

John 10 (Part 1) :1–21 • “I am the good shepherd”

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We are in John, Chapter 10, where this is Part 1. We are going to be looking at the first 21 verses of the chapter here. It goes like this. Follow along with me as I read: *“¹Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ²But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.’*

“⁶This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁷So Jesus again said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²He 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. ¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

“¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶And 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. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

“¹⁸No 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.’ ¹⁹There was again, a division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰Many of them said, ‘He has a demon, and is insane. Why listen to him?’ ²¹Others said, ‘These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’” (ESV)

Let's stop there. Pray with me. Father, as we take time to look into these verses, I pray, my Father, that You minister grace and insight, and wisdom and understanding to our hearts, because, Lord, you know everybody here. You know what's going on in their lives. You know what's not going on in their lives. You know everything about them, and You know what they need to hear most. And I ask You, my Father, to speak and to minister to each and every heart with Your truth. Thank You, Father. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Amen.

What we are reading here this morning follows immediately on the heels of what happened in the previous chapter. You will remember that Jesus healed a man who had been born blind, blind from birth. And then there was all the drama and the debate and the conversation that went on about that. And now Jesus is addressing the religious leaders who were determined to not believe that there was anything legitimate about that healing of that particular blind man.

The religious leaders of Israel considered themselves the shepherds of the people, the shepherds of Israel in a spiritual sense. And so Jesus begins to speak about shepherding and taking care of sheep. Obviously, as you saw as we read through this passage already, Jesus heavily uses metaphoric language to speak about this, but He is talking about His relationship to the flock. He is talking about who we are as sheep. He is talking about who He is as the shepherd. And that is what we are going to learn here this morning as we dig into these verses. And I find it interesting that, first of all, Jesus uses sheep as a picture for us.

And I think that there are several reasons why that is interesting. But if you know anything about sheep, you know that it is not a compliment, because there are several things about sheep. By the way, do any of you have sheep? Any shepherd? Oh, wow. We are all city slickers here. Okay, well then, I'm probably not going to offend.

Well, maybe I will. Well, we'll just do this: sheep are dumb. That's really the first thing. And so I don't think this was a mistake that God used this sort of a picture to describe us. But also, sheep are very easily frightened. They are very skittish. In fact, did you know that sheep will not drink from running water because they are afraid of it? The water needs to be sitting still for them to drink. Isn't that interesting? What does that remind you of?

We are going to talk about this at the end, but, *"The Lord is my shepherd... He leads me beside still waters"* (Psalm 23:1-2, ESV), because He knows. He knows that I get scared really easily. The other thing about sheep that makes an interesting metaphorical picture to you and me is that they are completely defenseless. There is nothing that they can do to defend themselves. If a

predator comes, they need someone else to take care of them. They can't run. They have these little, short, spindly legs. They're wearing 27 sweaters. That has to slow you down. They can't growl or bark or bite or get up on their hind legs and look bigger.

They just kind of lie down and say, "All right, here I am. Lamb chops. Go for it." Literally, no means of self-defense, and what that means is, they are entirely dependent on their shepherd. What do you think God is saying to you and me? They are entirely dependent upon their shepherd.

I think that what we do know, and there's a lot more things about— I won't continue to sit here and offend you— but there are a lot of other things that relate to sheep that I think also connect very much to us. But I want you to notice that Jesus begins here by using some very strong words. He says, "*Truly, truly...*" Did you catch that?

He starts off right there in verse 1: "*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.*" And so the two things I want to bring out here is the way he begins this by saying, "*Truly, truly.*" If you have a New King James Version on your lap or on your device, you are reading the words, "*Most assuredly, I say to you,*" and whatever version you are using, they all mean the same thing there.

It is a call to us to pay close attention. When Jesus starts something by saying, "*Truly, truly,*" or "*Most assuredly, I say to you,*" He is saying, "This is important. Don't overlook what I'm about to say." We don't use phrases today like, "*Truly, truly, I say...*" I don't anyway, and I don't think I've ever caught myself saying, "*Most assuredly, I say to you.*" That's just not part of our common sort of language. But we do understand that it is a... what do I want to say?... message to us in and of itself to pay attention. And so that is what we are going to do.

But secondly, I'll need to talk a little bit about this sheepfold. Did you notice in verse 1, Jesus talked about a sheepfold, and He said that, "*He who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but tries to climb in by another way, (He says) that man is a thief and a robber.*" Since we don't have any shepherds here, and we obviously don't live in ancient times, I need to give you a little background on the sheepfold.

