

Harris Creek Baptist Church  
Nate Hilgenkamp  
Series: I AM  
19 March 2023

I AM: The Good Shepherd

John 10:11-21

**“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So, when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father. The Jews who heard these words were again divided. Many of them said, ‘He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?’ But others said, ‘These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’”**

Well, every time I go to Chipotle, I get the exact same thing every time. I'm not a very adventurous eater; I just get the same thing every time. It's this—if you're looking for the perfect Chipotle order, this is it: chicken bowl with brown rice. Brown rice doesn't taste very good but apparently it's better for you. You get rice and then you get black *and* pinto beans. I know some of you are “black only,” but I'm like, “Black and pinto beans for sure.” Then veggies and then cheese and then pico. Then, since I'm not a doctor or a lawyer like some of you, I can't afford the guac, so I have to pass on that, but here's the key. The key for me is that Chipotle's kind of bland without the red salsa, so I ask for the red-hot salsa, but I ask for it on the side because if they put it on top, it just ruins the whole thing; it's way too hot. So, I just ask for a cup of it on the side. That's what I do every time.

A couple weeks ago, I picked up Chipotle for my wife and me and brought it home. We were eating at the dinner table—me, my wife, and my two-year-old daughter. We were sharing our food with her, so we were sharing the rice, the beans, and the chicken. She didn't care about any of it. She wasn't eating any of it; she wouldn't even look at any of it because the only thing that she was looking at was Dad's red cup—my red cup of hot salsa. We're like, “Hey, will you eat your food?” She just kept saying, “Red cup. Red cup. Red cup.” I said, “Jacie girl, no. You're not gonna like it. It is way too hot; it's gonna burn your mouth.” But she just kept saying, “Red cup, red cup.” I was like, “Jacie, it's way too hot for you. It's way too hot for you.” She just kept saying, “Red cup. Red cup. Red cup.” So, I fell into peer pressure and said, “Okay, you want it? You can have it.” I grabbed it and set it down next to her. She was delighted. It made her day and brought a huge smile to her face, so I felt great as a dad. She took her spoon and she grabbed a huge spoonful of it. She put it in her mouth and was smiling so big for about two seconds and then the tears came. She started making faces like this (*makes faces like he's gagging*). She was trying to get the salsa out of her mouth. She was no longer pointing at the red cup; she was pointing at me, going, “Too hot, too hot, too hot.” I'm like, “Don't blame me; my hands are clean of this. This is on you, girl. I told you what it would be, but you wanted what you wanted, so you have the consequences of it.” She should have known better. I've been eating Chipotle for years;

she's been eating food for 15 months. I know food and I know Chipotle better than her. As her dad, I want to give her what she would like. I wanted her to have what would taste good to her so she can happily eat whatever is put on her plate because I love her, and I want what's best for her. But as a two-year-old, she thought she knew better.

You know what's true even if you're two, twenty-two, or sixty-two? A lot of us don't like to be led. Some of us have a personality that just doesn't really like to be led. Others of us have had life experiences that make us not want to be led because some of you have tried to follow pastors, professors, parents, or politicians. You've tried to follow their leadership and you've been burned by their leadership, so the response has been this: "I'm not gonna be a follower; I want to be my own man. I want to be my own woman. I'm not going to be a follower. I'm going to lead myself." The problem is that I don't think that will go well for you because, while we want to lead ourselves, we simultaneously can't lead ourselves. When we try to lead ourselves, things don't go well for us. In fact, we're seeing this happen right now in our culture today. When a truth of our culture is, "Hey, just do whatever you want," things don't go well. An example of this is a study that came out a month ago. If you're a parent, you need to know this data; it's fascinating. It came out from the CDC. They were doing this study on teenage girls and trying to figure out how many teenage girls would report feeling persistently sad or hopeless. They did this study in 2011 and—check this out—36% of teenage girls in 2011 felt persistent feelings of hopelessness or sadness. That's devastating; about one in three. They ran the study ten years later, in 2021, and the data just came out last month. This is what it is now: 57%. Fifty-seven percent felt persistent feelings of hopelessness or sadness. Maybe you see that, or you read that and you're like, "I think we're doing a great job on our own." I don't know. I read that and I think that Jesus looks at this next generation and looks at all of us a lot like he did the crowds in Matthew 9. This is what it says: **"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."** Like sheep without a shepherd, like people who don't want to be led.

