

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Good Shepherd, Part 2

Scripture: John 10:11-21

Code: 1529

For our guests, we may add a word at this point. We are studying through the gospel of John each Sunday morning. We've been there for a long time and will be there for a long time. But it's rich and it's exciting and we're learning what God's Spirit designed to say to us through the apostle John as he recorded the events of the life of Christ.

The gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; record the record of the life of Christ. They record the life of Christ in terms of His birth, His death, His resurrection and those things that occurred in His life which bear important weight on His own deity and importance to our understanding of Him and of God.

Now in John's gospel particularly, John has one basic theme. And we have repeated it again and again, and shall do so this morning. John constantly desires that men understand that Jesus is God. He is concerned with the deity of Christ, that He is God in a human body. So repeatedly through the gospel of John, John records the various times that Jesus made the claim to be God.

And it's interesting that again and again, on every page, Jesus is claiming to be God in one way or another, and repeatedly with all of His claims to be God, there is a constant running rejection on the part of Israel. In fact, by the time you get to chapter 10, there are at least three times when the Jews have tried to kill Jesus in anger and fury as a result of His claim to be God.

Now as we come to chapter 10, we come in on the closing of a discourse that Jesus is giving to a group of people who have gathered because of a particular miracle. In chapter 9, Jesus healed a man born blind, something that had never been done, a congenitally blind man. Jesus healed him on the Sabbath, so immediately it was reported to the Pharisees, who were the great guardians of the Sabbath. It was reported to them that Jesus had broken the Sabbath law in healing the man.

It's interesting that the Pharisees claimed that Jesus had broken the law in healing the man and then denied that Jesus healed him because they didn't believe Jesus could heal. It's a rather strange paradox, but they found themselves in stranger ones than that. So at the same time they denied the miracle, they accuse Jesus of doing it on the Sabbath.

And so Jesus is confronted again with these same leaders, who again design in wrath and fury to blast Him out of the situation, get rid of Him, and He confronts them beginning at the end of chapter 9,

and particularly beginning with verse 39.

Now mixed into the crowd, not only are the Pharisees and the Jewish leaders, but also are Jesus' disciples, and the man who was healed of his blindness, who by this time is a convert. If you look backwards a little bit at verse 38 you see the man said, "Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him."

So the man not only had his eyes healed, he had his soul healed. He not only had been given physical sight, but he had been given spiritual sight. And since the man's neighbors, to whom the man immediately reported the miracle of his sight, since the man's neighbors had reported this to the Pharisees, there was now a big confrontation between the Pharisees, the Jews, the disciples, the blind man, and Jesus in the midst to find out what He thought He was doing this, doing this on the Sabbath, and who did He think He was, and just kind of clearing the air of all of this situation.

Well, naturally in any given situation where Jesus is present, Jesus is also dominant. And you don't hear anything in this discourse from anybody but Jesus. Everybody just stands there until the very end, and we'll see that a little later in our message this morning.

Beginning in verse 39, Jesus makes a very important declaration, kind of bouncing the thought off the miracle that had just taken place involving the blind man, because in 9:39-41, Jesus has told these Pharisees and Jewish leaders that they were the ones who were really blind spiritually, that they could not discern spiritual truth, they could not see God. They did not know right from wrong in terms of recognition because they were spiritually blind.

Elsewhere He called them blind leaders of the blind, and then said both of them would fall into the ditch. And so they are spiritually blind. They do not discern God or God's truth. They are totally blind to Messiah. And they are absolutely blind to everything Jesus claims. And when they think they see, they don't see.

So, in verses 39 to 41, Jesus tells them that, in effect. And He wraps it up at the end of verse 41 by saying, "Therefore your sin remains." And earlier in this gospel Jesus said, "If your sins remain, you die in your sins." And you and I know if you die in your sins, you're damned for eternity.

And so, what is happening here is Jesus has told them they are blind and then told them that that blindness damns them for eternity. Now, of course, they never did believe this at all. All the way through the gospel He's been telling them the same thing in different words, and they never believed it. And so, Jesus takes a further step here. He says, "You have chosen to be blind willfully and you cannot help somebody who doesn't know he's blind." Jesus says to them in 39 to 41, in effect, "Since you will not admit your blindness, I can't heal your blindness, so you are willfully blind."

Then Jesus goes a step further and says, "Consequently, I declare you to be judicially blind." In other words, if a man chooses to be blind, sooner or later God confirms him in that blindness, and he is hopeless. There's a point at which, you know, you can go past the point of grace and you become judicially confirmed in whatever you've chosen. To the pre-flood civilization God said, "My Spirit will not always strive with man." There comes a point when you go past grace, and then there's confirmation. The Pharisees came to that point.

