

## INTRO:

If you were here last week, you know we ended **John 9** with Jesus declaring the religious leaders to be “*spiritually blind*.” Not only cuz they misunderstood the Messiah who was being revealed in front of them in Jesus, BUT because they were subsequently leading or “*shepherding*” the people of Israel into ALSO misunderstanding the Messiah. And it’s THAT poor leadership, which prompts Jesus to give THIS extended discourse here...on “shepherding.” Shepherding! **Now, why are WE talking about it since Southie’s not exactly teeming with shepherds.** Well, because here’s the deal: Every one of you/every one of your friends, neighbors, co-workers, every one of your family members...is looking/**even longing for...a shepherd**... Which is to say **longing** for someone to take care of you; put you at ease; be able to take control and ensure that everything’s gonna be ok! Cuz that’s what a shepherd is. It’s someone who takes care of everything on behalf of their sheep. Some years ago, the New York Times published an article entitled *Modern Shepherd Saving the Flock*, which gave this incredible picture of how shepherding is essentially a 24hr a-day job. They do everything from raising newborn lambs to tending miles of electric fences, cleaning barns, shearing wool, trimming hoofs, administering shots, keeping meticulous breeding records, even fending off coyotes. They do it all, cuz that’s what a shepherd is! AND that’s what you and I **long** for. It’s why, for example, a lot of people get married. Cuz ya think, “*finally I’ve found someone who’s gonna meet my needs and take care of me.*”...One of the things I see as a Pastor, all the time, is that people who really struggle spiritually/emotionally, it’s OFTEN/not always but often, because they’re operating off an assumption that their parents should’ve been their shepherd in some way they weren’t. Should’ve provided or been there in some way that they didn’t...And of course it works in reverse too. OFTEN when PARENTS get older they want their kids to kind of shepherd THEM in old age. Certainly in our neighborhood, one of the big ways people seek this out is through friendships - some set of roommates, bar buddies, a boyfriend/girlfriend, rec. team - to whom you look and say, “*These people make life worth it/fill my life with care.*”...We do it with our bosses and employers. Personally, I think one of the reasons our generation switches jobs so frequently is cuz we’re always looking for a better “vocational shepherd.” We even do it with politicians when we assume that if a certain person or political party is in power, everything’ll be better! **Because we LONG for a shepherd.** And if ya think, “*I’m more mature than that. I’m not looking to other people to be my shepherd.*” Great! That just means you’ve determined that YOU are your shepherd! Cuz again we ALL **long for a shepherd**, such that/**and here’s my point today**: Until you recognize that AND recognize that no one is qualified to BE that for you, except Jesus, you’ll always be restless at best or distraught at worst. JESUS as your shepherd.

## PASSAGE READING:

SO, let’s consider what that means, as we stand for the reading of God’s word...

## TEXT:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Works consulted:

- “The Good Shepherd”: Gospel of John, Part 1: July 14, 1991: John 10:1-15 - Timothy J. Keller, *Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (NYC: Redeemer Church, 2013).  
 - “I Am the Shepherd”: John - On Knowing the Christ: November 29, 1998: John 10:1-15 - Timothy J. Keller, *Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (NYC: Redeemer Church, 2013)  
 - “The True Shepherd”: Gospel of John, Part 1: August 18, 1991: John 10:14-30 - Timothy J. Keller, *Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (NYC: Redeemer Church, 2013)  
 - Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here Is Your King! With Study Guide*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 144-51.

So as you heard there Jesus says very clearly/multiple times/with multiple different analogies, that HE is the Good Shepherd. And according to this text, that means at least 3 huge things/write these down: **First**, it means: **Jesus Knows You Like No One Else Does/He Knows You Like No One Else Does**. Look in **vv.3-5** and **14-15** there. Jesus says, as the Good Shepherd, “*The sheep - and that’s a metaphor throughout Scripture for you and me, as spiritually dependent people - we hear his voice, and he calls (us) by name.*” He says, “*I know my own and my own know me - how much? - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.*” So here’s the picture: You’ve got a shepherd with his sheep. And why do sheep need a shepherd, unlike say horses, dogs, or various types of cats, which’ve all been known to live in the wild? Well because sheep CAN’T live in the wild. If you ever find a wild sheep, you’ve found a dead sheep, because sheep are almost universally considered to be one of the dumbest animals/certainly dumbest mammals on the planet. They’re incredibly valuable, given that almost every part of em can be used for something, but they’re also incredibly helpless. In-fact, with almost every animal EXCEPT sheep - so dogs, cats, horses, even chickens - if you let em go wild, they’ll basically do one of two things. EITHER run as fast as they can away from you screaming, “FREEDOM,” OR run for a bit, until eventually making their way back home. Sheep, however, won’t do anything. They’ll just sit there confused UNLESS there’s another sheep in front of em that starts moving, at which point they’ll just follow that sheep. To the point that if THAT sheep walks off a cliff - And that’s not a stretch. They’d do it all the time if you let em - they TOO will just walk right off the cliff. Seriously, not bright animals AND seriously helpless. So when Jesus here call us “*sheep,*” it’s not a compliment. It’s a reflection of our spiritual dependency and insufficiency.

