

# **The Powerful Love Of The Good Shepherd**

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**John 10:11-16**

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So we are soon coming up on four years in the Book of John, four years and throughout this book has used a few metaphors to describe himself. So in Chapter 6, he is like bread, Chapters 8 and 9, he's like light. We saw last time in Chapter 10 that he's like a door, and today we're going to see that Jesus is like a shepherd.

So far after studying Jesus as bread, as light, as a door, and now as a shepherd, I am convinced that what we will look at today is the richest, the most profound, the most encouraging and the most personal metaphor that Jesus gave for himself.

I think we kind of already know intuitively though what it means for Jesus to be our good shepherd, but what's been done to this metaphor can really obscure the truth for all of us. Because of that, I want us to stand in awe today of the powerful love of our good shepherd. I say this because I want to emphasize something that is in contrast to what's happened in the church in regard to this image of Jesus being a shepherd. I think when it comes to Jesus being the good shepherd, that we've sentimentalized it. He's pictured with a chubby lamb over his shoulders and the sun is shining and the birds are flying and everything is just pretty. It's just nice. Or he's walking on a path with sheep surrounding him and he's looking down at them and they're looking up at him smiling as his hair is flowing in the wind and butterflies are flying around and again, everything is just nice. It's just pretty.

I want you to know that there is nothing sentimental or effeminate about being a shepherd. A shepherd, while mostly unskilled had an incredibly difficult job. Nonetheless, he was responsible all day, every day for the survival and welfare of an entire flock of sheep. He was up early and he was up late. He was out in the elements all day, rain or shine, snow or wind. He led the sheep. He fed the sheep. He protects them from danger, from predators, from thieves and robbers. He even protects the sheep from themselves.

To do this, he had to be rough and he had to be tough. He got dirty. He didn't smell great. He examined the sheep for parasites and disposed of them. He cleaned their coats when they got matted down with mud and feces. He got them entangled from bushes. He rescued them from getting lost. He freed them from the clutches of predators. He made them a shelter to sleep in, then he slept across the front of that shelter just to make sure they were safe. He knew his sheep individually as well. He gave them food, water, and medicine, they were sick and he guaranteed each sheep had everything that they needed, because unlike goats, which can pretty much take care of themselves, sheep without their shepherd are completely helpless.

In order to do all of this and do it well, the shepherd had to know his sheep. But beyond that, he really had to love his sheep. He had to care deeply about them. But this love, this care was not weakness. It was strong, it was powerful. It was even manly. In fact, God himself, the strongest, most powerful being in the universe is often pictured in the Old Testament as a shepherd. Like Psalm 80:1 which says, "Give ear," which means listen. "Oh, shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock, you who are enthroned upon the cherubim." So this shepherd is the king enthroned above all the angels and then it says, "Shine forth," which means protect us from our enemies.

So it's important for us to put aside all of the sentimental pictures of the good shepherd and keep this powerful strength, this toughness in mind as we make our way through John 10. Now for context in verse 11, Jesus is explaining and expanding on an illustration that he gave in verses 1 to 5, an illustration about his care for God's people versus the religious leaders of his day. He is in Jerusalem, he's talking to some of these religious leaders who were introduced way back in Chapter 9:40. When they ask him, "Are we blind? Are we spiritually blind?" This illustration shows them, should have shown them that they were blind, they were blind to their own sin. They were blind to the truth about Jesus. But instead of seeing themselves as blind, they're going to say, "Jesus," verse 21, "He's insane. He is crazy. He's demon possessed. How could he talk like this?"

Well, Jesus begins this third and final explanation and expansion of his opening illustration starting in verse 11, take a look. "I am the good shepherd." Stop there. Those five words are just packed with at least three points of significant meaning. First is this, that word I there in verse 11, that word I is emphasized in Greek, and when you add that emphasis to the word the, this definite, this one shepherd, you put it all together, it means that he is the exclusive shepherd. I and I only, I, the only one.

This is Hebrews 13:20 saying, "Jesus the great Shepherd." Or 1 Peter 5:4, "He is the chief shepherd." He's the top. He's number one. In fact, about this exclusive shepherd God says this, Ezekiel 34:23, "I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them and he shall feed them and be their shepherd." Jesus here is saying, "That's me. I'm the shepherd of Ezekiel 34. I'm David's royal descendant. I'm the promised Messiah. I'm the king of Israel." This is true because second the words I am identify Jesus as the exalted shepherd because he's using the divine name and he's applying it to himself. Something that almost got him killed in Chapter 8:58.

