

**Title** Knowing the Good Shepherd  
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Good evening. It's good to see you all here this evening. In the past, I have always come with great anticipation of being refreshed, and my expectations have always been met. We give and give in the home congregations, and to come to a place like this is refreshing. My wife reminded me, there are times when we can't give, there are times we need to get a little bit, but you know how it is. As we give, we receive back far more than we've given. And that has been the case for me in preparation for this topic. As I have been considering this subject, my personal walk with the Lord has grown tremendously. I've seen Christ in a new dimension, experienced him in that way, and I give God the glory.

Knowing the Good Shepherd, I know all of you take your responsibilities seriously as a shepherd. Even as you sit here, you feel a great concern for the flock that God has called you to serve. As some of you were traveling here today, and the miles were increasing between you and the flock, your mind and your heart was still there. Possibly you had the opportunity to talk to one of the brothers in your congregation, one is scheduled to have a bypass surgery, and you can't be there. Or maybe, a man who had confided in you his personal struggle. Maybe the young sister in your congregation is taking a path away from truth. Or, you are basking in joy in being instrumental in helping a brother and another make reconciliation and find forgiveness. I don't know what your situation is tonight, my shepherd brother. I know that, although you are here this evening in body, there is a part of your here that is back home at your congregation. You carry a part of your congregation in your heart with you.

What can I learn from this topic? What are some techniques and tips and pointers that I can take home with me to learn how to be a better shepherd to my flock? What are some lessons I can learn from the Good Shepherd to enhance my own shepherding abilities. There is merit in asking questions like this. It reminds me of a book someone gave me once, "Learning Lessons from the Greatest Person that Ever Lived," or something like that. As I began to look through that book, I realized that the theme of that book was, learning to be successful as a leader, by learning from Jesus. There is little about personal experience or personal growth, but it was about how I can enhance my own leadership abilities and become more successful. Tonight, I believe there is a fundamental reason for us to be here, and something for us to consider, and that is the direction I'd like to go this evening. Although we have been called by God to be unde-shepherds to His flock, we are sheep first, and foremost. It was David that penned the words in Psalm 100:3.

*Reads verse.* King David included himself as one of those sheep. We are people in need of a Shepherd. We are so much like those four legged animals that go “baaa” in so many ways. We are timid at times, and we can be stubborn at other times. We are sometimes easily frightened, and other times we stand there right in the path of destruction. We are creatures of habit. We love our little ruts. We love to follow our own familiar paths in search of something to eat, while all along, that path, there are lush pastures that we miss. We are defenseless. We lose our way. We are sheep that are unprotected, without a shepherd’s watch over us. We will perish without his caring. We need the Good Shepherd. It’s a wonderful paradox that the Good Shepherd, the model Shepherd, is also the model sheep. “Behold the lamb of God.”

Let’s turn to our text tonight in John 10:14 & 27. *Reads verses.* Now this is a beautiful portion of Scripture that was spoken at first to a hostile crowd, Pharisees whose motive was to get a rid of Jesus, stone him. Yes, there was the blind man in John 9, healed on the Sabbath that brought about this confrontation in John 10. He was excommunicated from the Synagogue. These Pharisees both rejected the sheep who Jesus healed and Jesus as their Shepherd. Most of the people who read this beautiful portion in John 10 also rejected the message, that He is the Good Shepherd. For you and me that have accepted that, He is exceedingly precious.

### *Christ is the Good Shepherd.*

In the Old Testament to describe Himself to the people, he used the example of shepherd and a rock. They knew a lot about shepherds. The Hebrew word means, “To tend a flock, to rule, to associate with as a friend.” I like that, three words, “tend a flock.” Our Savior. “To rule,” our Lord. Let’s not forget, a shepherd is a friend of a sheep. The Old Testament is a legacy of God as shepherd leading His people, and His people rejecting that attempt. When people reject God, they choose other shepherds by default. Ezekiel 34 is a pronouncement, the entire chapter, against the shepherds that have taken God’s people and almost destroyed them. God says to them, “For thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will search for my sheep and seek them out.” My people will have a Shepherd. In the New Testament, in John, “I am the Good Shepherd.” He said this to the people that were taking advantage of God. Jesus said, you’re not taking care of my sheep. You don’t hear Me, hear My voice, you don’t follow Me, you’re not shepherds and you’re not even sheep. But I am the Good Shepherd.

