

John 10:1-30

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[0 : 00] Open your Bibles to John 10, John chapter 10. So my aim tonight is to be short, clear and simple. I don't think there's anyone here who shouldn't be able to understand me this evening.

! There is a difference, isn't there, between being childish and childlike. A massive difference. And so children, your parents might say to you, grow up, isn't it?

They don't want you to stay childish. And doing things that you should have left behind. To grow up is a good thing.

So don't be childish. But to be childlike is a different thing. To be childlike means that you never lose that simplicity.

You never lose that wonder of what it is to be a child. That excitement. And particularly when it comes to the Bible, Jesus' message is, be childlike.

[1 : 08] Never lose your wonder at the simplicity of the truth. And John 11 is a very, very simple passage.

It is a wonderfully simple passage. Jesus is the shepherd. And so guess who I am? I'm his little lamb.

Jesus is the shepherd. I'm his little lamb. And there is John 10 in a nutshell. This wonderful, wonderful passage of John 10.

Jesus is the shepherd. I'm his little lamb. Where have you heard that language of lamb before? Do you remember John 1, 29?

John the Baptist sees Jesus and he says, doesn't he? He cries out in a loud voice, behold the lamb of God. Who takes away the sin of the world. John particularly, of all the writers in scriptures, is obsessed with Jesus as the lamb of God.

[2 : 15] And yet in John 10, what we see is that the lamb of God has become the shepherd of the sheep. The lamb of God has become the shepherd of the sheep. Isn't that the truth? Who could be a better shepherd than the lamb?

Who would know better what sheep need than a lamb? And John tells us that Jesus is the lamb of God who has become the shepherd of his people.

And so how does John set out this relationship? Jesus set out this relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. What does he tell us is this lovely secret? What does it mean for you and I, if we're trusting and loving the Lord Jesus tonight, to be his little lambs?

There's three pictures. And the first picture is the shepherd and his flock. And the second picture is the shepherd and the fowl or the sheep pen.

And the third picture is the shepherd and the sheep. Here's the first picture. The shepherd and his flock. It says that no one enters the gate.

[3 : 24] The one who enters the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens to him and the sheep hear his voice. He goes in and he calls his own sheep by name and he leads them and he leads them all out.

And when he's brought them out, he goes ahead of them. The picture is this. All the shepherds of the village would make kind of common cause together.

They'd work together. And they would bring all of their sheep into an overnight sheep pen near the village. They'd bring all their flocks into one large sheep pen. And then they would appoint one of the shepherds to be a night watchman.

To watch through the night. While the rest of the shepherds went off and got a good night's sleep. And the night watchman's task was to keep this multiplicity, these many flocks, safe through the night. To ward off people who would come.

To ward off sheep rustlers who would steal the sheep. Bandits. And then in the morning, all the shepherds would come back. And the gatekeeper, the night watchman, they would recognize the shepherd and they would open the gate.

[4 : 34] And the shepherd would stand there. The shepherd would stand there. He'd be faced with a crowd of two or three or four or five flocks of sheep. And he would begin to call those who are his.

And the shepherd knew the sheep by name. And they recognized his voice. They knew his voice.

And as the shepherd called his sheep, they came out one by one.

And they passed him by the gate. And they waited from outside. And when he'd call all his own sheep out like that. He didn't drive them like you see shepherds do in Wales or in the Lake District.

He didn't call the dogs and whistles for the dogs to herd them. He'd call them by name. And now he takes his position in front of the flock of sheep and he leads them out to pasture.

Have you got that picture? The shepherd and the flock. It's the first of the three pictures that John gives us in this marvelous shepherding chapter.

[5 : 39] The shepherd and the flock called by name led out into pasture. The background to each one of us who are believing at this moment and trusting the Lord Jesus.

The background is that in his loving way, the Lord Jesus has called us to belong to him. The background to this chapter, of course, is chapter 9, isn't it?

Do you remember him? The man who was born blind. He was lovely last week, wasn't he? And Jesus came and he gave him sight. Do you remember? But because it happened on the Sabbath day, the religious authorities, they were greatly offended.