His deity is also seen in this text and how Jesus takes this Old Testament title and office and imagery of God being his people's shepherd, he takes that imagery of God and he applies it to himself. He's saying that he's Israel's shepherd spoken of in the Old Testament, which implies that he again is God. Because of all this, third, he is the excellent shepherd. He's the ideal, the true shepherd because this word good means the model, the excellent, the noble, the worthy, the best, the beautiful, the highest, the attractive, the standard, the only one in a class by himself. That's what Jesus means when he calls himself the good shepherd and then he gives the proof

that he is good by what he says next, verse 11, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." I want you to notice he's good precisely because he lays down his life for the sheep, which is a Hebrew idiom, which means he dies freely, he dies voluntarily. He's not forced. He dies willingly for his sheep. In the words of verse 18, he died of his own accord by his own initiative.

Now a dead Shepherd is not typically a good shepherd, right? If you think about it. I mean, even if he died fighting off a predator, battling robbers, his sheep are done for if he's dead. This would not have made sense to his hearers in some senses because it kind of breaks the illustration. But by doing this, Jesus not only emphasizes his death, but he emphasizes that his death will be for the good, for the benefit of the sheep, which is why he's rightly called the good shepherd.

In fact, that little word for in verse 11 is very often used in the New Testament for Jesus' death as a substitute for his sheep, like Ephesians 5:25, which is, "Husbands are to love our wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." That is he died for the church. Or in the words of John 10:11, he died for who? What does the text say, who did Jesus die for in verse 11? Look at it, what does it say? He died for his sheep. This care, this concern for the wellbeing of the sheep is the exact opposite of the religious leaders of his day pictured here as a hired hand, verse 12, "He 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. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."

So this one, he's not evil like a thief or a robber like we've seen in previous parts of Chapter 10. No, he just did his job for the check. That's the hired hand. So when everything is safe and it's fine and everything's kind of normal, he does his job and he probably does it pretty well. But at the first sign of danger to himself and to the sheep, the danger exposes him as a self-interested, cowardly, mercenary, doing his job simply for money because he runs away and he leaves God's people to fend for themselves. "Not being the owner," verse 13, means that he doesn't care. I'm sorry, verse 12, that means that he doesn't care about the sheep, verse 13, which is how the religious leaders listening to Jesus treated the man born blind all throughout Chapter 9, harsh, self-interested in their positions and their livelihood, which is why they didn't like this man, because Jesus was a threat to all of that and they saw this man born blind as aligned with Jesus.

No care, no concern for the man, which is how they treated the paralyzed man in Chapter 5. It's how they treated the woman caught in adultery in Chapter 8. God's people just didn't matter to them. They're of no real concern to them. In the end, the hired hand cares for himself far more than he cares about the sheep. While the good shepherd cares for the sheep far more than he cares about himself.

Now, what this tells us about the powerful love of our good shepherd is that point #1), ***The Good Shepherd Willingly Sacrifices For His Sheep. He Willingly Sacrifices For His Sheep.*** Jesus demonstrates his love for those who would believe in him, his sheep, by willingly, voluntarily sacrificing himself for their benefit. The benefit that is seen in verse 9 being their salvation, his sacrificial death leads to the salvation, the rescue of his sheep from their sin. Romans 5:8 puts it

this way, "God shows his love for us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 3:24 puts it this way, "Sinners are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith." What that means is that Jesus satisfied God's wrath for sin, not his own sin because he didn't have any. He satisfies God's wrath against our sin. He satisfies God's justice by his death, by his blood.

John 10:28, "Jesus said he came to earth to give his life as a ransom for many." His death pays the penalty that our sins deserve, setting us free from slavery to sin, but setting us free from God's punishment for our sins. Galatians 3:13 says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us." The curse that was ours, he receives for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who's hanged on a tree." Ephesians 5:2 says, "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as our substitute."