A sheepfold was an interesting sort of thing. You see, shepherds would stay with their sheep day and night, and they did not go home. They literally camped out with their sheep, and rarely did they camp in the open field. They would

create or build or put together somehow a sheepfold for the nighttime, because you see the nighttime was the time of danger or weather. But there were predators, and there were thieves, and there were things that you needed to protect your sheep from. And at night there was the higher risk of that.

So a sheepfold could be anything from a cave to a makeshift shed, or sometimes they would just pick out a large, grassy area, and they would stack rocks around in a circle, making a pen and so forth. In fact, there were times— if none of those things were available to build the sheepfold with— they would even use branches. Just cut down branches and pile them on top of one another to the height of 8 to 10 feet. And if they could find thorns, all the better because they would line the top of it with thorny branches if they had them available, again, to discourage any sort of predators or thieves who were trying to do something or get to the sheep.

But what ultimately made a sheepfold a safe place for the sheep at night was that it only had a single door. Or it wasn't even a door; they didn't put doors on them. It was a single entrance. In other words, there was only one way to get into the sheepfold. The shepherd would want to— he didn't want to stay up all night— he had to sleep. He was with his sheep all day long, and so now, night falls. He's building this sheepfold, and he wants to get some sleep. So what a shepherd would do is, he would lie down in the doorway, in the passageway of the sheepfold, so that effectively he became the door. Are you getting some little pictures here? Or as the NIV says, “*the gate*,” but there was no physical gate.

He became the door or the gate, and that means that anything that tried to get out or into that sheepfold had to pass by him. So that is how he would protect his sheep. Now, there were times when sheepfolds would hold the sheep or the flocks from several shepherds. If the sheepfold was big enough, shepherds would come together, and they would share a sheepfold.

Now, this wasn't a problem because the sheep knew their shepherd's voice, and when it came time to bring them out, they wouldn't get mixed up, because all the shepherd had to do was call to his sheep, and all that were his would come to him. And so that was never a problem. But if they were sharing a sheepfold, the shepherds would take turns sleeping in the entrance, and they would call that person the “gatekeeper.”

So the person who was lying in the door during that moment was the gatekeeper. And if one of the shepherds came to get his sheep while that gatekeeper was lying there, he would open the way for that shepherd to come in.

But as Jesus said, *“He who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, (but rather tries to climb in or break in by some other means, He says, that person) is a thief and a robber.”* Now we know that this is metaphoric language. And Jesus is communicating to you and me that He is the door; He is the gate. And by the way, yes, this is one of the “I Am” statements that Jesus gives: *“I am the gate for the sheep,”*(NIV) or, *“I am the door of the sheep”* (ESV).

But this is a warning to you and me and to the body of Christ that there are thieves that are going to try to get in from time to time. We need to know that. We need to understand that. We need to know that life is full of danger. Wouldn't it be great if life never produced any dangers at all? But we've been told many times, the dangers exist. Jesus told us; the apostles told us. Let me show you one other time when Jesus warned us of dangers. Look on the screen, Matthew, Chapter 7:

Matthew 7:15 (ESV)

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you (and notice how they come to you) in sheep's clothing (in other words, they come looking and smelling like a sheep, acting like a sheep, even talking like a sheep) but inwardly (he says, they) are ravenous wolves.” And now, he went on to say, of course, that you will know them ^{“16} *by their fruit.”* But the point here is that there are very real and present dangers.

And then the Apostle Paul– notice this from Acts, Chapter 20– he says:

Acts 20:29 (ESV)

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

Notice that both Jesus and Paul continue to use this metaphoric language to speak of the body of Christ as a flock, as sheep, even with wolves coming to attack and to kill some of the flock and so forth. Now these statements about false prophets and these warnings about fierce wolves, predators, who are going to make their way into the body of Christ, might be confusing to some of you. In light of the information that I just gave you about the sheepfold, and the fact that Jesus is sitting in the doorway and bringing protection to us, you might be thinking, “If Jesus is protecting the sheep and the sheepfold, then why do we even need to hear about these warnings?” Because the fact of the matter is, sometimes we wander off, sometimes we as sheep are our own worst enemies.

We like to blame the enemy for a lot of things that happen that are nasty in our lives. And to be sure, the enemy has been at work, but probably not as much as we think. I think that we provide our own enemy content, our own personal lives. We wander off; we do stupid things; rather than listening to the voice of our shepherd, we start paying attention to other voices. We get off track.