The word “good” is interesting. Two words are translated as “good.” The first word means “morally proper; an intrinsic quality.” I will read 3 John 11. *Reads verse.* That intrinsic quality of goodness. That is derived from God. There is another word for good in the Greek, it means everything the first term meant, and “perfect in every way, without flaw, useful.” Like the chocolate cake with the peanut butter icing on top. It’s perfect, good, and useful. This is the term John used to describe what Jesus meant when He said, “I am the Good Shepherd.” Goodness is part of the nature of Jesus, but it is imperative for us to realize, that He is perfect in every way, useful. He is the beautiful Shepherd. The title is more than the Good Shepherd, but a beautiful Shepherd.

Here’s a lesson for us under-shepherds, where we only have an expression of inner goodness, but little or no *kalos* goodness evident. Shouldn’t we aim to be useful, aim to present an attractive witness for Christ? We should. I like this quote: “Your doctrine can be just as straight as a gun barrel and as empty.” We need gun barrels to be straight, but let’s have them full of usefulness, of

beauty.

I'd like to look at John 10, and look at our beautiful shepherd. He talks about all those coming before being thieves and robbers. In verse 2, *reads verse*. Jesus enters in by the door. He is beautiful in his integrity. Here, Jesus is speaking symbolically of the door perhaps being the Jewish Nation, in the Old Covenant, into the New Covenant. But He comes to all places with pure motives. He is not a sheep stealer. He is beautiful in his integrity. Verse 3, beautiful in his authority. *Reads verse*. I ask, who is the porter? Well, in this case it may be John the Baptist. He opened that door for Jesus, but then he deferentially stepped aside, "He must increase, and I must decrease." As an under-shepherd, you are the porter that stands there in the door. We have many opportunities to open the door to Jesus Christ. Are we doing that? Who are we preaching? My agenda? My message? I don't like to use that term when I'm preaching, my message this morning is going to be this and this; it's not my message. Do I preach my hobby horse, or do I preach Jesus Christ? Preach Jesus. Step aside. Open the door so He can enter in.

Jesus is beautiful in his familiarity. He has many sheep in His worldwide flock. He knows all the names of his sheep in your churches; do you? He is familiar with their strengths, weaknesses, idiosyncrasies. He knows my name, He knows me. Psalm 139 talks about how everything about me is open to Him. Oh Lord, thou has searched me and known me. My struggle as a young person, with accepting the fact that my sins are forgiven, this is so beautiful. Brother tonight, whatever you are going through, He knows that. He is also beautiful in his ability, in verse 3. He leads His sheep out; He is beautiful in His abilities. But He is also beautiful in his responsibility. He takes his responsibility seriously. The Good Shepherd is always looking for pasture, always looking at the needs of the sheep He has. The Good Shepherd does not drive His sheep, He leads them. There was a tour guide on a bus in Israel with a group of tourists, talking to them about a Shepherd and how He leads His flock. A tourist looked out a window and saw a man with a stick. This man was waving his stick very belligerently at a flock, chasing them. A tourist said, "Look, you're wrong! Look at what that shepherd is doing." The tour guide ran out and asked the man some questions, then got back on. The man said, this was not the shepherd, this was the butcher, driving the sheep to the market. Jesus leads.

He is also beautiful in his security. verses 9-10. *Reads verses*. He is the door for salvation and abundant living. The word, "enter in" there. He that shall enter in shall be saved. How beautiful is that word. That word means, "protected." What about the going in and out. This is not going in and out from one church to another. This is not going out on a limb on my own, but the liberty in Christ to go in and out and find pasture and find abundance. There is abundant living in Jesus Christ.

Jesus in verse 15 is beautiful in His deity. *Reads verse*. There is a perfect relationship here, and the placement of what He said in verse 15 is an example for us. Our text is verse 14, *reads verse*. This is the relationship model that God the Father and God the Son have, and is the model that He has for us in our relationship to Him as the Shepherd. Jesus is also beautiful in His humility. Verse 11, *reads verse*. Though He is equal to God, He humbled himself to death, to death on the cross. He is also beautiful in His humility. Beautiful in His unity. A better translation would read, there would be one flock. He has many sheepfolds worldwide, different in size, different in construction and layout. The sheep may be different colors, but there is one flock.