The good news is that we're continuing on in this sermon series called "I Am." We're looking at the seven "I Am" statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John. This is an important sermon series for all of us because, if you have said that you're a Christian and that you have staked your life on who Jesus is, you'd better know who he claimed to be. In this sermon series, we're letting Jesus speak for Himself. This is Jesus according to Jesus. We've looked at Him saying, "I Am the Bread of Life," "I Am the Light of the world," "I Am the Gate" or "I Am the Door." Today, we're going to look at Him saying, "I Am the Good Shepherd." If you have your Bibles, open them up or turn them on. We're gonna be in John 10 this morning. John 10, starting in verse 11. It's actually the same chapter as last week; we're just going to finish out what Jesus is teaching to the people of God. John 10:11—this is what Jesus says: **"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So, when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."**

I know we've got a wide range of people here in this room today or in the Commons or watching online. I know that, for some of you, this is your first time ever in church. If that's you, I just want to say welcome. I'm so glad you're here. But we've got a lot of other people here today who have been in church for years, if not decades, and you've heard a lot of sermons about sheep and

shepherds. In fact, you've heard so many that you could probably just write this sermon for me. What happens when pastors start talking about sheep and shepherds? What do they almost always start with? When they start talking about sheep, they almost always say, "Sheep are not smart." You've probably heard that before, which is true. Sheep are really, really unintelligent. In fact, they are one of the dumbest animals on Earth. In fact, they're so dumb. Here's a story—I didn't think this was true, but it's 100% true—there's a story from just a few years ago in Turkey where a group of shepherds had their sheep up against a cliffside. There was great scenery with a bunch of grass; it was a great place for the sheep. The only problem was that there was this cliff and sheep are not smart, so as the Shepherds were just watching their sheep graze, one of the sheep looks over the cliff, sees some grass down there, and jumps. Then, his buddies go, "Well, if he did it, I might as well do it," so then they jump. This is crazy: all 1500 sheep jumped off the cliff. Fifteen hundred. They just followed what their friends were doing. Now, this next part is not funny, but it's also really funny: 1500 of them jumped. Only 450 of them died because sheep are really fluffy, so they jumped and then they just provided a pillow for the rest of them. I know, I know, it's sad. (*Laughter*). But the important part of the story is that sheep are not smart; they don't know what they're doing. Oftentimes, when passages like this are preached, it's preached like, "Sheep are not smart and you are not smart and, therefore, you need to follow the Shepherd"—but that's not the heart of this passage. The heart of this passage is not "sheep are not smart and, therefore, you need a Shepherd." The heart of this passage is that the Shepherd is good and, therefore, you should want to follow Him. The Shepherd is good; therefore, you should want to follow Him. The point of this passage is not about the foolishness of the sheep but about the faithfulness of the Shepherd. You see, it's not about how baaaaaad (*makes a noise like a sheep*) you are; it's about how good He is. (*Laughter.*) Hey, if you didn't laugh at that, you're still asheep this morning. (*Laughter.*) Unbelievable. (*Laughter.*)

