

“I Am the Good Shepherd” // John 10:10–18 // “I AM” #5¹

Introduction

Meet me in John 10 if you have your Bibles. There’s an old Sherlock Holmes short story called “The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual” where an old British family living on a historic, old estate notices that their butler starts acting very strangely one day, and then one night he just disappears. With the help of Sherlock Holmes, they discover that he’d been following this treasure map, and they are able to retrace his steps to an old, forgotten cellar in an abandoned wing of the house. There they find his body **(PIC)** stretched out over a box of what looks like a worthless pile of debris. That’s the pic from the book. The pile looks like it is nothing--it has 4 or 5 old coins in it, which have a little value, but certainly nothing that looks like it is worth dying for. The mystery is, “How did this butler die, and what was he after?” Eventually, Sherlock Holmes notices that in this pile of debris is an old, twisted, circular piece of metal that no one has paid any attention to. But Holmes is curious about it, so he starts to rub one of the corners of this piece of metal and it starts to glow like a spark. It turns out to be a diamond--and Holmes eventually realizes that this relic is the ancient lost crown of the kings of England. That’s what the butler had died trying to acquire, but nobody else had eyes to see the treasure; all they saw was a pile of worthless debris. (You say, “Well great, now you’ve spoiled that story for me” Listen, that

¹ Works consulted: Shai Linne, “[Abusive Authority and How to Avoid It](#),” message on Ezekiel 34, August 17, 2016, 9Marks conference; Tim Keller, “[I am the Shepherd](#)”, November 29, 1998, Redeemer Presbyterian; Dr. David Jeremiah, “[I AM the Good Shepherd](#)”, March 3, 2024, Shadow Mountain Community Church; Jay Pathak, “[I am](#)

story has been out since 1893. Don’t tell me you were planning to go home this afternoon and read it. I’m not feeling bad about that)

There is a paradox at the heart of the gospel: What looks to others like nothing more than a twisted piece of debris, God sees as a treasure of such value that he’s willing to lay down his life for it. The irony is that he sees more than anybody else just how messed up we actually are; and yet, he’s also the one who loves us more than anyone else ever has. **And that fact--that he sees us most clearly and yet loves us most deeply, that--he’s going to explain in John 10--that’s one of the ways we know he’s the true Savior. In this passage, you’re going to see how Jesus’ leadership stands out from every other religious leader in history--and how his leadership answers one of the deepest soul yearnings that we have.**

Jesus’ claim in John 10 is, **11 I AM the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.**

This is the 5th of our I AM statements in the Gospel of John; the 5th of 7 times that Jesus takes for himself the loftiest name of God in the Old Testament--*I AM* (or Yahweh in Hebrew, Jehovah in Latin)--and then connects that name to one of our greatest points of brokenness. To those who are hungry, Jesus said, ‘I AM the bread of life.’ To those who feel like they’re in darkness, he said, ‘I AM the light of the world.’ To those in need of shelter or refuge, he says, ‘I am the door.’ To those feeling the sting of death, and confused by where God’s love is in the middle of it, he says, ‘I AM the resurrection and the life.’

[the Good Shepherd](#)”, January 22, 2023, Bridgetown Church; Andy Stanley, “[Leading with Empathy](#)”, November 1, 2020, Sermons.love; Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*; Grant R. Osborne, *John: Verse by Verse*; and others as noted throughout.

Today, we come to what might be the most famous of his I AM claims. To those who feel isolated, and abandoned, and alone, he says, **John 10:11, I AM the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 He (you see) who is a hired hand and not (the true) a shepherd, (the one) who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and (truly) cares nothing for the sheep. (Again,) 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.**

These verses are a continuation of the discussion Jesus started with the Pharisees in which he explained he was the one Door for the sheep (we looked at that a couple weeks ago). If you remember, in that discussion, Jesus was contrasting his leadership to that of the Pharisees. Jesus had just forgiven an adulterous woman that the Pharisees were ready to stone, and he'd just healed a blind man that the Pharisees despised. To them, Jesus said, "The true Shepherd sees value where others see only junk."