Do you know there's a movement today of people fleeing evangelical protestant churches for the Orthodox church? Have you heard of this? Have you seen this? This is similar to 20 years ago with the emergent church, people being moved emotionally to find God in ancient forms of so-called faith like, because it's old, it's true, or because there's liturgy, it's true, not because it's biblical, it's true.

Well, we did a podcast on this subject this week that'll be out soon. What you find when you study the teachings of the Orthodox Church is that they deny what we've seen here in John Chapter 10:11. They deny that Jesus died for our benefit as our substitute for sinners. They say he merely died to achieve victory over sin, death and hell, but did not take God's wrath for our sins and because of that, the payoff for that is the good news that you get to earn your own salvation by your good works. Hooray, that's great. The other payoff for that that you get is you never ever have assurance of your salvation.

In fact, I've watched multiple priests and they all said the same thing. The best that you can say at the end of the day is, "I hope I go to heaven when I die." Now against this heresy, and it is a heresy, it is an attack on Jesus and the gospel, against this heresy stands, Isaiah 53:5, "Jesus was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds, we are healed." Verse 6, "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Verse 10, "His soul makes an offering for guilt." Not his guilt, he didn't have any guilt. The guilt his soul was an offering for was ours. Verse 11, "The righteous one, my servant, shall make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities."

In fact, Peter picks this up, verse Peter 2:24. It says, "Jesus bore our sins in his body on the tree. By his wounds, you have been healed." This is not a self-righteous sacrifice. This wasn't the idiocy of a shepherd running into the jaws of a lion screaming, "See how much I love you?" Only to have his sheep completely decimated after the lion kills him and then goes after the sheep. No, when one's death is for the good of someone else, like jumping on a grenade, that's not ever considered a suicide, is it? No, it's a sacrifice and it's good. In the same way, Jesus's

death was not a suicide. It was not even an accident or even a tragedy, at least not for Jesus, because he died willingly. He laid down his own life, and in fact, he even died joyfully.

Hebrews 12:2 says as much, for the joy that was set before him, Jesus endured the cross. The cross, didn't take Jesus by surprise. He actually predicted it numerous times in his life, just like we just saw here. Even saying in John 3 that he will be lifted up. He could predict the future accurately because he's God and knows the future perfectly and he could do it because Acts 2:23 says, "Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." Jesus's death for his sheep was the plan all along. That is why he came here. In fact, an interesting part of John 10:11 is the word lays. You see that word? He lays down his life. It doesn't say will lay, it doesn't say laid, it says lays. This verb is in the present tense.

One author I read this week said that we should see this laying down of his life, not just as the cross, but his whole earthly life was a laying down of his life. That coming here was a laying down of his life. That forever adding humanity to his deity was a laying down of his life. Growing up from an infant to adulthood, was laying down his life, being surrounded by sinners and dealing with their sin even against him, was a laying down of his life. Being despised and rejected, the one that angels adored, this one being betrayed and denied, That was a laying down of his life, all of that before he actually laid down his life in death on the cross.

Now the good shepherd is the beautiful shepherd, the excellent shepherd, the exemplary shepherd, which means he sets the tone for other Christians who are shepherds, like those who are called to shepherd the flock as pastors and elders. So in the Christian life we typically grow as a Christian by taking the next step of obedience, loving Jesus by doing what he tells us to do. However, for those who want to lead, they become leaders by taking the next step of sacrifice. Sacrifice is essential in Christian leadership because that's what our good shepherd models for us when he lays down his life for his sheep, it's also why he said to those who want to be great in his kingdom, they need to what? They must serve. Those who want to be on top must live for the benefit of those around them. So leaders in the church, evangelists, pastors, teachers, elders, et cetera, are to sacrifice what's best for them in order to do what's best for Jesus's church when they're called to.

In other words, the church does not ever exist for the benefit of the pastors ever. The pastors exist in a given group of Christians for the benefit of those people. Hired hands, not true shepherds, they don't love God's people, they use them for their own glory to build their own platform seeing God's precious people as a means to their own personal safety and enrichment, just like we saw in Verse 12. Church leadership is never about our glory, it's always about your good. In the end, the good shepherd of his local church willingly sacrifices for the sheep, Jesus's sheep that have been entrusted to their care and even dying to care for and protect the sheep, if necessary, just like the good shepherd did for us.