Jesus is also beautiful in his invincibility. Verse 17, *reads verse*. Jesus is invincible; they didn't take His life, they gave His life. He is alive, and He is our beautiful shepherd for eternity. Verse 28, and 29. *Reads verses*. Verse 30, *reads verse*. This is not a text for the doctrine of unconditional security. Sheep need to realize there are conditions that need to be met. My friends, He is the Good Shepherd. He will remain the Good Shepherd. He is not going to retire, give up. He will have sheep. I love that verse, in Revelation 7:17, where we receive a picture of Jesus in eternity and He is leading His people and He is feeding His people.

### *Characteristics of Christ's Sheep.*

The word "sheep" in English is interesting. Did you know, there is no plural (separate word) for the word? We do not say, I have one sheep, you have two sheeps, or a pair of sheepen. Christianity, following Christ, is both an individual and a corporate dynamic. There are many errors afloat today regarding this. There is one example I can give you. The idea that I can follow the Good Shepherd apart from a local and accountable brotherhood. The Good Shepherd is portrayed as leading a flock of sheep. We find the lone sheep in the Bible is the lost sheep. What does the Good Shepherd do to the lone sheep? Say, "I found you, we'll have a little fellowship right here"? He takes the lost sheep and carries it back to, what? The flock, the fold. Brothers and sisters tonight, there are far too many lone ranger sheep, and I know some of them. There is also an error that is opposite but equally wrong, to make an attempt to blend into a flock with little or no personal relationship with the Shepherd. "I like it here. The other sheep are so friendly. I like the lambs club. That ram is my hero." Interpersonal relationships within the flock are very important, but they cannot replace a personal relationship with the Good Shepherd. We need a personal relationship, and one within the context of community. They must be in perfect balance. They must be a living reality.

They hear the shepherd's voice: "My sheep hear my voice." My wife and I were still courting when she called our house one evening. The voice on the other end she presumed was me. The person who answered, my brother, did nothing to change that assumption, at least not for a while. The conversation progressed to a point where it seemed to reveal his true identity. She was embarrassed. We thought it was funny. My brother and I have voices that are similar. Recently, we discovered there are differences. We live several thousand miles apart. There are different accents, slight to be sure. My wife would not make that same mistake today. She knows my voice. Why do sheep perk up when they hear the shepherd's voice? Why don't they listen to the stranger's voice? There is familiarity with that voice. There has been a relationship developed with Him. The word "voice" means more than vibrations coming from vocal cords. The word "voice" also means "message." They know his message, they claim his message. They understand his purpose. They spend time with the Master. That is why they know His voice. There is no such thing as a drive-thru break-through. Time is needed!

How do we hear his voice today? We read it in the written word. The very words of Jesus are inspired of God. The entire Bible from the beginning to the last amen is the inspired Word of God. I do believe that we need to look at what Jesus said while He was here to help us understand the rest of the Word. It's sad for me to realize that there are people saying, "The words of Jesus are for a different dispensation [or] a different culture and not relevant for us today." We read the words of Jesus, and if there is any doubt about what Paul teaches in the

epistles, about, divorce and remarriage, we go back to what Jesus said, and we'll find every time that Paul is in perfect harmony with what Jesus taught.

His Spirit speaks to my spirit. His voice is sometimes heard from the sheep. Are you listening to your sheep? He speaks through them at times. Recently, in about a week's time, we had two brothers in our congregation who came and said, "We feel our church needs to spend more time in prayer." One was the oldest, one was one of the youngest. That was the voice of the Lord. There are many strange voices today, some without, and some within. And even verses from within are saying, "Our voice is not being heard." Oh, that we could block everything else out and hear His voice. "Be still and know that I am God!" What does that even mean today, when voices are bombarding us from all over. It's good for us pastors to take a fast, from reading other materials, from work, and just listen, and spend time with Him and hear His voice. Well, the sheep not only hear His voice, but also believe Him. Verse 25 and 26, Jesus is talking to those who do not believe in Him, and alluding that those who believe, hear His voice. In verse 27, "My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me." Here it is: it's obedience. Follow me is found over and over again in the gospels, follow me. It is our love, our faith, in action. It is obedience. It is saying, yes Lord, I will. It is an act of the will. He does not force us to obey him.