Later on, you remember in Matthew 12, Jesus said, "You have seen all My miracles. You have seen everything I did. You heard everything that I've said. You have concluded that what I do I do by the power of Satan, for that you will not be forgiven." And He confirmed them in their unbelief, and they committed what was really the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, for which they would not be forgiven.

So, when they had had all the revelation He could give and still didn't believe, then God just assigned them a judicial blindness that left them in their blindness, and they were damned in their sins. And so Jesus declares that they are, in fact, blind. Then He gives a graphic illustration of it which is the discourse of 10:1-21.

And the illustration is given in a paroimia. Now there are two things in the Greek, two words, one is parable, parabolos and the other is paroimia. They are both figures of speech. Very often Jesus spoke in parables, didn't He? Very often. Here, and because there are no parables in John, here it's a different thing. It's a paroimia. A paroimia and a parable are as different as a metaphor and a simile.

And so by use of a paroimia, Jesus proves their blindness. In other words, He says, "You're blind." Then He speaks in a lucid, clear paroimia, and sure enough, they're blind. They don't see it, see? So what it is is a living illustration confirming their blindness. At the same time it confirms their blindness, the disciples and the blind man are just eating it up, see? Because their faith renders them capable of understanding it.

Now in every case, whether it's a parable or a paroimia, it always had a two-fold purpose: To conceal and to reveal. While it was dark to somebody, it was light to somebody else. And so when Jesus taught in parables, the people who were blind did not understand. The people who saw did understand. And so that's the case right here. To illustrate their blindness and expose them as false leaders, and show the people that indeed He was right, they were blind, He speaks in a lucid, clear paroimia. It is so clear and so beautiful, and they do not get the message at all illustrating the fact that indeed they're blind.

And as I said, while they don't get the message at all, the believers get the message. And we get the message of the tender loving care of the Shepherd to the sheep, which is glorious. This illustrates how Jesus loves us. Tremendous truth. So while Jesus' words were dark to the unbeliever, they were

light to the believer. And that's what a parable, or a paroimia is designed to do.

Now this paroimia shifts gears all the way through it. We're not going to go into this because we've already been in it two weeks ago in the first ten verses. But you'll remember that there's a shift in gears. The fold here means one thing, and the fold there means something else. And the door is significant in at least two different ways. One place it means messianic right, the other place it refers directly to Jesus Christ. So there is a shift in the paroimia, and it must be studied very carefully.

For example, the first ten verses, the false leaders are called "strangers, thieves and robbers." In the section we'll study today they're called "hirelings," both referring to the same thing, only from a little different angle. So while it is in a sense a similar paroimia, that is it's always the figure of a shepherd and a sheep and a fold and a flock, yet it shifts in its significance.

Now as we come to our text this morning – and all that was introduction. That was a short introduction. As we come to our text in John 10, we come to verse 11. And this is very simple and yet it is profoundly thrilling to see the relationships of the shepherd. And that's what we want to discuss this morning.

If you have your bulletin, you have an outline in the bulletin. You might want to follow along. Incidentally, in verses 1-10, we really had a relationship between the shepherd and false shepherds, didn't we? The false shepherds were the strangers, thieves, and robbers contrasted to the true shepherd.

Now here we have three relationships of the Good Shepherd: His relation to the sheep, His relation to the Father, His relation to the world. And as I said in the first ten verses, if you wanted a fourth point for that outline, to teach the whole chapter at once, the first point would be His relation to false shepherds, that's verses 1-10. But we're dealing with 11-21.

So it's the relationship to the sheep, to the Father, and to the world. And in all of these relationships, Jesus is a true, good Shepherd promised in the Old Testament. He is the center of everything. He is the central point and the figures are all drawn in relation to Him. Now there is some rich, rich truth here. We could spend weeks just delving into verse 11 alone, it is so loaded with theology and truth.

Let me start out by giving you a little sub-heading for point number one. Point one, the relation of the Good Shepherd to the sheep. There are three sub-points. What does He do for the sheep? He dies for the sheep. Secondly, He loves the sheep. Thirdly, He unites the sheep. And we'll see each of these in the text. Beginning in verse 11 and going through verse 13, we see the first sub point, He dies for the sheep. Verse 11, "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."

Now first we see, then, that Christ has a relationship to sheep. He is the Good Shepherd. And that the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. The first thing Christ does for the sheep in text here, He dies for the sheep.

Now let's back up a little bit, and I want you to look at verse 11, just the first statement. "I am the Good Shepherd." That is a profound statement. And we often, I would think, look at it rather on a surface level, and if we don't understand the original and what's tied into this, that statement is jammed packed with truth because the Greek construction is very different. It has several definite articles in it, and in the Greek it literally would read this way, "I am the shepherd, the good one." I am the shepherd, the good one.