And maybe you’re thinking, “*that sounds a little harsh.*” Let me give you two illustrations. **First**, consider how dependent you are in your understanding of things. Just the other night the girls and I were looking at old family photos and videos and we came upon this video of me sharing some of the vision of Hub Church in the first year we were here. So 10 years ago. I kid you not, I watched myself for literally 5 seconds, before I was like, “*Next!*” It was awful! Because we’ve all had this experience **right?**, in which any time our present-self looks back on our past-self, isn’t our thought always, “*what an idiot. “Man I was so ignorant.*” Yeah! Because we’re dependent in our understanding, such that 10 years from NOW, you’re future-self will look back on your present-self and think, “*how did you not get that?*” We’re dependent!

Or consider the fact that with the exception of about the .00001% of people who hit the genetic lottery and look just as good without clothes as they do WITH em, NONE of us would EVER wanna be caught naked in crowd **right? Like, isn’t that the classic nightmare?** You’re presenting something/giving a speech/preaching, when all of the sudden you realize you’re completely naked, and ya wake up in a cold sweat! **Why?** Because we all know that if people were to see us for who we really are - every filter removed - we’d be found wanting. **How much more spiritually?** We’re spiritually dependent and in BEING dependent, we therefore require A LOT of oversight/of being known! Which you SEE, Jesus does for you in a way no one else can. Cuz look at the two things He says. **First**, He says He calls you by name. Commentators note, with respect to sheep, that it was very typical for a shepherd to be able to whistle and make a certain noise and have it be recognized by the sheep. That’s what Jesus means by “*sheep hearing*

*the voice of the shepherd*” or YOU, upon entering into relationship with Jesus, being able to distinguish the truth of God as found in the Gospel and the Scriptures vs falsehoods and lies of the culture around you. It’s pretty typical for sheep to be able to “*recognize the voice of their shepherd.*” What’s NOT typical is the idea that a shepherd would have separate/personal names for each of his sheep - that he would KNOW his sheep like that. - And YET, that’s EXACTLY how well Jesus says He knows you - knows you by “*name.*” ***Ya know what a name represents?*** It represents significance and purpose! Anytime in the Scriptures, God named someone - Abraham, Sarah, Jacob - He was always communicating both the significance those people possessed in His eyes AND the wonderful plans He had for em. So for Jesus to know YOU by name is to say that He sees you with eyes of incredible love and possibility.

Sometimes, before I get up here to teach you each week, I’ll imagine that God is up in heaven hanging out with His angels, when right before I gather you all back from our Connection & Communion time, He yells out, “*Gabriel, Michael*” - those are angels in the Bible - “*go get the boys, cuz Charlie’s about to teach my Word. And I know He’s got a good one this morning!*”... That He sees EVEN me/and you with that kind of significance and possibility!...And I say “*even*” because the ***Second*** thing you gotta see here is not just that Jesus knows you personally, but that He knows you DEEPLY. Cuz notice again He says, “*I know my own and my own know me JUST AS the Father knows me and I know the Father.*” ***Let me ask you:*** How well does the Father know Jesus and Jesus know the Father? Perfectly ***right?*** Down to the depths! Nothing escapes them! So when Jesus says He knows you like that, He’s saying that He sees you to the very bottom. So YES, He sees you with immense significance and possibility, BUT He sees that EVEN WHEN seeing all your sin too - seeing all your insecurity, bad decisions, all your swagger, and false bravado. He sees all of that! None of it surprises Him and He still sees you with significance and possibility. ***Who else sees you like that?*** No one! Not even those closest to you. Cuz even with those closest to us, there’s always a twinge of EITHER superficiality or rejection - superficiality because they love us, but don’t REALLY know all the darkness in us. Or rejection because when they DO see some of that darkness, they kinda pull back from us. But not Jesus! JESUS sees you to the bottom AND still loves you to the top!...And Friend, when you really understand that, it not only frees you from having to, in any way, pretend, project, or posture in order to MAKE yourself seen, BUT it frees you from putting pressure on others TO see you. Wives: frees you from discouragement when your husband doesn’t understand exactly how you’re feeling. Husbands: when your wives don’t understand some pressure or anxiety you’re facing. Guys: when some girl isn’t as attracted to you as you’d hoped. Gals: when some guy doesn’t appear interested...Cuz a lot times, our discouragement/even our depression in those areas is a function of feeling alone, unseen, misunderstood. And it’s not that you WON’T ever feel those things; it’s just that when you know the depths to which JESUS sees you, those things won’t crush you! ***As The Good Shepherd, He knows you like no one else.***