In these verses Jesus is picking up on a famous passage in Ezekiel--Ezekiel 34--where, around 600 BC, God had condemned "the worthless shepherds" of Israel. "One of my people's problems," God had said through Ezekiel, "is that their leaders are corrupt." And he lists out 10 different complaints about Israel's political and religious leaders that all center around the same theme--*You don't love the sheep, you use the sheep*. You don't feed the sheep, you use them to feed yourselves; you don't shield and protect *them*, you shear their

wool to profit yourselves; you don't bind up the wounded or go out searching for the lost--you abandon them the moment they become an inconvenience for you. "You worthless shepherds," he says, "you treat the sheep like they are little more than an asset to your personal fortunes."

(Sadly, BTW, that description would still apply to a lot of Christian leaders today, and I know some of you have suffered under that kind of leadership. If that's you, I just want to say that I recognize how difficult it can be to even come back to a place like this. You being here—we don't take that lightly, I know it's a huge step. *But all* of our leaders here want to model the kind of sacrificial leadership Jesus is about to commend here. Because Jesus' leadership, you see, is different from those worthless kinds of shepherds that God is lamenting in Ezekiel. **Shai Linne, a Christian hip hop artist**, says that Jesus' presents his leadership in John 10 vv 10–14 in direct contrast to the corrupt shepherds of Ezekiel 34.

In contrast to their authority, his authority is a (#1) protective authority; (2) a loving authority; and (3) a sacrificial authority.² I'm going to use that list but expand that list slightly and make everything in the list start with the letter "P," because I'm Baptist and that's just what we do. I'm going to show you that Jesus' leadership in these verses, in contrast to that of the Pharisees and other false shepherds, is Protective, Personal, Prospering, and Propitiatory, and that's how we know he's the true Shepherd (and that's how you know I'm a Southern Baptist).

² Shai Linne's 3 were protective, loving and sacrificial.

Before we unpack each of those--let me be clear: Jesus claims to be an authority. He never minces words about that. Our culture doesn't like authority, so we'd rather recast Jesus as a "moral model we aspire to" or a "life coach" or the ultimate "Tik Tok religious influencer." We wish Jesus' I AM claim was something like, "I AM the ultimate algorithm who will populate your feed with wonderful spiritual options to choose from." But the central Christian confession is not that Jesus is "insightful" or "helpful" or "cool" but that he is "Lord," and "Lord" means that whatever he says on anything at any time in any place is your new rule--if you're going to be his follower. Jesus once said to a group of would-be followers, Luke 6:46, "Why would you call me Lord, Lord and do not the things that I say?" Why call ME Lord if you are still your own Lord? Even if you've given Jesus 95% control of your life, aren't you still really the Lord of your own life, since you are still determining what 95% he gets and what 5% you keep? Unless he's Lord of all, he's not Lord at all. Jesus might say that to many of us today: Why do you call me Lord, Lord and not believe what I say about this area of your life? Or give me control over this area? Unless you've submitted yourself fully to Jesus--making him the complete and unchallenged Lord of your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, he's not your Lord.

So yes, Jesus is an authority. But--Jesus' authority is different from almost every other authority you've experienced--certainly from any toxic, abusive, self-serving authority you suffered under. And that, he explains, is one of the ways we know he's the true Shepherd. First, Jesus' authority is:

1. Protective

Vs. 11 The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (By contrast,) 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...

- The true shepherd loves his sheep and is committed to protecting them up to the point of dying for them.
- I've explained this before, but it's hard to think of a less flattering analogy that Jesus could have come up with for us than "sheep." A sheep w/o a shepherd in the wild is called 'a meal.' Sheep are slow and clumsy and dumb. They're not great fighters.
- **All due respect to Rameses, the UNC mascot**, but typically sheep aren't threatening animals. If they trip on a rock and fall over cast on their back, they stay there like a beetle until somebody comes along and flips them back over. That's not a good quality to carry into a fight with you. Imagine an MMA fighter who when he got flipped onto his back couldn't stand up until someone flipped him back over. That guy's not going very far.
- (BTW, I heard a missionary to Muslims over in the rural Middle East, where shepherding is still a thing, say that when he explained Jesus' parable about the sheep and the goats to a Muslim friend there--that parable where at the end of time Jesus separates the sheep from the goats and takes only the sheep--the Muslim man objected and said, "That can't be right. A true shepherd would never take sheep over goats. Sheep are so time-intensive. Goats, by contrast, take care of themselves. Every shepherd prefers goats." "Well, yes," the missionary explained, "but God wants sheep not goats, because he wants us to depend on him. Not because he's controlling or domineering—but because he knows how weak we are and he loves us.