There are two words, at least, in the Greek language for good, one is agathos from which we get the name Agatha, which means "the good one." And agathos means good in the sense of moral quality, and that's all. Just good in the sense of moral quality. For example, I might paint a painting. It might be agathos good, in the sense of moral quality. I mean, it might just be of a tree or a flower. I wouldn't paint an obscene painting. Morally, it would be good. Artistically, it would be lousy because I am not an artist.

But when you want to express the word "good" in terms of not only a moral quality in the painting, but a profoundly good piece of art, then the Greeks had another word that expressed not only moral goodness, but total beauty, and loveliness, and that word was kals, and that is the word that is used here.

Jesus does not say, "I am the morally good one." He says, "I am the good one, preeminent and excellent in every feature. I am the good, the beautiful one." That word is really packed. "I am the shepherd, the excellent, preeminent, lovely, beautiful one." That's what the word kals meant.

And that singles out Christ, friends. He's not just another shepherd. Two times a definite article, "I am the Shepherd. I am the preeminent, excellent, lovely, beautiful one." There is no other shepherd. He's above all shepherds.

And, of course, to the Jewish mind, who in the history was the greatest shepherd? Who was it? It was David. And so what is Jesus saying here? In effect He's saying, "I'm greater than David." You say, "That must not have registered too well with them." No. But that's all right. In chapter 5, He said He was greater than Moses, and in chapter 8 He said He was greater than Abraham. Why not go for David? He's the only one left.

You see, Jesus Christ was establishing in the minds of Israel His superiority. He said, "Moses wrote of Me," He said before Abraham was - "what? - I am." And now He's the good, the beautiful,

preeminent, excellent Shepherd. Quite a claim for Jesus to make in the face of Israel. But He backed it up with His deeds, didn't He?

But I think there's even something beyond the claim to be greater than David. I think what He's doing really here is claiming deity. Look at the statement again. "I am," first of all could be reference to the name of God. But what He's saying here when He says, "I am the Good Shepherd," is really a profound statement in terms of His deity because of this. I read this morning in our opening Psalm 23, "The Lord is my - " what? " - shepherd." Psalm 80 calls God "the Shepherd of Israel." The Jew knew that the true excellent Shepherd was God.

And when Jesus comes along and says, "I am the one excellent kals preeminently beautiful Shepherd," you know what He's claiming? Claiming equality with God. That's what He's claiming. He made Himself equal with the Jehovah of the Old Testament, and He could do it because He was equal.

Then having stated His identity, He then discusses the first characteristic of the relationship between the Good Shepherd and the sheep. "He gives His life." He dies for the sheep. Verse 11 in the middle, "The Good Shepherd - " the excellent, preeminent, beautiful Shepherd " - giveth His life for the sheep."

Now that's the first thing Jesus Christ does. Before we can have any other relationship to Him, He had to die, didn't He? Before we had any access to God, before we had any communion with Jesus Christ, before we had any relationship as a sheep, He had to die that we might gain entrance into His fold. So, the first thing the Good Shepherd does is die for the sheep.

Now in Palestine, the shepherd was absolutely responsible for the sheep. That's why this paraimia is so clear. If anything happened to the sheep, the shepherd had to produce evidence that he tried to make sure it didn't happen and did his best to prevent it. If there wasn't such a standard, you know, the shepherd could steal the sheep, or fleece the sheep, or barbecue the sheep, or do anything he wanted and just say, "Well, you know, he got away." So in the case of any kind of a problem, a shepherd had to produce evidence that he had struggled to save the life of the sheep.

Amos, for example, in Amos 3, I think it's verse 12, where Amos talks about the fact that if a shepherd loses a sheep, he would have to bring a leg, or two legs, or a piece of an ear to the owner, just to show him that the sheep had truly been devoured by a lion, or a bear, or wolves, or that the sheep somehow had died, or something had happened to the sheep. He had to try to get a piece of the sheep.

In Exodus 22:13 it says, "If it be torn in pieces, let him bring it for a witness." In other words, bring a piece of the sheep to the owner so that you would verify the fact that you had struggled to save the

life of that sheep. So even the shepherd in Palestine was used to risking his life in the protection of the flock. And the idea is simply that, that Jesus Christ, in a million times magnified sense, gives His life for the flock, the sheep of God.

David, for example, you remember, was talking to Saul in 1 Samuel 17, and he was reminding Saul of the time that he had kept his father's sheep and fought against the bear and the lion. Remember? To protect the sheep. And Isaiah 31 speaks of the crowd of shepherds that were called together to deal with the lion that was coming after the sheep.