***Second, As The Good Shepherd, Jesus Provides For You Like No One Else:*** Look in vv. 7-10 and 16. He says, “*Truly, truly...I am the door of the sheep...If anyone enters by me, he’ll be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy.* - which of course is a reference to Satan - *I came, Jesus says, that they may have life and have it*

*abundantly...And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also...*” **What’s He saying?** He’s saying that as your Shepherd, He COMPREHENSIVELY provides for you! See, one of the big hindrances, I find, to people/maybe you REALLY trusting Jesus for every area of your life, is we assume that if Jesus/if the Gospel’s true, then it’s really only relevant with respect to our future. In other words, if the Gospel’s true, then “*man that’s great, cuz it means through faith in Jesus your future salvation is secure.*” But in the meantime, we’ve got lives to live **right?** And so we profess faith in Jesus, but LIVE as functional atheists...But you understand, that thinking assumes that the Gospel/the shepherding work of Jesus is only relevant for the future, when in-fact, Jesus says here that it’s relevant for the past and present too. In other words, not just that, through faith in Him, you WILL be provided-for and saved, but that through faith in Him, you HAVE-BEEN and ARE EVEN NOW being provided-for and saved. Past, Present AND Future. As it’s been said, those are the “3 Tenses of the Gospel.” Cuz notice, He says, “*I am the door of the sheep...If anyone enters by me,* which is to say, you put your trust and life’s confidence in Jesus, *he WILL be saved.*” There’s your past and future provision. Cuz what happens when you receive Christ as your Lord and Savior/your “*Good Shepherd*” is that you’re not only brought INTO the sheepfold that is the people of God, including all those Gentiles along with Jews that Jesus says He’s bringing into His fold, BUT you’re necessarily brought OUT OF the “wilderness,” you could say, of condemnation and alienation from God. As **Ephesians 2:12-13** says, “*remember that you were at (one) time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*” So there’s this past provision of having been forgiven of your sin, as well as this future provision of knowing you’ll dwell eternally and perfectly with God and His people.

But notice, that’s not all. Cuz Jesus also says, that in having your past erased and your future secure/in having “*entered through the door,*” you’ll necessarily “*find pasture,*” and “*have life abundantly.*” And of course, those are metaphors for present satisfaction. Cuz ya think about **Psalms 23**, which says in part, “*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.*” That’s DEEP satisfaction **right?**...Tim Keller once wrote that the power of the Gospel is not JUST that you’re given relief from past shame and guilt without resorting to relativism - past provision - OR EVEN that you’re given a hope, which enables you to face anything with poise, since your FUTURE is secure, BUT, that in the PRESENT, you’re given a satisfaction that’s not based on circumstances because it’s rooted in Jesus’ unchanging love for you as your Shepherd!<sup>2</sup> **Think about that!** The peace and satisfaction you’d enjoy because no matter what you do so well; it’ll never make Jesus love you more. And no matter what you do so poorly; it’ll never make Him love you less. That your circumstances wouldn’t have to impact your satisfaction. Think about the kind of “*abundant life,*” as Jesus says, that that would bring! **Be honest:** Who else can provide past, present and future for you like that, except Jesus?