One of the worst things that we do is, we become prideful. We think we don't need to hear the voice of our shepherd. We don't need to be constantly listening. So we are not spending as much time in the Word as we might otherwise, or in prayer or whatever, and pretty soon we find ourselves in trouble. So there is a constant need for us to abide in the Word and to listen for the Shepherd's voice. But I want you to notice as we go on here, as Jesus talks about the sheep in verse 2, He goes on; He says: *"² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens."*

The gatekeeper is one of the shepherds whose turn it was to lie in the doorway. And when he knows that one of the other shepherds is coming to get his sheep he opens it up. He says, "Yeah, okay, come get your sheep." And He says, *"³ The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."* Notice that: he leads his sheep. He leads his sheep, and the sheep follow.

So I think Jesus is talking to us about how we are to follow our Shepherd. We are to listen for His voice and follow Him. I think some of us would rather have that poker or prodder in our backside to keep going. But that is not the way Jesus directs our lives. Sometimes it would be nice if He did. Sometimes I could use a good sharp prod in the backside to get moving. But Jesus says, "I want you to follow Me. I want you to listen for My voice, and I want you to follow Me. So you have to pay attention, Paul. You have to open your ears, your spiritual ears. You have to pray for direction. You have to pray for sensitivity. You have to learn to follow."

Notice that He goes on in verse 4; again we read, it says, *"When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them."* He goes before them. Do you understand that Jesus is going before you? Now, that is a great comfort to know that He goes before us into all things. All things. All things: every difficulty, every trial, every challenge, every hurt, every pain, every joy. He goes before you. Before you. And He says, "Follow me."

And sometimes I look at that direction and I go, "I'm not going in there. Uh-uh. That doesn't look fun. I didn't sign up for that. I don't want to go there."

He says, “Okay, I’ve gone before you. Follow Me now; follow Me.”

“Oh, okay, Lord.” We don’t do that very well, do we? Following.

I hear from more people who have gotten lost and are now coming back to the Lord. I think the pandemic did a lot to get people’s attention, to shake their world and get them back following the Lord, because we do, we get lost sometimes. We stop listening. We get stubborn. We get stubborn. Have you ever dealt with a stubborn animal like a horse or a cow or a mule? We call them mules because they act like that. We call people mules, I should say, because they act like that. How does God deal with us when we get stubborn? He appeals to us. Let me show you something from the Psalms. I’ve always loved this verse or passage:

Psalm 32:8-9 (ESV)

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.

He says, “*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.* (That’s the good news. But, He says,) *Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.*”

That is what you have to do. When I was a young kid, I didn’t have any horses, but all my friends had a horse, and I begged my dad for a horse, and he wisely never gave me one or let me have one. But I hung around horses a lot with my friends. We rode all the time, and I was really good at getting bucked off. But anyway, I fell off horses more times than you can imagine. But there were a lot of times when we were dealing with horses when the horse just simply didn’t want to do what you were trying to tell them to do.

And horses know, when they have someone on their back who doesn’t really know what they are doing. And vice versa, they know when they have someone on their back who does know what they are doing. And they always knew that I didn’t know what I was doing, so I would hurt, with the reins.

I want to go right. And the horse is like, “I’m not going that way.” I’m cranking on the thing. That’s what you have to do with the horse. You have to crank on the thing to try to get it to do what you want it to do. And God is saying to you and me in this passage from Psalms, “Don’t be like that. Don’t be like a stubborn

mule that just simply won't do what you want it to do, and you have to crank on that bit and bridle to try to get it to just move in the right direction."

He says, "Don't be that way." How does He want us to be? He wants us to be sensitive, listening and following. Now in verse 6, if you look with me there, we are told that all these figures of speech and metaphorical language that Jesus is using was completely lost on them. It says, they didn't get it, and so He started again.

He said to them in verse 7, "*Truly, truly*, (and notice He says that again, which is that emphatic, "Please listen.") *I say to you, I am the door for the sheep.*" Now He's getting a little more specific. And here is what's interesting about this particular section of Scripture in John. Jesus goes back and forth between metaphoric language and the language of reality, and you have to stay with Him because here He says, "*I am the door of the sheep.*"

In other words, He is telling them, "I've given you these metaphors, but I want you to understand what I mean by this. "I am the door; I am the passageway." So, the one and only way. He does not say, "I am A door," right? Like, some people like to think, "Well, Jesus is, oh, Jesus is one way we get to God."