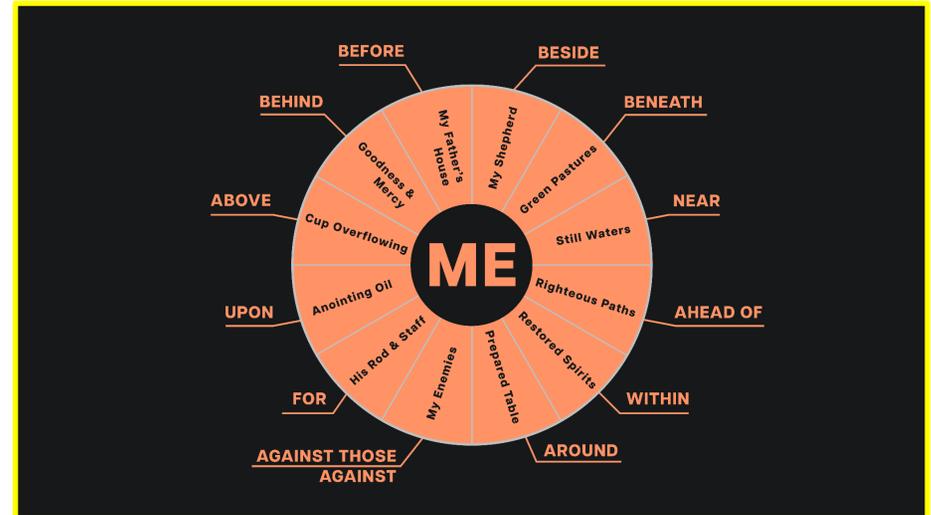
His love is a protective love. A few weeks ago I showed you this (pic) of an ancient sheep pen, and I explained how the shepherd slept in this little doorway to keep out predators. Literally the Shepherd was the Door--and I asked you how your disposition would change if you believed that nothing came into the pen without the permission of the shepherd?

I gave you this promise: **Ps 84:11**, **“No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly before him.”** This doesn’t mean, I told you, that nothing bad or painful ever happens to the Christian, just that I know it comes in only by permission of the Shepherd and with the promise that he is going to use it for good.

- *“No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly before him.”* That means if God withholds it, it isn’t really good; and if he allows it, he plans to use it for good, even if it’s painful.
- *So, again, How would your perspective in life change if you actually believed that?* That NOTHING came into your life that God did not intend to use for good. I don’t mean he caused it or that he’s the one who did it, just that he promises to use it for good.
- Think about the worst thing that happened to you this week--how would your perspective change if you said, “God, thank you for the pain of... because I know you, my Shepherd, who lies at the gate of my life, allowed this thing, and you plan to use it for good”?

In Ps 23, David, who began his life as a shepherd, revels in the protection of his Shepherd. It’s one of the most well-known Scripture passages in the world, and I don’t know if you’ve ever thought about

this, but it’s all about protection. I saw one commentator describe the protections promised in Psalm 23 like this: The Lord is my Shepherd, that’s protection *BESIDE ME* me...



I’m literally surrounded by his protection. There is NOWhere or NOthing that is exempt from his sovereign care. Again: How would your perspective change if you actually believed that?

In Psalm 139, David exults, ***Where could I go from your Spirit? Or where could I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol*** (the Old Testament word for hell), ***you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.*** (Ps. 139:6–11)

David is saying, *“I literally can’t get away from your love! Even if I made my bed in hell, God, you wouldn’t leave me there.” Truth is, of course, we did make our bed in hell. We rejected God and ran as far*

away as we possibly could from him. And yet, even there he still kept his promise to protect us--he entered hell and took it in our place.

It is no wonder David says, *How precious also are your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I could count them, they would outnumber the sand!* That number--of grains of sand on the seashore--is 8 quintillions, by the way--or, 8 with 18 zeros after it. That number looks like this: **8,000,000,000,000,000,000**. That's the amount of times God has thought about you, individually, and your protection.

Pick up a handful of sand next time you're at the beach and let it run through your fingers. Look at each grain and think, God thought about ME individually there, and there and there and then look down the beach and think, "Each of these grains of sand represent a thought about ME." I can't even get my mind around that.