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/christian-answer-questions-asking/>

**Finally**, you gotta see that **As The Good Shepherd, Jesus Values You Like No One Else**: Cuz look at what Jesus says in **vv.11-13** and **15-18**. He says, *“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who’s a hired hand/not a shepherd/who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches and scatters em...(the) hired hand...cares nothing for the sheep...(but) I lay down my life for the sheep.”* And then again *“I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, I lay it down of my own accord.”* And along with alluding to His death and resurrection, what Jesus is drawing on here is the fact that there were often two kinds of shepherds for a flock. On the one hand, there were hirelings or kinda like intern/contract shepherds, who were paid to take care of the sheep, because as I mentioned earlier, though stupid and helpless, sheep were incredibly valuable. Which MEANT in Jesus’ time/before banks, stock trading, and crypto, a shepherd’s wealth was entirely tied up in the well-being of his flock. Sheep were, quite literally, the shepherd’s pride, honor, wealth, and glory! And so if the flock was too large, the shepherd would employ a hireling. But here’s the thing about hirelings: If and when trouble came to the flock - like in the form of a *“wolf”* - that hireling had no real investment in the well-being OF the flock, so he’d just bolt, leaving the sheep to as hors d’oeuvres...But not the shepherd! Because the sheep were everything to the shepherd, he’d take the hit for the sheep! So here’s what Jesus is saying/**listen**: YOU, as His sheep, are so valuable to Him that He considers you His pride, His joy, His wealth, His glory! **Ephesians 1** says it this way, *“you/we the church - are the fullness of the glory of God!”* Crazy! The self-existent God of the universe - the *“I am,”* so clearly, not someone who needs anything to be glorious - voluntarily choosing to bind His honor, joy, and glory...up with you! That you’re THAT valuable to Him!...And more than that: BECAUSE you’re that valuable - HE as the Good Shepherd - unlike any friend, family, neighbor *“hireling”* - has been willing to take the ultimate hit for you on the Cross. Cuz that’s what He means by *“voluntarily and of His own accord, laying down His life for His sheep.”* ... **You know who Banksy is?** He’s this British street artist, whose real identity is unknown, except that every so often he’ll produce a piece of graffiti that instantaneously becomes priceless art. Which is crazy, given that it’s essentially vandalism. BUT because Banksy did it/when people, quote-unquote, *“look underneath”* the vandalism, and see he made it; it becomes priceless...Friend, the same is even more true with you and me. In and of ourselves we’re not particularly valuable. I mean from God’s perspective, there’s not a whole lot about us that He should say, *“yeah, they’re worth dying for, cuz I mean, they NEVER distrust, or doubt, or disobey me,” right?*...And YET, when Jesus looks underneath, He says, *“Yeah, but they’re my sheep. And I’ll do anything if it means keeping even ONE of my sheep from perishing.”* In other words, on the Cross, Jesus as the Good Shepherd became a sacrificial lamb so that we lambs could live! As **Isaiah 53** says, *“we ALL like sheep have gone astray (and) turned to our own way; but the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all...like a lamb led to slaughter/like a sheep before its shearers is silent, so (Jesus) opened not his mouth.”* Friend, THAT is what makes you valuable! When death had NO claim on Jesus, because of course, He loved God with his whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loved his neighbor as Himself - like we’re supposed to - He nevertheless TOOK your death, so that YOU can have His life! There’s no one else who values you like that and IN valuing you like that, frees you to live with total boldness! Cuz as **Romans** says, *“if He’s for you, who can be against you?”*

So let me close how I began, which is by saying: **Until you recognize your longing for a shepherd AND that no one is qualified to BE that shepherd for you, except Jesus, you'll always be restless at best or distraught at worst.** Cuz as Jesus says there in *v.1*, every other person or thing, but Him - no matter how much of a "shepherd" they look like, is ultimately, "*a thief and a robber*," meaning someone who'll disappoint cuz they won't be able or willing to know, provide for, or value you like Jesus! ***Do you see your need for a shepherd this morning? And do ya see that only Jesus is qualified to BE that shepherd for you?*** ...If so, then the application is very simple: ***One***, and as ***Hebrews 3:15*** says, "*If you hear his voice - the voice of your Shepherd inviting you to enter through the door that is faith in Christ - don't harden your heart.*" Receive Him as your Good Shepherd! And then ***Two***, IN receiving/or HAVING received Him, commit to being a sheep WITH Him. Which is to say, ya gotta drop any condition you have for trusting and following Him. Cuz of course, sheep can't say to the shepherd, "*So you can help me over there, but not here. That's your job/this is mine. I'll listen to you in this area, but hands off that one.*" No! A Shepherd isn't a consultant, assistant, partner, or someone you keep on retainer until you need em. Rather, a shepherd has absolute authority and access to everything! That's how it works. You first have to receive Jesus as your Good Shepherd and then IN receiving Him, daily drop any conditions to letting Him BE your shepherd... ***Will you do that? ... Let's Pray...***