You see, the point of this section is to show you how deeply He cares about you. He does it by contrasting the shepherd with the hired hand. The hired hand runs when the sheep are in danger. The shepherd stays by his sheep no matter what. This reminded me of a time when my wife and I were dating. We were asked to babysit for a family here at Harris Creek. It was a great family with some great kids. We had gotten to know them well. One of the daughters, at the time, was about three or four years old and we had a great time with her until I told her to go to sleep. When I said, "Hey, it's bedtime," it was like when Bruce Banner turned into the Incredible Hulk—like "Rawh!!" I didn't know that was capable of a three-year-old. She ran to the other room and was screaming at me going, "I'm not going to sleep! Where's Mom? Where's Dad? I don't want you here!" We did that for about a half hour and, honestly, I have no recollection on if we ever actually got her to go to sleep. The only thing I remember that night was my favorite part of the night: leaving their house. I was so overjoyed to leave because I was like, "I've got money in my Venmo account and she's no longer my problem." My favorite part of the night was leaving their house. Now I'm a dad. Can I tell you about my favorite part of my days? My favorite part of my day—by far—is going home. It's going home to see my daughter. She's not perfect. Man, she yells at me sometimes; she disobeys me; sometimes she wants the red salsa. The difference is I'm not paid to be with her; she's mine. My favorite part of my day is going home. Sometimes I also get to see her on Tuesdays and Thursdays because she's up here for Parents' Day Out from 9 to 2; it's a great program here at Harris Creek. Sometimes, if I don't have a meeting or other things going on, I get to see her at 2 PM when my wife comes to pick her up. Here's a picture of two weeks ago, when I saw her. She saw me from one end of the hallway, and she just ran to me and tackled me. You can see how happy she was to see me. I wish you could have seen how happy I was to

see her—because in that moment, my heart did something I didn't know I was capable of prior to being a dad. I didn't know I had this in me—because all I want to do, in that moment when I see her run to me, I just want to grab her in close and pull her in tight, say, “J, I love you so much! I'm so excited to see you.” I don't share this picture to say I'm a great dad, because I am not a perfect dad. My love for her is nothing compared to the love your heavenly Father has for you.

I know I share this and the word “dad,” for some of you, doesn't connect in the way that it should because you've had a dad who didn't care for you, didn't pursue you, didn't love you. But I just want to tell you, this picture is a picture that should be burned in your brain, but replace it with you and your heavenly Father. This is the heart your heavenly Father has for you when He sees you. He can't wait to wrap you up, pull you in close to his chest, and say, “Son, I love you. Daughter, I love you.” You are not a burden to Him. Some of you need to be reminded of that today. You've been covered in sin this whole week. I just want you to hear this: you are not a burden to your Father. You are not disgusting to Him because of how dumb you are. He delights in you because He's a good Father. He delights in you because He's a good Father because, you see, He's not a hired hand who's paid to put up with you. He's not a hired hand who just puts up with you because He gets rewarded. No, He's a Shepherd who pursues you because you are His reward. You are what He's after. He's not disgusted in you; He's delighted in you. It's not because you're a good sheep; it's because He's a good Shepherd.

Jesus is better than we expect. He was better than what the people at that time would have expected as well. They were expecting a Messiah; they were hoping for a Messiah to come. They expected Him to come as a king or a warrior. They wanted Him to come and dispose of all their enemies and sit on a throne on Earth so that they could be ruled over in peace and safety. This is what they expected; they expected the Messiah to come as a king or a warrior. There's biblical precedent for that. There's reasons in Scripture why that was the case; one example for that is Isaiah 40. It says this: **“See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.”** He was going to come powerfully and rule over the people. He was going to be a king and a warrior. This is what they focused on, but they missed the next verse. Verse 11: **“He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.”** You see, He could have come as a political king because He was the King of all kings, but He didn't. He could have come as a warrior because He was going to win the war of all wars, but he didn't. He came as a Shepherd because, more than wanting to explain that he wanted to rule and win, He wanted to show you that He loves you so deeply. He wants to pull you in close to His chest and tell you that He loves you because, friend, it doesn't matter how much of a foolish sheep you've been because you've got a faithful Shepherd. So, the first thing that we can learn is this:

*1. The sheep delight in the care of their Shepherd.*

Let's keep reading in verse 14: **“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.”** Now, if you're not Jewish, which is probably many of us here today, He's talking about you. In this moment, He's speaking to the Jewish people and He's saying, “I'm not just coming here to save you; I'm coming in to save all peoples from every race, nationality, culture, language. I've come

to save the world. All of them are welcome in my sheep pen.” **“They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”** Here, the Shepherd is saying that the #1 distinguishing mark of my sheep is that they know my voice. In fact, He said this a couple verses earlier in the passage that we looked at last week, in 10:3-4: **“The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.”** For Jesus, there was a high priority on His sheep knowing the voice of the Shepherd. So how do you know if you are His sheep? How do you know if He's your Shepherd?