They were furious that Jesus had healed again on the Sabbath day. They questioned the man twice. They called in his parents and questioned them. And then they called the man back for a third time.

And when they could get no satisfaction from them, according to what we're told, they really excommunicated him. They chuck him out of the church. And then we read at the end of chapter 9, don't we?

[6 : 47] That Jesus found him. Jesus found him. Verse 35. He heard they'd cast him out.

And having found him, Jesus said to him, Do you believe in the Son of Man? And the man said to him, didn't he?

He said, Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him? Jesus wonderfully said, I who speak to you, I am the man.

The man said, I believe, and he worshipped him. Do you see how Jesus, in chapter 9, is calling out one of his flock? That is the background to every single one of us who trust in Christ.

You may remember a day when you heard the voice of Jesus, when you knew that Jesus was calling you, and you said yes, and you received him as your Lord and Saviour.

[7 : 54] I can remember such a day. Or you may be one of those fortunate people, who can't remember a time, when you didn't love the Lord Jesus, and trust him, and know him as your shepherd and Saviour.

Or you may be one of those people who say, I can't put a date to it, but over a certain period, over the last few months, this has become true of me. Jesus has called you out.

He has called you by name, and he has made you one of his flock, and now he will never cease to go before you.

It's a strange way to put it, but I was talking with someone this week, and I was talking about, I don't know why I talked to them about being in the soup. They were in a difficult situation.

And the conversation kind of went in a really strange direction, about different kinds of soup, and it was just a strange thing. But what I was trying to do was, explain to them that they were in a difficult situation.

[8 : 59] And so one day, you might find yourself in the soup, in a real patch of difficulty. You might find yourself in trouble, or sorrow, wherever it might be.

And so you ask yourself the question, how did you get there? How are you in the situation you are in tonight? Because the answer is, he led you.

He led you. The Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd, he never stops leading his sheep. And so as this slightly odd man said to me this week, if you are in the soup, it is he who has decided whether it is tomato soup, or carrot soup.

And it is he who has decided whether it is cold soup, or very hot soup. And you are there, you are in the circumstances you are in, because that is where the shepherd has led you.

Can you get that picture? It is very simple, isn't it? It is part of our safety and security. Those words, safety and security, they belong really to the last picture, but they are here as well, aren't they?

[10:07] We belong to his flock. He leads us, and he will never stop leading us. Second picture is the shepherd and the foal. It begins in verse 7. Jesus said to them, verse 7, truly, truly, I tell you, I am the gate of the sheep.

And so here is a different picture. The shepherd has been out on the hills, he has been pastoring his sheep, and when the night time comes, there is a kind of enclosure, it is a walled enclosure, so that the sheep may be kept safe, but there is no gate on it.

It has got the kind of walls around it, but there is a space for the gate. It is an un-gated enclosure. It has got no door on it, it has got no gate on it, no lock on it, except the shepherd.

And so, staying overnight with his sheep, the shepherd sits down at the opening. And the shepherd, he himself, is the gate.

he stood there at the end of the day, and he's called his sheep by name, and they've gone past him into the enclosure. And so Psalm 100 says, doesn't it, we are the people of his pasture, the sheep of his hand.

[11:25] The people of his pasture, the sheep of his hand, he's been out pasturing all day, his sheep, and at the end of the day, the sheep pass under his arm.

And he or she goes into the safety of the enclosure, and within the enclosure, the shepherd sits.

And just as he was the gate that let them in, so he is the gate that keeps them safe.

The shepherd into the fold. The shepherd and the fold. And they are admitted into the fold, and they are kept safe in the fold, by the action, and by the presence, and by the faithfulness of the shepherd.

And that's us, isn't it? The picture goes on, verse 9. He says, I am the door. Whoever enters me will be saved. And that is our way into safety.

And salvation, to pass under the shepherd's hand, into the fold. But then he says, he will go in and out, and find pasture. You see here, it's not so much the leading shepherd, but it is the providing shepherd.