Do you ache to be special to someone? You are special to God. Do you yearn (in your soul) to matter to someone? You matter to him. Do you know how much he thinks about you? MY GOODNESS! God's thoughts about YOU outnumber the sands on the seashore. I can assure you: Nothing gets into that pen without his awareness and his promise. You may think it's random or unfortunate or bad luck--and, again, I'm not saying God is the one doing it to you; just that whatever it is comes with his promise to use it for good because you have a Savior who neither slumbers nor sleeps, who always stands guard at the gate of your life.

The Lord is my Shepherd, Amen and Hallelujah. Which leads me to the 2nd characteristic of his authority. It's

2. Personal

In **vs 14**, Jesus says, "I know my sheep and my sheep know me." In **vs 3** he'd said, "I call them each out by name." Jesus' sheep are not one big formless mass to him. He knows each of them by name: Fluffy, Snowball, Wooly, Rufus, Bernadette or whatever you'd name sheep.

There's a Scottish pastor named Douglas McMillan. He died when I was in high school, but he worked as a shepherd in Scotland before becoming a pastor. He said one day he was on a train with a shepherd-friend who 3 weeks prior had sold a number of his lambs to another farmer. As the train was pulling out of the station, they passed a flock of sheep in a pen near the track and the shepherd said, "Hey! There's four of my lambs in there." He knew his sheep so well he could spot 4 lambs out of a flock from a moving train. Honestly, I'm not even sure I could spot my kids from a moving train. Just kidding. But that's how well a good Shepherd knows his sheep.

There's an individuality to God's love that the Holy Spirit enables you to FEEL. It's not just "God so loved *the world*..." as in "God has a generic kindly disposition to THE WORLD," but "God loves *ME*." Paul says in Romans that's what the Holy Spirit does in our hearts--he sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts for us individually, teaching us to say, "Abba, Father," or "MY daddy." I think of my kids, especially when they were young, when they called me, "Daddy." It was a deeply personal name; they knew I was paying attention to them in crowds more than anybody else.

And sometimes, btw, God even goes the extra mile in communicating that to us:

I once heard a pastor tell a story about how one night he was putting his 10-year old daughter to bed, and as he tucked her in, he

was singing over her that little song, “You are my Sunshine, my only sunshine.” Well, when he got back to his room, his wife was crying, and so he asked her what was wrong. And she said, “My dad never sang like that over me. I’m watching you raise our girls, and I know I’m supposed to be happy about it—and I am—but I didn’t have a dad like that, and I’m never going to.” She said, “I’m grateful for all that God has given me, but it feels like there’s these gaps in my heart that I’m never going to be able to fill.” The pastor said, “I tried to comfort her, but just couldn’t. This was an old, deep wound that my love for her wasn’t going to be able to fix.” Well, life moved on and they forgot about it. Well, a few weeks go by, and the pastor said one of his pastor friends came to speak at their church staff meeting. At the end they opened up the altar for prayer and this pastor and his wife came up to pray--specifically about a financial issue they were facing. Their coming forward had nothing to do with this moment she had had a few weeks before. Well, their pastor friend came over and laid his hands on them and started to pray for them, and after a few sentences he stopped and said, “I think God is putting something on my heart that he wants to say to you. But it’s really unusual--strange--and I can’t really sing, so I’m just going to say it: “You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy when skies are gray. You’ll never know, dear, how much I love you, please don’t take my sunshine away.” The pastor said “My wife and I came apart--we hadn’t told anybody about that moment and we knew our Heavenly Father was speaking right to her.”

His love is a personal love. **And maybe you hear that story and you say, “Oh, I wish God would do something like that for me.”** He might. But, listen, and this is important--it’s not just in those little

“divine butterfly” moments that we perceive his love. That’s not even the main way. Paul says the Holy Spirit “sheds abroad the love of God” in our hearts by allowing us to perceive the gospel. He lets us see the gospel is for us. It’s John Wesley talking about his heart being “strangely warmed” at that meeting in Aldersgate Chapel realizing that Jesus had not just died for the sins of the whole world, but his sins, even his.