So it was the shepherd's duty with the risking of his own life to protect the sheep. And it was a natural thing for him to do. You see, every night when the sheep went into the fold, he put the rod down there and every sheep passed under the rod, and he checked all the marks, and the scratches, and the cuts. You do that for a few months and you stay with those sheep all day, and you're going to get attached to those sheep, and the shepherd did, and he loved the sheep, and he gave his life because of that.

Doctor Thomasen has written a book called, *The Land of the Book*, and in it he gives an instance of this. He says this, and I quote, "I have listened with intense interest to their graphic descriptions of downright desperate fights with savage beasts. And when the thief and the robber come, the faithful shepherd is often to put his life in his hand to defend the flock. I have known more than one case where he literally had to lay it down in the contest.

"Illustration, a poor faithful fellow last spring between Tiberius and Tabor, instead of fleeing actually fought three Bedouin robbers until he was hacked to pieces with their khanjars and died among the sheep he was defending."

And so, the true shepherd never hesitated to give his life for the sheep, if need be. Notice here the word in verse 11 is "giveth," do you see it there? Did you know that if the wolf or the lion came after the sheep, the sheep could not persuade the shepherd to defend them? How could they do that? There's no way. That shepherd must voluntarily protect the sheep. Why, as soon as the sheep see the lion they're not going to stand around and take a vote on whether the shepherd ought to protect them or not. They'll be gone. The only way that that shepherd would ever be able to protect those sheep would be on the basis of his voluntary choice to risk his life.

That's what Jesus did. He gave His life, freely, voluntarily. He gave His life. And you'll see it in verse 17 in a few minutes. He says, "I lay down My life," personally. Personally He did it. Then in verse 18, "No man taketh it from Me." Jesus voluntarily gave His life for the sheep. We had no access to God except someone die in our place, bear our sin. Jesus did it.

You say, “Yeah, but, you know, I mean, it’s no big thing. Jesus was God. Came down here, got into a body, then they came along for a few years, they nailed the body to the cross, He just took off. I mean, you know, He didn’t need that body, anyway. No big sacrifice. Just lay that body on a cross and nail it up there. I mean, Christ was detached. He was God. God of the universe. There was not a real involvement.” I’ve heard that. Well, that’s an interesting thing. The only problem with that is it’s not true, which is a problem of some consequence.

If you notice carefully in verse 11 you’ll see the word “life.” Now in the English version, you never would understand the significance of this because it’s not there. But listen to this. In the Greek there are two words for life, neither one of them is used here. One is bios from which we get our word “biology,” which means “life,” just the breathing part of life. You know, I exist, that’s it, you know, as opposed to being dead. The other is z which means “the circumstances of life.”

When Jesus gave His life, He didn’t just give up His biological breathing, He did not just forfeit the circumstances of life. You know what the word used here is? It’s psuch, that’s the word that’s translated “soul.” It means the total man inside. When Jesus died, He wasn’t just throwing His body up there. You want to read the verse right, read it this way, “The Good Shepherd poured out His soul for the sheep,” see?

When Jesus died, friends, He was totally involved in that death. And to make sure we don’t misunderstand that, God even wound Himself through the Greek language, picked out psuch and stuck it in there. Jesus did not in a detached fashion give up His z or bios, He poured out His psuch, His entire being into death. He didn’t just do it in a detached way. Jesus said in Matthew 20:28, “The Son of Man gives His life a ransom for many,” and right there “His life” again is psuch. He poured out His soul.

Listen, Jesus felt it all, friends. He felt the curse of sin. He felt the hurt of hate. He felt the pain of nails. He felt every excruciating agony that the sin of the world could put upon Him, and He felt every bit of it in His own soul. There was no detachment on the cross. This verse is loaded with theology.

Then you’ll notice that there’s an interesting construction, “He giveth His life for the sheep.” That’s huper, that means “in the behalf of” or “for the sake of” or “for the benefit of.” Why did He die? For His own benefit? No. He didn’t need to die. He had no sin. He died purely for the sheep, for our benefit. What a sacrifice. Undeserved, but He did it. For the benefit of the sheep, He died.

Now, you say, “Well that’s a little strange in the analogy because if the shepherd died on the hillside, it wouldn’t be for the benefit of the sheep.” You’re right. In the human realm, if the shepherd died, the sheep were finished. There was nobody to protect them and nobody to regather them. If the shepherd died, the sheep were helpless. And to be very honest, you know, that’s even in Christ’s case what happened initially.

Zechariah predicted this. "The Shepherd will be smitten and the sheep will be - " what? " - scattered." And at the death of Jesus Christ they were gone. The disciples were scattered. The only thing that reversed that was three days later, what did Jesus do? He rose from the dead, and the first thing He did was regather the flock that had been scattered. He rose from the dead. He died for the sheep. And even though they were scattered at the beginning, He regathered them and His death was for the benefit of the sheep.