Also, husbands, fathers, we are sheep, yes, but we are also shepherds of our homes with our good shepherd as our model of excellence. In what ways do we need to sacrifice what we want? What ways do we need to sacrifice what's best for us in order to do what's best for our wives or our

kids? Do we need to sacrifice our time? Do we need to sacrifice our comfort? Do we need to sacrifice our privacy? Do we need to sacrifice our career advancement? We can kind of tell if we do based on whether or not the sheep under our care are thriving and happy and satisfied, or if there's something lacking.

So if love is lacking, do you give it? If holiness is lacking, do you encourage it? If cherishing is lacking, do you make that happen? If instruction is lacking, do you teach it and then model it? If you know something is lacking, look back at point number one. The good shepherd of his family willingly sacrifices for his sheep. The good shepherd of his wife willingly sacrifices for her good, the good shepherd of his children willingly sacrifices for their good, and if you're a single guy here and you're like, "Whew, dodged that Bible bullet, thank goodness." No, here it is. If you're single, this is the standard to get your heart and your life ready for because your good shepherd willingly sacrificed his life for your eternal good, and in that he becomes your model. This is the powerful, strong, even manly love of our good shepherd.

Now in Verse 14, Jesus reiterates who he is and why he does what he does. Take a look, "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me." Notice once again, the sheep are his. Twice he calls his sheep my own, in Verse 14, because they belong to him, unlike the hired hand, verse 12, their shepherd does own them. Now knowing here does not mean that he has information about them, "Oh, I recognize him." No, the clue that tells us that is in verse 15, "Jesus's death is connected to the Father knowing him," we just saw that. We'll see that in a minute. But in verse 17, "Jesus's death is connected to the Father loving him." Put that together, that's because the knowing here means loving. It could just as easily say, "I love my own and my own love me," but by using the word know, what Jesus is pointing us to is intimacy, closeness.

He knows his sheep, in the sense of loving them, knowing them intimately, verse 3, knowing them personally, "Calling his own sheep by name," out of Judaism, verse 3. In fact, this is so close that verse 15 is compared to the knowledge that the father has of the son and vice versa as eternal members of the Trinity. Look at 14 again, "I know my own and my own know me just as the father knows me and I know the father." So maybe this wouldn't be true for you, but for me, my vocabulary, my mental powers kind of tap out at this moment to try to convey what this means, that the knowledge between the first and second members of the Trinity is similar to the knowledge that the shepherd has of his sheep and that the sheep have of their shepherd.

I mean the knowledge, the relationship between father and son is so close and so pure and so deep, I can't even begin to describe it. It stretches the limits of my entire thought. I can't get there. But then he takes that and he says, "Oh, and that's the way that my sheep relate to me and that I relate to them." It's like, "Wait, what?" That's too wonderful for words, that stretches me to my limits. I cannot begin to describe that.

Now, what I can say is that this comparison cannot be one of equality, that we know Jesus the same way that the Father knows Jesus, that that's impossible. This is not a comparison of equality, but it is a comparison of quality. It's similar but not equal. Jesus's knowledge of his sheep is like his knowledge of the Father and quality, in the sense that the knowledge Jesus has

of his sheep goes beyond information. It's close, it's real, it's direct. It's not intellectual only, it's personal, it's honest. It's a loving, intimate relationship that Jesus has with his sheep. But do not miss that this close relationship, this intimate knowledge is not one way. What does 14 say? "I know my own," and what? "And my own know me."

His sheep aren't just acquainted with Jesus or know some stuff about him, no, they know him, not only as high and exalted and other, but close, not in some kind of imaginary wishful thinking, but they know him truly and really and honestly, not just informationally, but personally, closely. It's because of this intimate love relationship with his sheep that Jesus says, verse 15, "I lay down my life for the sheep." He repeats this to emphasize it, that this is the ultimate characteristic of the good shepherd, that he sacrifices himself for the good of his sheep. But did you notice the difference between this and verse 11, he repeats himself, but in verse 11, it's in the third person, "Here's what a good shepherd does." Here, it's in the first person. What was general truth in verse 11 becomes personalized, localized in Jesus. He emphasizes this again, "This is who I am."