Sheep hardly know anything; they hardly know anything at all, but they do know one thing: the voice of their Shepherd. I just want you to see what this looks like. Let's play this video; in this video, there's a number of different people who try to call on these sheep. They do it by using the same call that the Shepherd makes. He told them the exact right words to say. You can see that's what that girl did there. The sheep did not respond. Here's the shepherd. Look at them. Look at them. You know, when I saw that video the first time, I almost got emotional watching it. I'm like, “What am I doing?” These are sheep; who cares? But I think there's something within us; I think there's something within me that's like, “I want that to be me. I want that to be me with Jesus so that, when He calls, I come running. When every other voice is screaming at me, I don't even lift up my head because I know they're not my shepherd. I know my Shepherd cares for me, knows me, loves me, and is going to lead me to green pastures.” In fact, when I saw that video, the first picture that came to mind was Peter right after the resurrection. He's on the boat, fishing for fish. “He was fishing for fish”—that's deep stuff right there. Then, he saw Jesus on the shore. The minute he recognized it was Jesus—you might know this story—he jumped off the boat and swam to his Shepherd, just like those sheep. I want that to be me, and I bet some of you want that to be you. You're like, “I want to respond to the voice of my Shepherd. I want to hear the voice of God.”

Here's why you might not hear His voice: it's because you respond to every other voice in your life. You've crowded out the voice of your Shepherd with everything else going on in your life. Your life is so noisy that you can't hear His voice. You can't respond to His voice. This week, I was listening to this podcast, and it said this really interesting thing about this. It recommended this book, so I picked up this book and, man, I just love this theory that's being written about in this book. It's just so beautiful and I really enjoy it. I was talking to my friend this week and they had a different belief about this. I really learned a lot from them. My mom—she always says this—and this person in my Life Group—they believe this—and this influencer that I follow on social media, they seem to have a really great life and here's what they say about this. “Those voices cannot be the defining voices of your life.” They cannot be the defining voices of your life. The defining voice of your life must be Jesus' voice—must be your Shepherd's voice. You need to respond to His voice before any other voice in your life.

If you want to hear His voice, I've got a surefire way that you can hear His voice in your life. If you want to hear the voice of God audibly in your life, here's what you can do this week. Any of you have one of those things called a Bible in here—anybody? Can I see one? Oh my gosh. Oh, okay, good—there are some Bibles here. Let's go. The voice of God in your life this week: pull out your Bible and read it out loud. You're going to hear what God's voice sounds like because He's given it to us. He's given us books of His voice, of His word. I know some of you struggle

reading the Bible. Your excuses: “I don't have time for it.” “I don't like reading.” “I don't really understand it.” “I like to sleep more.” “I like to watch TV more.” Whatever your excuses, I just hope we get on the same page here: those excuses about getting in the Word of God showcase your desire to know the voice of God. Those excuses about getting in the Word of God showcase your desire or lack thereof of knowing the voice of God. A.W. Tozer—he was an author—said this: “Whatever keeps me from my Bible is my enemy.” That has got to be true in your life. You've got to grab hold of that and make that true of your life. You cut anything out that's keeping you from the Word of God so that you can begin to hear the voice of God. I know many of us are like, “Man, I would like to hear a lot more interesting things than what is in Scripture. I would like to hear the voice of God tell me who to marry. I would like to hear the voice of God tell me what job to take or what to eat for lunch.” I believe that God can do that through the power of the Holy Spirit. He can prompt you in those different ways and we should eagerly desire for him to do that, but think about this: if you were God, why would you reveal your mysterious will if that person is not currently following your revealed will? Why would you show them your mysterious will if they're not already following your revealed will? Why would you tell them exactly who to marry if they're not listening on how to do dating well? If they're not already following what you've said, why would you tell them more? Why would you prompt them in more ways? If you want to know the voice of God, get in His Word and train yourself to hear what God says and what He sounds like.