You see, the truth is that if you perceive and believe the truth of the gospel, that is evidence of God’s love at work inside of you. ‘Member, Paul says in 1 Cor 12:3 that no one can truly say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit, which means that if you are able to recognize, from your heart, that Jesus is Lord, that is evidence of his love at work in you. He is saying to you right now: “I love *you*. When I died on the cross, I was thinking about *you*. I paid for your sin.”

I heard a true story about a guy named Steve Henning who, when he was 2 years old, contracted spinal meningitis and completely lost his hearing. For the next 58 years, Steve lived in complete silence--he never heard the sound of music, laughter, or the voice of his loved ones--nothing. Well, in the winter of 2001, his doctor told him about a new surgical procedure that could implant a sound wave detection device that could bypass the non-functioning part of his ear and transmit the audio signals directly to the auditory nerve. But here was the thing: after they implanted the device, back near his brain, they couldn’t activate it until the swelling from the surgery had gone down, and that would take 6 weeks. So, Steve had to wait for 6 weeks to see if this surgery worked. **Finally, the day arrived and the audiologist programmed the cochlear implant** on his device and he held his finger over the final key and nodded to Steve as if to ask him

if he was ready, and Steve gave the thumbs up and the doctor hit “enter”... And then the doctor motioned to Steve's wife to say something, and she leaned toward her husband and gently said, “I love you.” Steve's face suddenly broke into a smile. The first sound he'd heard in 6 decades were words of personal love.

When God opens your spiritual ears, what you hear is the voice of God whispering in the gospel, “*I love YOU!*” His love is a personal love.

Before I go on to #3, can I tell you that this is what your soul most craves? You were created to be known and loved by God—we've seen that every week in this series—and that means you will always feel like you're missing something until you feel known by him and cherished by him.

Listen: one of the most popular myths at work in our culture today is this idea that the only love, the only validation I need, is my own. We don't need anybody else to believe in us, as long as we believe in us. I mean, it's like that great Whitney Houston song from the 1980's-- “*The greatest love of all, is easy to achieve; learning to love yourself, it is the greatest love of all.*” Or, more recently, the Barbie movie, “*You gotta learn that whoever you are, or whatever you are, you are KEN-ough*” and if you believe that about yourself, you'll have “KEN-ergy.”

And listen, I agree, **it's important not to live or die by the opinion of others.** But think with me for a moment. Is that really enough? Imagine a songwriter who has been songwriting for 10 years. He's let a few thousand people hear his songs and everyone hates them and

they say they're terrible. But the songwriter says, “Well, it doesn't matter what other people think, I know in my heart I'm a GREAT songwriter!” We might sort-of admire his self-confidence, but we'll also think he's on the verge of insanity. He's delusional.³

Listen, here's the truth: You cannot fully validate yourself. I'm sorry, but you can't. No offense to Whitney Houston or Barbie, but we yearn for a validation that comes from outside of us. From somebody we care about. We need somebody from outside of us to tell us that we're beautiful, valuable.

So, that leaves us with a dilemma--right? We can't fully give that kind of validation to ourselves, but other people are not a reliable source of it. So where do we find it?

- **From our Shepherd.** We were created to find our identity in him.
- **Only your Shepherd can name you and bless you.**
- And he does. Jesus says, The Good Shepherd calls you by name.

Again, David, reveling in this in Psalm 139, says, “Before I was fully formed in the womb, God already knew me. When I was just a small lump called a fetus, with no rights in the state of California, God knew me as a person and laid out a special plan for me and fashioned me for it.” Friend, that's true for you, too. He created you special. He knows the plans he has for YOU, to prosper you, to give you a future and a hope. He has prepared good works for YOU to go and walk in them. You are his, if you're ready to believe it.

His leadership is Protective, Personal, #3...

³ Adapted from Tim Keller

3. Prospering

In vs 10, right before Jesus makes this claim to be the Good Shepherd, he says: 10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

I told you a few weeks ago that the Greek word for abundance there in vs 10 is “*perissos*.” It means “over the top.” Jesus promises an abundant, over-the-top life for his sheep.

That doesn't mean, I told you, a problem-free life. Or a life filled necessarily with riches and popularity. No, this kind of abundant life is better than those things—it is the abundance that comes from walking with One whose love, you know, is better than life and stronger than death and resting in the blessed assurance that you are his and he is yours and that he is working all things in your life together for good. That is the abundant life, the over-the-top life, the peace-that-passes-all-understanding life.