No, He is THE way. He is THE door. He repeats this, if you skip down into verse 9: "*I am the door.*" Obviously He is using metaphor, but He is saying, "This is me. I am the spiritual reality of this metaphor." And He says, "*If anyone* (look at this in verse 9, if anyone) *enters by me, he will be saved.*"

Now He has gotten away from metaphor, hasn't He? Now He is talking about spiritual realities. You come through Me, and you will be saved. And He is talking again about how we have become born-again Christians. It is through Jesus. You have to go through the door. But then He slips back into metaphoric language here in the end of the verse— look at this— after saying, "*He will be saved,*" He says, "(and then he) *will go in and out and find pasture.*"

Going in and out. That phrase means, just living your life. You hear that a lot in the Old Testament, and "finding pasture" refers to walking in the Lord's provision. So He says, "You come in through Me, you'll be saved." There is the reality of it, and then you will be able to live your life under the provision of God. You will literally live your life under the provision of the Lord. He will take care of you. You know what is interesting about that? So many Christians—and I find this in my own life, so when I say "so many Christians," just know that I'm including myself in that— we hear things like this where Jesus promises us that we will find pasture.

And again, that is that metaphor for, live under the provision of the Lord. And yet we live our lives many times as if He is not going to provide. And we have to do it ourselves, and we get all upset and stressed-out and hot and bothered and lathered up about all the things that we have to deal with, and we are concerned about these things, like, “Well, I’ve got to do all that.” And we forget that it is the Shepherd’s responsibility to lead the sheep to pasture, which is to take care of them, to feed them, to care for them, to protect them. We forget that. We forget that He is our provider. We forget, and we start running off.

And so Jesus had to say things like, “Look at the birds. You see them getting an ulcer. They’re not worrying. They’re not going, ‘Oh man, what are we going to eat?’ And look at the flowers. Are they worried about what they’re going to wear?” He says, “Listen, Solomon had all the money in the world. He wasn’t clothed like even one of those flowers. And he was filthy rich in human worldly terms.” And yet Jesus said, “God clothes the grass of the field in raiment that is more glorious than even Solomon” (Matthew 6:26-29). So he says, “You think, do you really think He cares less for you than He does flowers or birds?” Don’t you know that your Shepherd will take care of you? Oh, don’t you need to hear that like every day? I do, I need to hear that, like, seriously, every day.

But falling back into metaphor in verse 10— look there with me in your Bible— it says, “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.*” Now, He already told us who the thief is. It is the person who tries to get into the sheepfold by some other way than the doorway, or the passageway. That is the thief. You most often, by the way, hear this verse quoted relating to Satan. They’ll say, “Well, Satan, he comes to steal, kill, and destroy. He’s the thief.” And I have no doubt that is true.

That is not who Jesus is talking about. I think that is probably an accurate characteristic of the enemy to steal, kill, and destroy. But again He is talking about the thief being anyone who would attempt to get to the sheep by avoiding the shepherd. You with me? Anybody who tries to get to the sheep by avoiding the shepherd; in other words, they are somebody who tries to get to the people of God without going through Jesus.

“I want to leave Jesus out of this,” they say, “but I still want you and your attention and your life,” and so forth. So He says, “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.*” But the real emphasis of this verse is the last part, where He says, “*I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*”

You know what’s interesting about this word, “abundantly”? When I look up words in my Greek dictionary, which is on my computer— don’t think I’m going

to a lot of work. All I have to do is double-click on a word, and this thing pops up, but anyway— usually when I look up a Greek word, there are a few synonymous terms that help me give a little more dimension to understanding what the word means.

When I looked up this word, “abundantly,” there was this huge paragraph of words that popped up, and what that means is, this word is “extravagant” in its essence. When Jesus says, “The thief comes to steal from you, he comes to kill, he comes to destroy; I have come that you might be ‘extravagantly’ and abundantly blessed.”

That is really what He is saying. This word is absolutely incredible. It means something beyond the norm. “I have come that you might have something beyond the norm. I have come that you might have excessive blessings.” That is actually one of the words I found in my Greek dictionary. It can be translated, “excessive.”

“I have come that you might have life excessively.” It sounds like a strange way to say it. More abundantly, more extremely, overflowing, is the promise. “That is why I have come. He has come to take from you. I come to bless you and to give to you abundantly.” And then the other “I Am” statement here is in verse 11, where Jesus says, “*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*” He lays down his life for the sheep. Did you guys see this? You understand this has a dual meaning, right? Because remember we already talked about the fact that in the sheepfold, the shepherd would lie down in the doorway to make sure that nobody could get to the sheep, to make sure they would be protected.