The problem is not just hearing the voice of God; the second problem in this passage, in this section, is not just hearing God's voice but following God's voice. Think back to that opening story with my daughter and a red salsa cup. The problem in that story wasn't that she couldn't hear me; the problem in that story wasn't that she didn't know it was me. The problem with that story was that she heard me and knew it was me; she knew I was warning her, and she ignored me. She didn't care at all because she knew what she wanted. Some of you gotta hear this. Some of you—that's what your life looks like right now. You hear the voice of God, you know it's Him, and you know He's warning you—and you don't care because you're still reaching for that “red cup” anyway. I don't know what that is for you, but you've got to figure out what that is for you. Maybe for you, it's bitterness. You're like, “I just want to be bitter over what they did to me. I want to hold it with me the rest of my life.” Meanwhile, He's saying, “It's not best. It's not best. It's not best. It's only going to bring you harm.” Maybe for some of you, it's gossip. You just want to hold on to that gossip. Meanwhile, you hear God clearly saying, “It's not best. It's not best. It's not best. We've got to get on the same page.” You just don't care. You've heard Him speak over and over again. You're flat-out ignoring Him. What is it for you? Maybe it's sex. Maybe it's drinking too much alcohol. Maybe it's the way you spend your money. Maybe it's the way you work while you're at your job. Whatever it is—what is that thing where you hear His voice and you're ignoring His voice? You need to understand the weight of that in your life because what Jesus says here is that “my sheep hear my voice and follow my voice.” If you are one of His sheep, you've got to start following, not just because He told you to but because He's got your best interest in mind. He's saying, “This is not going to turn out well for you; it's only going to bring you more harm than it will healing.” So, point number two—the second thing we can learn—is that:

*2. Sheep follow the voice of their Shepherd.*

Let's keep reading in verse 17: **“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”** Jesus is saying, “Although I'm a shepherd, make no mistake about it: I'm not passive. I am in control. I have the authority to lay down my life and I have the authority to pick it up again.” He's saying, “I have the power here.” Continuing on in verse 19: **“The Jews who heard these words were again divided. Many of them said, ‘He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?’ But others said, ‘These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’”** Jesus is saying, to close out this passage, “I'm in charge. I'm in charge. I'm in charge. I'm in charge.” The people talk about who He is. Some say, “He's insane,” and others say, “It sure seems like He's in charge. He has the power and the authority to open up the eyes of the blind so, although I'm not totally sure about who He is, although I'm not totally sure about all of His teachings, all I know is what I see. It sure seems like He is in charge.” This is the third thing we can learn from this passage:

### *3. Sheep submit to the authority of their Shepherd.*

You see, we shouldn't just follow Jesus because He's good. We should follow Jesus because His position demands it. It does. In ministry, one of the ways that I can guarantee that you will continue to have issues and problems in your life is if you won't give up control of your life. Some of you, even today, came here in control of your life and you're going to leave here in control of your life. Meanwhile, Jesus is saying, “It's not gonna go well for you. I need to be the one in charge. I need to be the one in authority.” In fact, this is what shepherds would often have to teach their sheep. Whenever they had a sheep that continually went astray—went their own way—what a good shepherd would do is they would take that sheep and they would break that sheep's legs. They do it for the good of that sheep because they take that sheep and they put it on their shoulders until those legs began to heal. They take the sheep, and they carry that sheep to pasture; they'd carry that sheep to water; they'd carry that sheep to safety. They'd carry it until those legs were healed. You know what the sheep would do once its legs were healed? The shepherd would take him off his shoulders and set him down. That sheep wouldn't leave the side of the shepherd because that sheep was so convinced that the best place for that sheep was submitting to the authority of the shepherd. The shepherd was the one who had the authority of the pasture. That shepherd was the one who was in better control of the pasture than that sheep was. Friend, this will probably happen to all of us in our life: for our own good, there will be times in which God will break us to make sure we know who's in charge. It's not us, but it's Him. He does it for our good, because when you begin to learn to submit to the Good Shepherd, your life begins to sound like this: **“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.”** See, when you learn to submit to the authority of the Shepherd, that's what your life looks like.