He promises to guide you into his pathways of blessing even when you're too dumb to figure out how to get there yourself. Which, as a sheep, you are.

Listen, can I get you to do a thought experiment with me. For those of you over 30, how do you feel about your wisdom, say, 15 years ago? Do you look back with amazement at how wise you were back then? I look back and think, “35 year old J.D.? That guy was an idiot.” (I started preaching here when I was 28, but there's a reason you can't find any sermons online from those first 7 years. I'm not sure what was wrong with that guy. I'm kind of embarrassed by him. God graciously used me, but man, I look back on that guy and say, “What an idiot.”) But here's the thing: 35 year old J.D. thought he was pretty

wise. He felt pretty confident. But if you had asked 35-year-old J.D. about 15 year old J.D., he'd say, “Now that guy WAS an idiot.” But here's the thing: 15 year old J.D. was pretty impressed with himself, too. So, follow this: 15 year old J.D. was impressed with himself but 35 year old J.D. was embarrassed by him. Now 50 year old J.D. is embarrassed of 35 year old J.D. **So, here's the obvious question:** What do you think 65-year old J.D. will think about 50-year old J.D.? He's probably going to think, “What an idiot!” And how 'bout Heavenly J.D.? How will Heavenly J.D. feel about earthly J.D.? I'm guessing he's gonna say, “What an idiot!” (Ouch: You don't have to be so enthusiastic about it, guys.)

Here's the point: Just a little time and space in our lives shows us there is so much more about life that we don't know. Doesn't that mean that at every stage of our lives we should show a little humility and look to our all-wise Shepherd to guide us?

You see, the fact that the analogy God chose for us was “sheep” is bad news, but that bad news has good news in it, too. The good news is that sheep with a Good Shepherd turn out fine, and we have a great Shepherd.

And that means I can trust him to guide me even when I feel incompetent. **My confidence in life**—at 35, or 50, or whenever—is **NOT in my ability to figure out God's will** (I'm still a sheep and sheep are idiots), **but in his ability to lead me in it.** Let me slow that down and say it again for you guys in the back, because I feel like some of you don't get that, and if you did, it would SET YOU FREE. My confidence in life is NOT in my ability to figure out God's will, but in his ability to lead me in it. Jesus doesn't say, “My clever foxes figure it out and do just fine.”⁴ He says, “My sheep hear my voice and I lead them.”

⁴ Adapted from Jay Pathak, sermon on John 10.

I've told you, when I face a difficult decision, I often pray what I call "the sheep prayer." It goes like this, "God, you called me a sheep. Sheep are idiots. That's your analogy, not mine. Which means you know I don't have the ability to choose the right way here. I'm probably gonna get it wrong. So, will you lead me? Close doors that need to be closed. Open ones that need to be opened. Give me wisdom, yes, but where I mess it up, which I probably will, will you use your rod and staff to guide me in the path you want me to go?" And then I make the decision I need to make, in confidence that God is keeping his promise, and I'm at peace because I trust in him.

I'm not even that confident in my ability to hear his voice. Some of you are like, "I'd love to have God lead me, but I don't even know how to hear his voice. What does that feel like? What does his voice in my soul sound like? I'm so sinful, and I don't know how to discern his voice." You're right! And you probably don't know the half of it! You are so much more sinful and dull of hearing than you could imagine. If you saw how spiritually inept you really are, you probably wouldn't even get out of bed in the morning. But good news! God is your shepherd, and he's committed to guide you, which means he'll find a way to steer you even when you don't know how to discern his voice, if you trust him. **Listen, try my sheep prayer, patent pending:** "Lord, I'm a sheep, which means I'm gonna get it wrong! I trust you to guide me! Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him."

OK, last one: his authority is protective, personal, prospering, and...

4. Propitiatory

- (I know all of you have already used that word 3 or 4 times today.)
- Think "**sacrificial**" here. **5 times in John 10 Jesus says he "lays down his life for his sheep."**⁵

⁵ In verses 11, 15, 17, and twice in 18.