Are you glad He died? I'm glad He died for my benefit. I heard one who said that He died for angels. It says He died for sheep. Isaiah 53, "For the transgression of My people was He stricken." Matthew 1:21, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His - " what? " - people from their sins." He died for us. So, Jesus states the character of the Good Shepherd. He gives His life for the sheep. Isn't that a beautiful thing? What self-sacrifice.

Then He contrasts the Good Shepherd to those in verses 12 and 13. Watch it, this is really fascinating. Verse 12, He's still talking about giving His life, as opposed to these kind who don't. "But he who that is an hireling - " that's a paid part-time shepherd who is in it for the money, a mercenary " - he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."

Now you see how Jesus - this is so powerful. Here are all these, you know, religious mucky-mucks from Israel standing there listening to Jesus. And now He hits them right between the eyes again and says, "You care nothing about the sheep. You are hirelings. You are religious mercenaries in it for the money and the prestige. And when any trouble comes, you bail out, and the sheep get ruined, scattered, crippled and devoured." In fact, they were even earlier called "those who destroyed the sheep."

But here he calls these false leaders "mercenaries" or "hirelings." They work for the job. They don't care about the sheep. They only want the money. They have no love for the sheep, only love for the pay. And when the wolves attack the flock, the hireling forgot everything but the saving of his own hide and took off.

And I mean, that's a natural thing. I remember when I was in high school, I had a job one time to herd sheep out in Death Valley. It wasn't an after school job, but it was a weekend type thing. And I didn't really like it. I mean, it was miserable out there, miserable. I had no concern for the sheep. And I'll be very honest, had a whole lot of wolves come over the hill, you wouldn't have seen anything of me. I would have been long gone. To me it was a job. I had no care for the sheep. And that's what a hireling is.

Zechariah says that a characteristic of a hireling is that he makes no attempt to gather the sheep when they're scattered. And you know something, folks? Lest you think that the only hirelings are in Israel, they're not. We've got them all over the place, paid professionals, ministering in the name of Jesus Christ. May I say that we have hireling teachers, we have hireling preachers, and we have hireling pastors? We have hirelings in every dimension of Christian service who want only their money and could care less about the sheep.

May I add a statement? There is no - catch it - there is no Spirit-directed ministry with a price on it. None. That is the antithesis of faith and Spirit direction. There is no Spirit-directed ministry with a price on it. If a ministry is not love, that minister is a hireling. He is a false shepherd and he really doesn't care anything about the sheep.

And, boy, the Bible is really strong on this. Titus 1:10 says this, listen. "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision: - " watch this " - Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, - " Why? " - for filthy lucre's sake." You know what filthy lucre is? Money. Anybody in the ministry for money is a hireling.

You say, "Is that all the Bible says about it?" No, a lot more. I'll share some of them with you. First Peter 5:2. This is what he says to the true shepherd - I really like this - the undershepherd, like we are as ministers. "Feed the flock of God which is among you - " That's what we want to do is feed the flock of God. I like that. " - taking the oversight of it - " You know, just watch them, make sure everybody is going along good. " - not by constraint - " not because somebody pressures you to do it " - but willingly - " now watch this one, " - not for filthy lucre - " There's no place in any kind of Christian ministry in the name of Christ for a prompting on the basis of money.

Peter also mentions something else about it in 2 Peter 2:3. He says, "And through covetousness - " false leaders, hirelings " - with feign words make merchandise of you." See. There's no Spirit-directed ministry with a price on it. It doesn't exist.

And so, these Jewish leaders are compared to hirelings. And I'll tell you right now, there are plenty of hirelings under the name of Christianity. They're cowards in crisis. They want nothing to do with the hard things. They could care less about the sheep. When things get rough, they pack up and they're gone.

I was asking Alan Jerdy about this. I said, "Are there any liberals in Vietnam?" He looked a little shocked. "You kidding? Why would liberals go to Vietnam? It's tough over there, you know." And in all the ministries of Vietnam, there are no liberal ministries. There are liberal missionary ministries all over the world. Not there in Vietnam. Why get killed when it's only for money, anyway? There's no place in Christianity for mercenaries.

Well, you'll notice the wolves that come, and the wolves represent Satanic attacks from the outside. And it's kind of an interesting thing that Satan attacks the sheep, you know, constantly with wolves. Temptation and sin, and the world usually shoots these wolves at the church, you know? And let's face it, these wolves are pretty tough customers. There's a lot of real crippled Christians and they've fallen to the wolves of Satan in sin, and the flock is scattered. Is it scattered? You better believe it's scattered.

We keep talking about the body idea, you know, and maintaining our love, and our oneness in Christ, and, man, we're scattered all over the place by the wolves of Satan. The Christians are crippled, and been chewed on, and nibbled on by these wolves until their weaknesses are obvious.