This word life is amazing. He's not saying that he's going to expire. His heart's going to stop. His brain's going to stop firing. This word for life is not biological life at all. This word refers to his soul, the immaterial, not the physical, the very depth of his being. He gives his whole self, his entire self-up entirely to save his sheep. All of this makes Jesus the good shepherd because he lays down his life for who? What does it say? He dies for his sheep. In other words, the good shepherd becomes a lamb. The good shepherd becomes the lamb of God and dies out of great love for his sheep.

What this tells us about the powerful love of our good shepherd is that ***point #2), The Good Shepherd Intimately Knows His Sheep. He Intimately Knows His Sheep.*** Because people are not faces in a vast crowd, they're not drops in the ocean of some religious organization, no, they are known personally, truly, intimately. Again, John 10:3, Jesus calls his own sheep by name. He compares this intimate knowledge to being at home with someone, that the people in your home are the ones that know you best. Listen to this, John 14:23, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." In the words of John 10:4 and 10:5, Jesus is not a stranger to his people, they follow him because they know his voice and listen, the result of him knowing us intimately is that we get to know him intimately.

This knowledge is equal to eternal life. In John 17:3 saying, "This is eternal life that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." What would you say to yourself in the midst of suffering for persecution for being a Christian and even contemplating your own execution for being a Christian? Here's Paul, 2 Timothy 1:12 as he is suffering for being a Christian and he says this, "I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed." Now, we read the Bible way too fast. I had a lady just last night, she's like, "Thank you for slowing us down a little bit." So let me slow that down a little bit. "I'm not ashamed for I know whom I have believed," did you hear that?

While in prison preparing to be executed, it's not what he knows, it's who he knows, "I know whom I have believed." Because he knows his savior closely, he's willing to suffer and even die for him. That's why he can write, Philippians 3:8, that he considers, "Everything as a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ." Knowing Jesus is priceless. You cannot put a price on it. It is worth more than anything else in the entire world and Paul then writes two verses later that, because he knows him so well that the goal of his life, he says, I quote, "That I may know, Christ. I want to know him more." What I know about him is priceless, and I want to know him even more than I do now.

The Old Testament, this kind of knowing is compared to the intimacy of husband and wife, like Genesis 4:1, Adam knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain. The closest relationship of love and intimacy that's possible on this planet and Jesus says, "No, I've got one that's even closer." That's what it's like to be one of my sheep, my relationship with the Father and his relationship with me. To try to apply that, I mean, trying to understand it is hard enough, but then to try to apply it, you can't even begin to exhaust how much and how well and how truly, how closely Jesus knows his people.

He knows you personally. He knows your families. He knows your experiences. He knows your circumstances. He knows your secrets. He knows your pain. He knows you perfectly and he can no sooner forget about you or disregard you or abandon you than he could abandon his own father because he loves you like you are his father. It doesn't matter if you're the king of the world or the lowest peasant. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what you've done. He knows you and loves you if you are his sheep. All of this is true. Why? Because he is the good shepherd of his sheep.

So rest in that. Trust in his intimate knowledge of you and that despite the depth of all that he knows about you; he loves you and demonstrated his love for you by dying for sinners like you and me. Now as the good, the excellent, the ideal shepherd Jesus again is the model for all shepherds to follow. So church leaders are good shepherds when they intimately know the sheep that Jesus has entrusted to their care.

Now, that's not easy when a church grows like this one has, which is why we have so many pastors. We've heard many of you complain, "Why do we have so many pastors here?" That's why, right there. The goal we strive for is to know every single member, just like the shepherd knows every single sheep by name. That's our goal. So we can't do that with just a handful of us, we need as many as we can get, that every member has at least one pastor that they're connected to that know you and that you know them and that like the good shepherd, they lead you in the truth and feed you the truth and care for your soul and protect you from spiritual danger. Again, husbands and fathers, you're a good shepherd when you intimately know your family flock, that you don't just know about your wife and kids, but you know them personally, individually, intimately.

Listen, that's not beta male stuff, that's Jesus as your model stuff. Jesus knows you, do you know their experiences, their trials, the pains and their circumstances, the joys of your wife and kids, or



do you regularly disregard them for sports or comfort or leisure? Do you abandon them often for your buddies? Do you forget about them for a job or hobby or even God forbid to indulge yourself in your sin? Brothers, how Jesus treats us as his sheep is how we are to treat our wives and kids. What we see here is that a good shepherd intimately knows his family all because our good shepherd intimately knows us. This is the powerful, this is the strong, even manly love of our good shepherd. Now, Jesus concludes this illustration of contrasting himself with the religious leaders in verse 16, "And 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.