- This would have seemed crazy, even then. Shepherds are way more valuable than sheep. I remember one of my favorite Clint Eastwood movies that came out when I was in college, called, "In the Line of Fire." It was about a secret service agent that takes a bullet for the President, and we admire that. But has there ever been a President who took a bullet for his agent?
- **That's what is happening here**, but to an even greater extent. Why would a Shepherd lay down his life for his sheep? The Shepherd's life is much more valuable than the sheep's!
- The only answer is because he loves them.
- **No other leader in Israel's history had done that.** In fact, the OT leader who served as a model for what a shepherd is was King David--and for a lot of his reign, David was a great shepherd to Israel—Psalm 79 tells us that.⁶ But then there was the incident where David took Bathsheba, the wife of one of his most loyal soldiers, and slept with her. And when she gets pregnant, to cover up his own failure, David stages an "accident" where his loyal soldier dies so he can take Bathsheba as his own wife. And you're left scratching your head saying, "David, the great shepherd of Israel, makes one of his men to die as a cover for his sin?" The Jewish people loved David--he was the epitome of a great king for them--but this is a big, unanswered question from the Old Testament: Even David turned out to be a bad shepherd--and that's because David is not the Shepherd Israel is yearning for.
- **But here, in John 10**, we have Jesus, who will end his time on earth not by making one of his people die for his sin, but by him voluntarily dying for theirs. **That's what we mean by "propitiatory."** It means that Jesus took our place in judgment.

⁶ Ps 78:72

- And that's because he's the true Shepherd; he's Israel's true King. A true Shepherd, Jesus says, lays down his life for his sheep. **This is the shepherd that you've always yearned for.**

Father Maximilian Colby was part of the German resistance to the Nazi movement. He'd been public with his objection to the Nazi regime, and in 1941 he was sitting at his desk praying when Nazis burst into his home and arrested him for publishing unauthorized material. He was sentenced to the notorious Auschwitz camp. Conditions there were harsh, and life expectancy was about 5 months. And yet, despite the cold, the heat, the hunger and the grueling labor, Father Colby used every opportunity there to serve his fellow prisoners.

One day, in the middle of that summer heat, a prisoner from Father Colby's barracks escaped. So, in retaliation, the prison guard lined up every prisoner in that barrack and said that ten of them were going to be put into the starvation bunker to die as punishment. The guard was going to choose 10 people at random. He chose the guy next to Father Colby, and the guy started to weep for his wife and children. But Father Colby reached out his hand and stopped the man from stepping forward with the guard and stepped forward in his place. The prison guard looked up, laughed, and shook his head, but allowed it. Father Colby went to the starvation bunker in this guy's place.

Several days passed, and prisoners said that instead of the cries of anguish and madness that they usually heard coming from that bunker, they heard the faint sounds of hymns being sung in that dreadful place. Father Colby brought peace and joy to the other 9

in their final moments. They said that when the doors to the bunker were finally opened, they found Father Colby's body sitting against a wall with what looked like a peaceful smile on his face. The man whose place he took went on to live until he was 95—he died just a few years ago—and for the rest of his life he took any chance he got to honor Father Colby, the man who laid down his life for him.

There's so much about that story that pictures the gospel, but there's one big difference. The man Father Colby replaced had not betrayed or turned on Father Colby personally. And yet Jesus, our Shepherd, laid down his life to pay for the sins of the sheep that had rebelled against him. Isaiah said, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone of us to his own way, and the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all."

"How do you know the true Shepherd?" Jesus said to a confused group of Israelites. "The true Shepherd," he says, "lays down his life for the sheep." The leader they'd always longed for, and you've always longed for--what you've looked for from every leader, every parent, every boss, every President, is fulfilled in Jesus.

(And, btw, for those of you in leadership, you won't find a better model in leadership than what you see here: Christlike leadership is Protective, Personal, Prospering, and Propitiatory. But that's another sermon for another day, but it's a great thing for you to jot down and meditate on.)

VAMP::Conclusion

I want to end our time today w/ two pictures relating to Jesus as Shepherd I want you to leave thinking about. One is a photo taken a few years ago; the other is a famous 19th century British painting.