And so in a very real sense, whoever was the gatekeeper for the night, or for whatever watch of the night he was the gatekeeper, he was putting his life on the line because he may have to fight off a predator. So he is literally laying down his life in a very true sense of the term.

But of course, Jesus did this in a very literal sense for you and me. When He went to the cross, Jesus said, “¹⁵*I lay down my life for the sheep.*” And of course, Jesus laid down his life for us at the cross. And He bore our punishment, our penalty and so forth. And this is a beautiful statement about what He came to do for us.

But can I just add something to this statement by Jesus, where He says the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep? Can I suggest to you that this is also

an example that pastors should follow, to be willing to lay down their lives, perhaps never physically?

How often do you get a chance to lay down your life physically for somebody? We say the same thing to husbands. Husbands are to *“love your wives, as Christ loved the church.”* Isn't that what Paul says in Ephesians (6:25, ESV)? How did Christ love the church? He loved her sacrificially, laying down his life for her.

So we say to husbands, be willing to lay down your life for your wife. I think most husbands would think, “Yeah, sure. I'd take a bullet for my wife. No problem.” How often is that going to happen? No one has ever shot at Sue and me up to this point, and I'm thankful for that. And so I have never had an opportunity to do that. There have been some other things that have come our way that I have had to step in front of.

And I believe that this is an example for pastors. You might say, “Well, Pastor Paul, why do you think this is an example for pastors?” Do you guys remember that the word “shepherd” and the title “pastor” are the exact same Greek word? You can translate it “pastor” or “shepherd,” and it is the context of the passage that tells you how to render it in English.

So you could literally say. “The good pastor lays down his life for the sheep.” Now, again, that can come in all kinds of ways, to lay down one's life. But what it means is, in most often cases, “I am willing, I need to be willing, to put them first, to put the people first.” At the end of the day, that is just like a husband with his wife. He needs to be willing to put her first. A pastor needs to be willing to put the people first. That is what sacrificial service is all about. But unfortunately, too many times in our church history, we have taken the position of pastor, and we have begun to call it other things other than the biblical term, which is pastor; that is the Bible's term for the role of the leader of a local fellowship. And we have come up with all kinds of other terms that speak more of this ministry as a career than a calling, and this is what we have done. And so now, rather than pastors who are called by Jesus to shepherd the flock, now we have career clergymen who Jesus would refer to as “hired hands.”

Look what He says in verse 12 and following: *“¹²He 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.”* And then He explains what is going on in verse 13: *“¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.”* You see, he lies down in the doorway. And he is sleeping away, but he starts to hear something sniffing around, and he looks

and he sees that there's a sheep coming, I mean, a wolf coming, and he says, "I'm outta here." So he dashes off, leaving the passageway open to the sheepfold, and the sheep are now literally captive to the wolf or whatever predator happens to be after them. And he left because he is like, "Oh, I didn't sign up for this. I came for a paycheck. I don't care about these dirty, miserable, stinky sheep."

By the way, did you know sheep are stinky? They are, they are stinky. Their wool secretes this oil that picks up, like, everything. And it is an oil that we have actually drawn from them. And it is where we get lanoline. Have you ever heard, it's like, "Oh, this lotion has 'with lanoline,'" and we think it is a really cool thing, but with sheep, it makes them stinky because literally it attracts everything to their coat, and they get all matted, (and blech!...)

And so there is another neat little metaphoric connection to us as people. Anyway, so the hired hand "*cares nothing for the sheep.*" But here is what Jesus says about Himself. Verse 14: "¹⁴*I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. Just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father.*" And this is Jesus' way of simply saying, "I have a personal relationship with My sheep."

This is not some situation where I take care of these sheep because, "I have this job to do, but I don't really care about these sheep. It is my job, so I'm going to do my job." No, no, no, no. Jesus says, "I know every single sheep. I know their weaknesses. I know their strengths. I know their problems. I know their concerns. I know everything. I am intimately acquainted with my sheep, and they know My voice."

What does it mean when it says, "⁴*They know his voice*"? It simply means that when they hear truth, they recognize it as truth because Jesus is the Truth. Have you ever noticed that about yourself as a believer? Somebody will say something, you hear something on the radio, read it in a magazine or whatever. It might not even be in the Bible, but some truth is spoken and you're like, "Yeah, that's true. That's true." And then when you read your Bible, it's just all over the place. "This is true. I see it. I hear the voice of the shepherd."