So Jesus can't mention his own sheep in verse 14 without mentioning his other sheep in verse 16. Now, this word other is important. It means other of a different variety like the difference between an apple and a banana. It's not other of the same variety as different kinds of apples. So in other words, the other sheep are a different group of sheep than this fold, in verse 16. This fold refers to Jesus's Jewish followers, which would make these other sheep his people in the surrounding nations, what the Bible calls the Gentiles, non-Jewish people. Now look at verse 16, carefully, we read too fast, but I want you to know, so we're going to slow down and read this, Jesus has these sheep, they are his before he brings them into his fold. Do you see that? "I have other sheep, I must bring them," if he must bring them, they're not there yet.

Notice, before they listen to his voice, which means believe in him, he already has them. Look at the text, "I have other sheep, they will listen to my voice." So he has them before they believe. In fact, the idea here is repeated in verse 26. It's that the reason they listen to his voice and believe in him is because they are already his sheep to begin with. Look at verse 26, Jesus says that the religious leaders, he tells them why they are rejecting him. Take a look, "You do not believe," What does it say? "Because." "You do not believe, because you are not my sheep." You see that? See that in the text right there?

If you're like, "Hey, you're taking this too far, it's just an illustration." Yes, it is an illustration, but is it illustrating truth or is it illustrating something that's not true. Notice too, they, "Will listen to his voice." As in, they cannot not listen to his voice. He must bring them to himself. They will come to him because he will call them out of paganism into himself just like he called the Jewish sheep out of Judaism in verses 3 and 4. So if you take a step back from that, this is Jesus predicting the worldwide reach of Christianity. This is Jesus reiterating a promise made all the way back in Genesis 12, 2,000 years before this moment in John 10, "That through Abraham's descendant," which is him, "All the families of the earth will be blessed." That, "Jesus is a light to the nation, so that God's salvation will reach to the ends of the earth," Isaiah 49:6, that he would be the savior for the whole world, that he would be the light of truth for the world.

All the non-Jewish Christians, are there any of those here today? All of us non-Jewish Christians realize right here that in verse 16, Jesus is talking about us. He's talking about us in verse 16. This is not a reinvigoration of Israel, this is a brand-new fold, one that will exist that didn't exist in this moment. Brand new fold, a mystery because it was not revealed in the Old Testament that believing Jews and believing Gentiles will be united into one new community called the church,

a community that did not exist yet, but in verse 16, when they will all be united in one flock with one shepherd, the good shepherd, the Lord Jesus.

Now what this tells us about the powerful love of our good shepherd is that, *point #3), The Good Shepherd Intentionally Seeks His Sheep. The Good Shepherd Intentionally Seeks His Sheep.*

Notice again, look at the text again, verse 16, because they are his sheep, just in another fold at the moment, he must bring them and they will listen and there will be one flock, not a Jewish flock of followers of Jesus and a Gentile flock of followers of Jesus, but one flock with Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians together under one shepherd. Luke 19:10, Jesus says that "He came to seek and to save the lost." Luke 15, remember this, when just one sheep is lost, separated from the 99, what does the shepherd do? Verse 4, he goes after the one that is lost.

Matthew 18:12, Jesus uses the same illustration. He repeats himself like good teachers do sometimes he says about the one lost sheep, that the shepherd goes in search of the one that went astray. The shepherd was not lost, and the sheep found him. The sheep were lost, and the shepherd searched and sought after them. He seeks them to save them and unite them to himself and unite them to each other.

Now, in saying this, we're not saying that he's physically present doing this work himself. He didn't, he died, he rose again and ascended to heaven. So how does he seek his sheep then? He seeks his sheep through the preaching of the gospel. And what an encouragement that this preaching will have success because, verse 16, "People must come." It will be successful, verse 16, because people will listen. This mission started in Jerusalem, Acts Chapter 8, and continues to this very day and will continue until in the words of Revelation 5:9, "People from every tribe, from every language, from every people group, from every nation will give their life to Jesus."