[12:39] The shepherd who makes sure there will be, always be pasturing for his sheep. There will always be green grass. There will always be food for his sheep. And that is the point of faith for us tonight.

All through our lives, we are to say, we're in the hands of a shepherd. We're in the hands of a shepherd, and he will provide. And some of you can look back over a long life, and you will say tonight, yes, he does, he did, and he will.

He is the providing shepherd. You will find pasture. The thief comes in, in verse 10, only to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.

The thief is out for himself, but Jesus says, I am come, that they might have life, and they might have it abundantly. He's a providing shepherd.

And then we come to the third picture, which begins in verse 11. I am the good shepherd. It's the picture of the shepherd and the sheep. The shepherd and the flock. The shepherd and the sheep fold.

[13:56] The shepherd and the sheep. The first one is the shepherd and the flock leading. And then there's the shepherd and the flock, the shepherd and the sheep pen, safeguarding and providing.

And then there's the shepherd and the sheep, and he is out and about, with his flock, day and night. Day and night. And perhaps as the days darken, the wolves begin to gather.

And the shepherd has a choice, doesn't he? The shepherd has a choice. Am I going to guard my sheep from the wolf, certainly at the risk of my own life, from that savage creature, or am I going to leave the sheep to the savaging of the wolf?

And Jesus says, if he's only a hired hand, and has no care for the sheep, do you notice that expression? So he runs. If you have no care for the sheep, you run.

But Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. And I give my life for the sheep. What a picture. The laying down of a life, so that others may live and be safe.

[15 : 06] It's beautiful. The good shepherd. And Jesus takes us just a little bit deeper into that one. He says, the father loves me because I lay down my life.

He brings the father into the picture. The father loves me. And he doesn't say, does he? Well, what does he say there? He says, the father loves me because, I mean, son.

He could say that, but he doesn't. No, he says, he loves me because, I lay down my life, for the sheep. And so we must ask ourselves tonight, how greatly, the father must love the sheep, if he is content and willing, even to see his son dying for them.

How greatly the father loves the sheep. How greatly the father loves you. And so this third picture, we are in the area, aren't we, of love and self-sacrifice and devotion, and in the deepest sense of the word, salvation.

And this is what the father wants, and he loves his son, because the son gives his life for the sheep. So the truth here, is saved, and then secured.

[16 : 33] Because Jesus goes on with those lovely verses, later in John 10, where he picks up the shepherding theme, doesn't he? He says, my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

And listen, I give them eternal life. It's not just a temporary rescue, from a worldly wolf. This is an eternal rescue, from the eternal enemy.

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My father who has given them to me, well, he is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them, out of the father's hand.

Talk about double security. Security. No one will pluck them out of my hand. No one will pluck them out of my father's hand. What a picture of security. What a picture of our daily lives.

And so tonight, are you in the soup? Are you in trouble? Where were you, when what happened to you, happened to you?

[17 : 49] You were in his hand, and in the father's hand, and he never lets us go. There is no point, where he is an absent landlord.

There is no point, when he is away, on some other business. There is no point, at which some other call, on his time, has overtaken him.

He is always there. We are always in his hand. And when we pass, through the valley, of the shadow of death, we'll fear no evil, for, you are with me.

And when we pass, through that final time, when we come to our deathbeds, at the hour of our death, we will still be in his hand. And we will still be in his hand, at the day of judgment.

And nothing can touch us, because we are eternally, in his hand. And he gives us eternal life. And we will never perish, because he is the good shepherd, who lays down his life, for the sheep.

[19 : 00] And so, we are loved, by the dying shepherd, and we are gripped, by the living shepherd.

We are loved, by the dying shepherd, and gripped, by the living shepherd. Jesus says, I have power, to lay down my life, and I have power, to take it up again.

Loved, by the dying shepherd. The living shepherd. Gripped, by the living shepherd. I have called, these pictures, haven't I, but they are not pictures.

Actually, they are the reality, of your life and mine. Belonging, to his flock, and led by him.

Welcomed, into his fold, and guarded, and provided for, by him.

And gripped, in his hand, and saved, by him for all eternity. Let's pray together.

[20 : 08]