So, you see, the flock of God suffers from a double danger: The danger of attack from the outside wolves of Satan, and the trouble from the inside with a hireling instead of a true shepherd. And I'll tell you, the church runs with danger. We run with it all the time. It's kind of an exciting place to be, isn't it? We're trying to run right down the middle, and watch out for the stuff from the outside and the problems on the inside.

And the inside danger is the greatest, obviously, because if there's a strong faithful shepherd, right, if there's a strong faithful shepherd, then he's going to defend the flock from attacks from the outside, right? But if you've got a hireling, not only is he propagating error, but at the same time he is totally incapacitated to defend them from the outside attack. So you've got total destruction and chaos, and everything is a disaster.

So the church's first essential is Christlike leadership which cares for the sheep to the extent of risking its own neck. All right, so we see that the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep, pays the price. And the right kind of undershepherd hangs in there with the sheep and defends the sheep.

Now the second thing the Good Shepherd does, He loves the sheep. This is so good. You know that your relationship to Jesus Christ is not just theological? Did you know that? It's personal. Jesus actually loves you, and He loves me, in an intimate, singular, unique, personal way. That is thrilling, and it is emphasized in these verses. Look at verse 14.

"I am the Good Shepherd - " repeats the statement " - and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so I know the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep." Now these verses tell us that He loves the sheep.

You say, "I don't see the word 'love' in there." No, you don't. But it still tells us He loves the sheep. How? Because He uses the word "know," and the word "know," ginsk means "to know experientially." It's not to know by reading it in a book, or philosophizing, it's to know it experientially.

And the word “know” very often in the Bible is used in terms of a love relationship. For example - and we’ve talked about this many times - a refresher. In the Old Testament it says, “Cain knew his wife and she bore a child.” It doesn’t mean he knew her name. It implies the most intimate kind of love relationship. It implies a union of love. Cain knew his wife intimately.

Amos 3:2, “Israel only have I known,” said God. It doesn’t mean the only people God even knows exist is Israel, obviously. It means He loves Israel. Special love, right? The word “know” implies loving fellowship. Did you get it? Loving fellowship. “Depart from Me I never - ” what? “ - knew you,” Matthew 7. Does that mean He doesn’t know who they are? No. It means, “I never had an intimate, loving fellowship with you.”

“Joseph did not know Mary until the birth of Jesus.” What does that mean? He had never met her? No. It means he never had a union with her of love, physical. So, you see, the word “know” implies loving union, loving fellowship.

Now read the verses that way, look at 14. “I am the Good Shepherd, and have loving fellowship with My sheep, and My sheep have loving fellowship with Me. As the Father has loving fellowship with Me, even so I have loving fellowship with the Father.”

And you know what that says? We are all tangled up in a love triangle, between us and Christ and God, in loving fellowship. Now I like that. My relation to God is not theological only, personal. He loves me.

You say, “You’re kind of pushing there in the context, MacArthur.” Well I’ll push over to 15:10 for a second. “If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” There’s the same triangle, isn’t it? Only that time it says “love” instead of “know.” No difference. Jesus has a unique intimate love relationship, a sweet fellowship with His sheep, and it goes both ways.

Chapter 14 verse 21, “He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father - ” There’s the same triangle again, and it goes on “ - and I will love him, and manifest Myself to him.” Verse 23, “If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him.” See, it’s the same triangle all through John’s gospel. We’re all tangled up in love with Jesus Christ and God, fantastic, personal, real love.

Now, experiential love - and Christ loves us, He loves the sheep personally - but experiential love wants one thing most, and it can be defined by two words. It wants identification and oneness, or unity. You know what I mean?

For example, if you really - let's say a man really loves a lady, really loves her. A guy loves a girl. The natural end of their love is unity that they two shall become one. You don't say, "Honey, I love you so much that I'm going to join the Foreign Legion." No. That is the very opposite. "I love you so much I want to spend every day of my life with you." Remind him of that, ladies. My wife reminds me of that all the time.

But love says, "I want unity. I want identification." Jesus said, "Sheep, I love you." God says, "I love you," and then God in Romans 8, the Bible says, wants to conform us to the image of who? His Son. You see, He wants us to be identified with Jesus.

God loves us so much that He wants us to be one with Him. If you say to somebody, "I love you," that means you want to be identified with them. The apostle Paul loved Jesus Christ so much that in Philippians 3:10 he says, I want only one thing, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death." Paul said, "I love Him so much I want to be one with Him in His life, and death, and resurrection, and all His power." You see, true love demands identification and oneness. Just as marriage is the obvious goal of love in a man/woman relationship, so in a God/man relationship a union of oneness is the obvious goal of that kind of love.