Now in heaven, all the church of God will be one, united together. Even though today we're separated into denominations and designations based on things like baptism or church government or music styles or many, many, many, many, many secondary doctrines that don't contradict the gospel. Has that ever driven you crazy? It does me. However, invisibly, known only to Jesus himself, his sheep are united in one flock with him as the one good shepherd, united by faith alone, in Jesus alone, a reality that will one day be fully revealed when we return with him.

Now, for those who reject salvation by faith alone, in Jesus alone, they're not brothers and sisters within the one flock with Jesus as the one shepherd. But for all who do embrace salvation by faith alone, in Jesus alone, we may look different, very different theologically, have differences and even significant differences, but we're still brothers and sisters, nonetheless. If Jesus seeks to save us and to unite us, then in the words of Ephesians 4:3, we need to work hard to maintain our unity by protecting peace. Some make the flock too big by including people in the flock who deny salvation by faith alone in Jesus alone. But others make the flock too small by excluding true Christians who disagree on secondary issues.

So a friend of mine was talking, we were talking recently, we were talking about this recently, and he said that he heard a teacher named R. C. Sproul talking about this once. If you don't know who that is, that's okay. Well, you should because he's awesome. But Dr. Sproul was talking about this, the absolute importance of theological fences, and fences separate between those on one side and those on the other. He said, "We should build them and they should be clearly defined and they should be strong fences and they should be low enough that you could hug your brother on the other side."

Now, with that paradigm of seeking and uniting in mind, a good local church shepherd intentionally seeks the sheep entrusted to his care. In the words of Ezekiel 34:11, he will search for Jesus's sheep when they stray and he will seek them out seeking to rescue them from whatever could be harming them." Like the good shepherd did for them, the good local church shepherds will go after lost sheep. Look for them, reach out to them, call them, email them, text them to make sure that they're okay, and make sure that they're not straying from or being lured away from their unity with the good shepherd.

With the good shepherd, the model shepherd in mind, husbands, fathers, that the good shepherd intentionally seeks the family entrusted to his care. He doesn't give up because it's too hard, because the good shepherd never gave up on him. He's an empathetic, or distant. Like Jesus did with him, he seeks relationship with his wife. He seeks relationship with his kids. He seeks them and pursues them and seeks their salvation just like the good shepherd sought their salvation, he seeks relationship, he seeks unity, if there are fractures in those relationships, he seeks them so that he stays united to them and their one family flock with him as the one family shepherd. Easy to do that, not at all, but it is strong to do it because it is modeled after the powerful, even manly love of our good shepherd.

This is incredibly pictured in a hymnal published in 1861, edited by a man named Sir Henry Williams Baker. This hymnal, this book went on to sell over 60 million copies in the late 1800s. In it was a song that Mr. Baker actually wrote that perfectly summarizes what we've seen today in John 10, and the hymn is called The King of Love My Shepherd Is. Did you hear that? The king, the powerful, strong king of love. It says this, "The king of love my shepherd is, whose goodness fails never. I, nothing lack if I am his, and he is mine forever. Perverse and foolish oft I stray, but yet in love he sought me and, on his shoulder, gently laid and home rejoicing brought me. In death's dark veil, I feared no ill with you, dear Lord, beside me. Your rod and staff, my comfort still, your cross before to guide me. So through all the length of days, your goodness fails never. Good shepherd, may I sing your praise within your house forever."

I hope this look at John 10 has caused you to say, I want to know my good shepherd better than I know him now. Beyond that, I hope that this short look at John 10 has caused you to stand in awe of his powerful love for you. He sacrificed himself willingly. He knows his sheep intimately. He sought you intentionally all to save you and to bring you to himself and to bring you into his flock. This is a priceless gift, an infinite blessing that we will never stop thanking him for. The team's going to come up and sing one more song. But before we do, let's pray.

Jesus, there are some texts that no matter how much time I get, it doesn't seem like I've even scratched the surface of all the truth that is wrapped up about you. I pray that you would use this text in my life and in all of our lives to cause us to seek you, to want to know you more like Paul, to know that I may know you. For some that would mean knowing you in salvation, like John 17:3, that this is eternal life to know you. For others, I pray that this look at this incredible metaphor will cause us to dig deeper and to know you, and to seek you to love you more because you are so good. Our good shepherd, I pray this in your name, Amen.