There's that story, of the shepherd who has the lamb always running away, always getting lost. So the shepherd takes the lamb and breaks his leg, then carries that lamb around, until the lamb has learned to obey the master. Pretty good story, but I think it is inaccurate. I don't find that in any historical setting, at least not in Biblical culture. That is not the Good Shepherd. He does not force his sheep to obey Him. Yes, they have broken legs sometimes, because they fall into the crevice, but He does not force them to follow Him. Well, they know the Good Shepherd, and He knows them; reciprocal relationship. The word "know" is not a word that only means, "to have an awareness of," it's an intimate word. It means to experience. It's a daily dependence on the Shepherd, an hourly communion with Him, a giving of myself totally to Him.

#### *A Call to Christ's Shepherds.*

The word Shepherd, the Greek word is translated once as "XXX" We used to be called ministers. More and more we refer to ourselves as pastors. We have a ministers' meeting, and will stay so I trust. I love the word pastor and I love the word minister. I'm not sure why we take more to one than another. "Minister" is found in the New Testament many, many times. Pastor is a beautiful word, it means shepherd. It's not so important what we call ourselves, but that we are faithful to our calling.

The verse was read already, in 1 Peter 5:3. *Reads verse.* The word "ensamples" means, a dye, a stamp, a pattern, a prototype. A model of what? Of a good shepherd: "My pastor is better than yours!" No. The word ensamples means that we are to be a model of a sheep that is faithfully following Jesus. Be ensamples to your flock, your enthusiasm about following Christ, what you talk about after the service is over, how enthusiastic you are about passing out tracts on the Sunday when you finished preaching, and you're tired. Be an ensample to the flock.

Brothers, tonight, Jesus also talks about a hired shepherd in John 9:12. *Reads verse.* Brothers, there are voices that would lure the sheep away. There are thieves and robbers that are plundering sheep. There are wolves that are devouring sheep. There are hirelings who care not for the sheep,

but flee. If my reputation, if my status, if my income is more important than Christ's will for the flock he has called me to serve, than I am an hireling Shepherd. Let me mention this book: *Road Signs for the Journey*. I am not questioning the salvation of the churches this book refers to, but there is an alarming figure, talking about a group of churches going away from the truth. In a survey, the statement was made, "Jesus is the clearest revelation of God, but God may save people who don't know Jesus." In this group of churches, there were 24% of the members that answered, "Yes, that is possible." That's almost a 1/4<sup>th</sup>. They asked the pastors the same question. It was 43% who answered "yes."

We would tend to think that when a group of people forsakes the truth and go into apostasy, it is the congregation leading the way and the pastor reluctantly following, but statistics and the truth would show otherwise. Brothers, we have a responsibility. Let's take that responsibility and be accountability, and take it seriously. It has been one of the greatest privileges of my life, although a humbling experience, to teach our precious young ladies and men at Calvary Bible School the past few years, to sit with them and study the word of God. I love it. I gave the assignment this past year for the students to write a short essay about a pastor in their church whom they admire and who has been an inspiration for them in their Christian life. This is about you. I found out some things about you I didn't know before. Many of your names are mentioned here (*holds up a stack of papers*). Some of you are quite the preachers. These dear young men and ladies do not always express it to you, they do appreciate you. They are encouraged by your sermons, those personal touches you do, calling them on their way home, eating breakfast with them, just chatting. They appreciate that you invite their counsel on issues that pertain to them and the church. Do you know what is more influential? It is the voice of your example. This is what one person wrote about a pastor in this group, "When I think of a humble man, I think of him. He realizes that he is only an instrument in the hands of God. He is so passionate about following God. It is obvious he has an incredible relationship with God. He knows much about God's Word, and his wisdom seems endless. He thinks before speaking. This is something I wish I would do more often. He has been a challenge and blessing in my life. I respect him, his passion for God and people, and his desire to live a righteous, holy lifestyle."

God bless you tonight, as you know Him, and He knows you, and as you have the privilege and opportunity to make Him known. God bless you.