Listen, Christ loves you, sheep, and He loves you with such a love that He wants you to be one with Him, die with Him, rise with Him, walk with Him, be like Him, more and more conformed to His image. He loves you so much. Can you imagine that He loves you so much that He wants you to be one with Him, joint heirs, His image? Fantastic love.

Do you love Him enough to want that, too? Do you want to be one with Him, identify all the way down the line? If you don't, then you don't have the right kind of love. Real love wants total identification with His death, His resurrection, His life, His sufferings, whatever it may be, just to be one with Jesus Christ is all it ever wants.

No, Christ is not a mystical fog floating around somewhere, a theological abstraction. He is a personal, real lover and His love in my life is as experiential as any other love relationship that I know.

So what does the Good Shepherd do for the sheep? He dies for the sheep and He loves the sheep. Thirdly, verse 16, He unites the sheep. Now verse 16, "And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold - " now that does not refer to men on Mars, that refers to Gentiles " - other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd."

Do you know what else Christ does for the sheep? He unites the sheep. He reaches around the world to Jew and Gentile, whoever it may be, and gathers them into one flock. We are one flock. We're not two flocks crammed into one fold. We're one flock.

You say, "Well, who is this one flock?" Look at chapter 11 verse 49, "And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all - " that's the pot calling the kettle black " - Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not. And this spoke he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he professed that Jesus should die for that nation; - " now here comes this, that's Israel " - And not for that nation only, but that He also should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

They were already designated as children of God, they were just waiting to be gathered. And so it is that God not only sent Christ to Israel, but to the Gentiles.

Ephesians chapter 2:11 and following, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh." Now verse 13, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who once were far off were made near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one - " that is Jew and Gentile " - hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; has abolished the enmity to make of the two one new man." That is Jew and Gentile made one.

Verse 18, "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." And so, Paul stresses that we are one. And then in Galatians 3 he says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, you're all one in Christ."

Third thing the Good Shepherd did was unite the flock. And the unity does not come from the fact that we're all shoved into the same fold, it comes from the fact that we all love and serve the same shepherd. And it's not an ecumenical unity. It doesn't come about because of the good work of the council for Jews and Christians, or whatever it is. It doesn't come about because of some ecclesiastical structure. It's the unity of love and obedience to Christ. And if you're a Jew and love and obey Christ, if you're a Gentile and obey Christ, that's the same fold, same flock. The tragedy is that the one flock doesn't act like one flock.

So, the relationship of the Good Shepherd - we're really racing now - to the sheep, gives His life, loves His sheep, unites the sheep. Now two other relationships here and we'll see them very quickly, the relation of the Good Shepherd to the Father. What is Christ's relation to God?

Here it is in verse 17 and 18 and it has two aspects. Verse 17, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power - " or authority " - to lay it down. I have power - " or authority " - to take it again.

This commandment have I received of My Father.”

Now the last statement, “This commandment have I received of My Father,” is an obedience statement. The first statement of verse 17 is a love statement. The two things that characterize the relationship of the incarnate Christ to the Father are love and obedience. He had the power to take His life back again after He had given it. Nobody took it from Him.

And I always think of John 19 where Pilate says, “Don’t You know I have power to take Your life?” See. Pilate, he didn’t have power to get up in the morning. Jesus said, “You don’t have power to do anything if I don’t allow it.” “I have power to take Your life.” Jesus said, “Nobody takes My life, I lay it down and then I pick it up again.”

There have been a lot of people who could say, “I laid my life down.” There has been nobody but Jesus who said, “And then I took it up again.” And He did all this as an act of love and obedience to the Father. So you have love at the beginning, obedience at the end, and the act in the middle. God loves Christ, Christ loves God, and that love implies obedience.

Now mark this, friends, there is no such thing as love without obedience. It doesn’t exist. Does not exist. In 15:9, “As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love.” In other words, without the obedience end of it, the love is a mockery. Say you love and then not obey, that’s foolishness - foolishness. Love is seen in obedience. I don’t care whether it’s your children. I don’t care whether it’s your wife or your husband. I don’t care what relationship it is, whether it’s you and God, love is viewed in obedience.

Now you go to 1 John and you see this so aptly. First John 2:3, just listen, we’ll read 3-5, 1 John 2:3, “And by this we do know that we know Him - ” There’s the word “know” again and meaning love “ - If we keep His - ” what? “ - commandment.” That’s it. Verse 4, “He that saith, I know Him, - ” I have loving fellowship with Him, “ - and keepeth not His commandments is a - ” what? “ - a liar. But who so keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.” You see, that’s the whole point.