And then in the middle of verse 15, Jesus again says, "*And I lay down my life for the sheep,*" obviously a prophetic foretelling of the cross. And then Jesus says in verse 16, "*And I have other sheep that are not of this fold.*" And that's good news for you and me. I'm assuming we are all Gentiles in this room. There might be some of you who have a little Jewish DNA, but for the rest of us who are European mongrels mostly, we are not of the original fold that Jesus was

referring to here. We are the other fold, and I'm thankful that Jesus made that point: "I have sheep who are not of this fold, but they are going to come in, and they are going to hear My voice, and they are going to listen. So there is going to be one flock and one shepherd."

Remember what the Apostle Paul said about this? Let me show you: Galatians on the screen, Chapter 3, verse 28. He wrote, and he said:

Galatians 3:28 (ESV)

There is neither Jew or Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

He said, "I have other sheep who are not of this fold, but I'm going to bring them into the fold, and there is just going to be one fold. There's going to be one flock, and they are just Mine, just My flock, those that belong to Me." Then Jesus says some very important words about Himself in verse 17 and 18, and you need to hear this. He says, "*For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I (notice that— that I) may take it up again.*"

Who? Let me ask you a question: Who raised Jesus from the dead? If you said, "God the Father raised Jesus from the dead," I would say you are correct because the Bible says that. If you said to me, "Oh, the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead; the power of the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead," I would say that's correct because the Bible says that.

But if you also said, "Jesus raised Himself from the dead," I would say, "Correct" because the Bible says that too. The whole Trinity was involved in the resurrection. Jesus says right here, He says, "I take it up. I take up my life again." Look, notice what even goes on. He repeats himself in verse 18. He says, "*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.*" Isn't that great?

Do you know what Jesus is essentially saying here? He is saying, "I have power over life and death. Nobody takes my life from Me." We say that they crucified Jesus, and they killed him on a cross. But He allowed that to happen. They did not take His life. He offered His life as a sacrifice, a willing sacrifice. And when He was done paying the price for your sins and my sins, what did He do? He dismissed His spirit because, why? It was finished. When it was done, He even said so. He announced it. He said, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). And I think that was a cry of victory, by the way. And then He said, "All right, we're done. We're done here. "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit*" (Luke

23:46, ESV). Boom. He was in control of that whole thing, and yet He offered himself as a sacrifice for your sins and mine. What an incredible, incredible thing: the ultimate expression of the Good Shepherd.

You remember...? We are going to get to this when we get to Chapter 15. Let me put it on the screen— John, Chapter 15. Jesus said:

John 15:13 (ESV)

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus laid down his life. It was not taken from Him. He laid it down, and He did it for you. So those statements are so important. Jesus is claiming deity, and this is the heart of the Gospel. The death of Jesus on the cross, sacrificed for you and me and so forth. But of course, whenever that kind of talk is made, it is always confusing to people.

This section ends in verses 19 and following by talking about the fact that people were divided. They heard what Jesus had to say, and this whole thing about being the shepherd and the door. And they came away going, “Oh, this is ridiculous. Why do we even listen to this guy? This guy's obviously got a demon. Let's just, let's go home.” But in verse 21, it says, other people said, “First of all, number one, these aren't the kind of words that you hear coming out of a demoniac.” (We've heard some words coming out of a demoniac. Sometimes we even hear it on the news.) And they say, “This is not the way a demoniac talks.” But secondly, “Can a demoniac open the eyes of a man born blind?” And of course, they are referring to what happened in the previous chapter, in Chapter 9.

But that is essentially where we are going to end. But before I close, I am going to put a Psalm up on the screen that I know that you all know. But now I want you to look at it and read it with me with new eyes, understanding what we now do about Jesus' role, what He came to do in our lives, what you are like as a sheep, what you need, how defenseless you are, how stinky, and all the other offensive things that we learn about sheep, and how much God loves you. Anyway, up on the screen:

Psalm 23 (ESV)

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. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence

of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

“¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want (and that means of course, I shall have no want. I will have no needs). ²He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. (You already know what that's all about. He understands that I'm skittish. And) ³he restores my soul. (Your soul is your emotions and your intellect.) He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”
Amen.

Let's stand and pray. If you need prayer, we invite you to come on up so we can pray for you.

Father God, thank You for being our Shepherd, our Good Shepherd, who lays down His life for the sheep. Who fills us with hope and life and truths. We thank You and praise You for all that You are, in Jesus' precious name. And all God's people said, amen.

God bless you.