Some of you, right now, are not submitting to the authority and the control of the Good Shepherd. Here's what your life will look like; it might not look like this right now, but I'm just

telling you, I just want to warn you: this is what your life will look like at some point. This is what it will sound like. “I am my own Shepherd and I have wants. I can't find any green pasture or still water. My soul feels hollow. I can't find the right path; I'm walking through the valley of the shadow of death and I'm terrified, for no one is here to comfort me. My table is empty in the presence of my enemies; my head has no oil; my cup is empty. Surely goodness and mercy have forsaken me and I will be alone forever.” Friend, while you crave independence, you were made for submission—submission to the Good Shepherd who has the power to give sheep eyes to see and an eternal life to live. Point number three—the third thing we can learn—is that sheep submit to the authority of their Shepherd.

In summary:

1. Sheep delight in the care of their Shepherd.
2. Sheep follow the voice of their Shepherd.
3. Sheep submit to the authority of their Shepherd.

You know, going back to the story of the sheep on the cliff in Turkey: you remember that story? Where one sheep jumped to their death and the next followed and the next followed and the next followed? That picture is such a great picture of what the people of God were like before Jesus, because before Jesus this is what it looked like: Adam and Eve existed, and they chose death. Then the next generation came about, and they chose death. The next generation, they chose death. The next generation, they chose death and over and over and over again, they kept making the same mistakes. Something had to be done for the good of the sheep. This is what God asked them to do in Exodus 29. God required that a priest would sacrifice a lamb every single morning and evening in the temple. This is what would be done to atone for the sins of the people. This is what they were used to; they were used to a sheep being killed for the forgiveness of their sins. That went on for years and years and years, but then it stopped. It stopped in a moment; it stopped on the cross of Jesus Christ, because on the cross of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd became the Sheep. This is what it says in 1 Peter 1:18-19: **“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”** I want you to know this: there are so many reasons for you to follow Jesus. He cares for you; He's got a voice that's worthy of following; He has the authority that calls for you to submit to Him. But the most important thing about Him, the best thing about Jesus you need to hear, is that, while He was a Good Shepherd, He became a sheep. The Lamb of God was slain for the people of God so that we could live forever. Now, our story has changed. Now, our story is that one Sheep chose death so that the rest of us don't have to. Friend, no matter what your situation is in your life, I want you to know what defines your life—your story—is no longer defined by you being a foolish sheep but by you being known by a faithful Shepherd who loves you, cares for you, and died for you so that He could lead you to green pasture. So that He could lead you besides still water. So that He could restore your soul. Let me pray that you'd let Him.

Father, we are so so foolish. Thank you that you are so so faithful. God, even as I said in that message, I said that you pursue us because we are your reward. Man, that seems like such a consolation prize. I know me and I know many of us here and we've made a lot of mistakes. We've done a lot of foolish things. We don't seem worthy of that reward. We don't seem like



we're a true trophy—but it doesn't matter what I think I am. It doesn't matter what we think we are. What matters is what you say we are and you, the Good Shepherd, say, “I want you. I want to hold you in close, carry you close to my chest and say, ‘I love you, son. I love you, daughter.’” God, I pray that through the power of your Holy Spirit, that we’d begin to feel that this morning. That we'd feel the care of our Shepherd and Father. As we hear the care of the Shepherd, I pray that your Holy Spirit would allow us to to hear the voice of the Shepherd and respond to the voice of the Shepherd; that we would forsake foolish things and, instead, follow you, knowing that you are the only way to green pasture and still water. God, thank you that we're not alone. Thank you that, even though we all, like sheep, have gone astray and went to our own separate way, you came as a Shepherd to guide us. But, more than that, you became a sheep to save us and that's why we're here today. We want to worship you because Jesus is alive and with us and for us. It's in His powerful name that we pray, amen.