Let me tell you about the first. Allan Emery was a business leadership guru who spent his early years in the wool industry. He wrote a book called *A Turtle on a Fencepost*, and he tells the story of being with a shepherd-friend late one night on an open Texas prairie. The shepherd had lit a ginormous roaring bonfire to keep warm, and all the sheep were around it. Around that one bonfire fire were one shepherd, 3 trusty sheep dogs, and a couple thousand sheep. Well, suddenly, some coyotes start howling in the distance. Allan said you could feel the entire flock tense with fear. But then Allan said he looked out over the sheep and saw something he'll never forget: thousands of small lights reflecting back at him. (PIC). Look at it. In their moment of fear, the eyes of the sheep weren't looking out into darkness to where the predators were; they weren't tearing out in panic; they were looking toward their safety. That's where peace and confidence are. What do you do when danger howls? I will keep him in perfect peace, God says in Isaiah, whose eyes are **fixed upon me**. The one who guards Israel never slumbers or sleeps, and he stands guard in front of the door of my pen each night and will not let in anyone or anything that he does not promise to use for good in my life. That means I do not have to be afraid. You want to know how to find peace when you feel confused, or afraid, or threatened? When you don't know what to do with your finances, or with one of your kids? When you don't know what direction to go? I will keep him in perfect peace whose eyes are fixed on me. "Be anxious for nothing," God tells us in Philippians, "but in everything by prayer and

supplication let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace that passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." When danger howls, get your eyes onto the Shepherd. That's where some of you are this weekend. So, I invite you to look, and fix your eyes, and REST.

Here's the 2nd picture: it's a **famous painting in 1898** by Alfred Usher Soord, depicting Jesus, our Shepherd, risking his life to go after a lost lamb. Maybe life has gotten you into a place and you don't even know quite how you got there. You are stuck on a rocky cliff out here called addiction. Or you're in a bad relationship. Or you're just suffering under a series of choices you now regret. And this morning, maybe for the first time, you realize that your main problem is that you've been doing things your way instead of God's way. You're lost, and it's your sin--your insistence on going out your way--that has led you to this place. Well, I have good news: the Savior is reaching out for you. He knew you were missing, and he left the 99, he said, to go after the lost 1, which was you. That's you, and this is him reaching out for you this morning. That's that tug you feel in your heart right now. You've been feeling it for weeks, haven't you? The question is: *Will you receive him?* Will you take his hand? He wants to forgive your sins, restore you, and put you on a new path. But you have to surrender to him and let him have control. Are you willing to do that?

BOW HEADS

Prayer of refuge: How many of you would say, "I'm afraid. I need to rest in the arms of my Shepherd this morning"? Raise your hands. Can you say, "My refuge. My protector. My guide"?

Prayer of commitment: How many of you would say, “I’m that lost lamb over on the cliff separated from God. I’ve been walking away from God, and right now, I want to give myself to Jesus and let him rescue me. I’m willing to surrender to him and go back with him.”

Now I have a special invitation: your 1st act of obedience, showing that you receive Jesus, is baptism. Baptism is your public declaration that you are giving yourself to Jesus. It’s beautiful imagery--the waters of God’s salvation wash over you; you are forgiven of your sin and made new. These waters don’t have healing powers, of course, it’s just a symbol. But it’s an important ceremony.

There are two groups of you whom I want to talk to right now: The first group are those of you making a decision today to give your life to Jesus. I want to invite you to make it public today by getting baptized. Maybe you’ve got questions about this. That’s fine. I want to invite you to come forward in a moment, and we’ll start that convo. And if we need to slow it down and take some time, we will. Or maybe you are fully ready today. Whatever. You come.

The second group are those of you who have made a decision sometime in the past to receive Jesus, but you’ve never declared that through baptism. I’m not condemning you for that, but it’s time you took this really important step. Maybe your parents baptized you when you were a baby. That’s great, but baptism is supposed to be your own declaration of faith. If you’ve trusted Christ but never been baptized by your own choice, I want to invite you to come also.

We have changes of clothes for you, and everything you’ll need.

Here’s how we’re going to do this--it’s pretty standard here at Summit. Our worship teams are coming and our counseling team is getting into place. When I stand you up, if you need to be baptized, or you have questions, or you’re ready to follow Jesus, whatever, when I stand you up, immediately step out into the aisle and find the nearest Summit rep in the aisle. Maybe you’re nervous to do this. Bring your friend with you. They’ll come. I’ll stand you up, and you immediately stand and step. The rest of us are going to put our hands together and cheer and go crazy with excitement over the step you’re taking today. So, are you ready? Our worship teams are in place. OK, let’s stand, -- and you come, right now, and Summit, let’s put our hands together and rejoice in what God is doing today.