

Title: Wolves, Hirelings, and Shepherds: Knowing Who Truly Cares for the Flock

Sermon Summary: Drawing from John 10, this sermon examines three distinct figures -- the wolf, the hireling, and the good shepherd -- to help believers understand that proximity and title do not guarantee genuine care or commitment. The preacher warns that not everyone surrounding a person has that person's best interests at heart, and that danger has a way of exposing the true character of those in leadership. The wolf represents spiritual and physical threats that come without announcement. The hireling represents those who occupy positions of leadership for personal gain but abandon responsibility when the cost becomes too high. The good shepherd, ultimately embodied in Jesus Christ, is defined not by title or eloquence but by a willingness to stay, stand, and sacrifice for the flock. The sermon calls believers to recognize the value of genuine spiritual leadership, to remain anchored in Christ as the ultimate shepherd, and to trust that God will take care of his sheep even in seasons of danger and uncertainty.

Key Points:

- Proximity does not equal protection, and titles do not guarantee character
- All believers are sheep who require genuine spiritual protection, guidance, and instruction
- The wolf represents danger that does not always announce itself and can come through false teaching, manipulation, division, financial exploitation, and destructive spiritual influences
- The hireling is not identified by receiving compensation but by a heart that prioritizes personal benefit over the welfare of the flock
- The difference between a shepherd and a hireling is most clearly revealed when danger appears
- Crisis and pressure expose what position and title can conceal
- The good shepherd stays when it is inconvenient, stands firm against threats, and sacrifices personal comfort and safety for the sake of the flock
- Jesus is the supreme example of the good shepherd, having stayed through rejection, suffering, and death to secure the lives of his sheep
- Believers can have confidence that because they have a good shepherd, no weapon formed against them will prosper

Scripture Reference:

- John 10:10 -- Jesus contrasts the thief, who comes only to steal, kill, and destroy, with himself, who came to give life in abundance
- John 10:11-13 -- Jesus identifies himself as the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep, and contrasts him with the hireling who flees when the wolf comes
- Psalm 23 -- The Lord is described as a shepherd who provides, protects, and guides his sheep through every season, including the valley of the shadow of death
- Isaiah 40:8 -- The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of God endures forever
- Romans 8:28 -- All things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose
- 2 Timothy 4:2 -- The charge to preach the word in season and out of season
- John 14:6 -- Jesus declares himself the way, the truth, and the life, and the only path to the Father

Stories:

- The preacher shares a personal account of his son being diagnosed with lymphoma unexpectedly, using it to illustrate how the wolf of danger can arrive without warning even in seasons of flourishing ministry and family stability
- The preacher recalls a humorous incident from his college years when, serving as minister of music, he told choir members they could call him for anything they needed -- only to receive a call from a woman asking him to replace her mailbox post, illustrating how people often make promises they have no intention or ability to keep
- The crucifixion narrative is retold as the ultimate demonstration of the good shepherd's commitment, tracing Jesus through the agony of Gethsemane, the mockery and suffering of his trial, the walk to Golgotha, the crucifixion between two thieves, and the resurrection on the third day as proof that the good shepherd stayed, stood, and sacrificed for his flock