don’t have to be afraid of anything or anyone, for you are with me.

You nourish me all the time, even when my enemies are close by and threatening. Your generous anointing overflows for the blessing of others... Even in the new heaven and earth you will be our shepherd, leading us to springs of living water (Rev. 7:17) In your great and gracious name we pray. Amen”

Smith, Scotty. Everyday Prayers; Baker Books, 2011