Then over in the 5th chapter, same book, he says this, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God - ” verse 1 “ - and everyone that loveth Him that begot loveth Him also that is begotten of Him.” Now watch. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His - ” what? “ - commandments - ” again. Verse 3, here it is. “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” There is no love without obedience. None.

And people may come along and say, “Well, I love God very very much,” and then they don’t even obey God. They don’t study. “I love God, I just don’t study.” No. It’s a pretty shallow sick love if it doesn’t obey. We stand up, “O how I love Jesus.” Oh really, you do? How much do you love Him? “Well I love Him, I love Him.”

You love Him so much you can't be bothered to come Sunday night and study His Word with us? You love Him so much you couldn't come on Wednesday nights for fellowship and testimonies and prayers? You love Him so much you can't read His Word? Do you love Him so much you can't bother to give to the needs? You love Him so much you can't bother to pray?

Maybe you love Him so much you can't even serve. Maybe you love Him so much you can't even use your spiritual gift. Is that really what love is all about? Don't think that God keeps the record of your love on the basis of how you sort of float in on Sunday morning and float out again and God says, "He loves Me." No. No.

You want to know how to prove your love? Obey. You know how Jesus proved His love? The obedience of - here it comes - self sacrifice. Isn't sacrifice always the measure of love? Sure it is. Christ's relation to the Father was a relationship of love that issued itself in self sacrificing obedience. When you start to sacrifice, then God hears the word, "I love you," not until. When the sacrifices start coming, then God starts reading the love loud and clear.

What is Christ's relation to the Father? Love and obedience. What should be our relationship to the Father? Love and obedience, same thing. For we are one with Christ, aren't we?

Lastly, thirdly, the Good Shepherd's relation to the world. Very quickly. This is a polarized relation. Two extremes. Verse 19, "There was a division therefore again - " I like the word "again" cause there have always been - they been divided ever since chapter 7. "There was a division therefore among the Jews for these sayings." Now you've got two groups. They just polarized themselves. Group A, verse 20, "And many of them said, He hath a demon."

And here we go back to the third level of conflict. They have descended to name calling again, like earlier when they called Him a demon-possessed Samaritan. They said, "He has a demon and is mad." He's not only demon possessed, He's crazy. "Why hear ye Him?" Why do you stand around listening to this guy, He's crazy? Demon possessed.

You know, there are some people who think Jesus is a madman. That is a tragic, sinful, and damnable conclusion. Boy, that's what they concluded in Matthew 12, you know. They said, "What He does, He does by the power of Satan." And Jesus said, "For that you will not be forgiven." If a man sees all the revelation of Christ, everything He's ever done and said, if those people stood there and saw all His miracles and heard all His words and concluded He did it by Satan, they were beyond the possibility of salvation because they rejected total revelation.

That is blasphemy and there are blasphemers today, plenty of them. Perhaps the most prominent one is Madalyn Murray O'Hair, but there are many in her bag who just don't have her platform.

But then you have the other pole and society often divides itself in to these polarized ends. Verse 21, "Others said - " and I like them. They're on the verge of salvation. "Others said, These are not the words of Him that hath a demon." Listen to what He says. His lucid conversation, the majestic calm of His words, their strength, the strains thrill that His words sent through their souls. These are not the words of a demon-possessed man.

And I like that little last shot, "Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" So the world is polarized regarding Jesus. What's His relation to the world? On the one hand they think He's a madman. On the other hand, they're just hanging on the balance of faith. And it is to group B that Christ will commit Himself, John 7:17, "If any man wills to know His will, He shall know of the doctrine." If you're going to be in one of these two groups, I hope you're in Group B.

So, we meet the Good Shepherd. In His relationship to the sheep, He gives His life, He loves the sheep, He unites the sheep. In His relationship to the Father, two things: Love and obedience, same two that should characterize us. In His relation to the world, two poles: The close minded, the open minded, those are the relationships of the Good Shepherd.

As we close, one beautifully glorious passage comes to my heart. If you are one of the sheep, will you just listen to this, and we'll close with this passage, just listen. If you're one of His sheep, you're about to hear an injunction to you as sheep. Here it comes. Hebrews 13:20-21, listen.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

Our Father, we thank You this morning for Your truth, instruction of Your precious Word. Lord, how our hearts have been lifted and thrilled again as we've seen our Shepherd. What a joy it is to know that You love us. God, help us to manifest our love in obedience. And, Lord, we would pray for some who may be apart from the flock, sheep yet to be gathered, God, that they might be gathered by the Shepherd this morning into the flock.

And those of us who are Christians, Father, may we come to the point of real commitment in our lives in terms of self sacrificing obedience, and that by the power of that great Shepherd who came out of the grave, we might be indeed made perfect to do His will that Jesus might receive the glory forever and ever. We pray in His name. Amen.

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