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John 10:1 - 10:21



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg reflects on John 10:1-21, discussing the contrast between Jesus as the good shepherd and the Pharisees as the hired ones. He emphasizes how Jesus is the door through which one must enter to find salvation, in contrast to the false shepherds who lead astray. Gregg highlights the value Jesus places on his sheep, providing them with abundant life and willingly laying down his own life for them.

Transcript

Let's turn to John chapter 10. The last chapter is taken up almost entirely with the character study of one man. The man who had been born blind and who was healed by Jesus through the strange method of making mud and putting it in his eyes and having him wash it out.

And then after that, the man experienced conflict with the religious authorities. It was really Jesus who had done the offensive deed. Jesus had done something on the Sabbath.

The man had done nothing wrong. But he got into trouble because he wouldn't speak against Jesus. He was just telling his story and there's no way he could have told it differently.

But it put the religious leaders in a bad spot because he confessed that he had been born blind and that Jesus had healed him, which were the true story, the things he couldn't modify and couldn't leave out. And yet those two things in themselves pointed in the direction of Jesus being from God, which is the very thing that Pharisees were interested in denying at all costs. And therefore they didn't want to look at that information.

Now in that setting, apparently while Jesus is still in conversation with the Pharisees here at the end of chapter 9, it said some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these words and said to him, Are we blind also? And Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no sin. But now you say, We see. Therefore your sin remains.

And he continues in chapter 10, verse 1. Most assuredly I say to you, he who does not

enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same as a thief and a robber, but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which he spoke to them. And so he was going to go on and say more on the same subject, but why did he say this on this occasion? There was a tremendous contrast between Jesus, the good shepherd of the sheep, and the false shepherds.

The Pharisees, who were the religious teachers of the Jews, and the chief priests, who were the political religious rulers of the Jews, were not good shepherds. And the reason was that they were not willing to come through the door. Now, shepherds in Israel took their sheep out on the hillsides, and it wasn't always convenient to take them all back into the village at night.

Sometimes they would, in seeking pasture, travel all day, or maybe several days, to new pasture lands, so that the sheep would have enough to eat. And it would not be convenient or possible to take the sheep all the way back to their village at the end of every day, and so sometimes they camped out overnight in the area where they were pasturing. In those places they would build what they called sheep folds.

A sheep fold was really just an enclosure, usually made of stone. It could be made of hedges, or something like that, depending on what was available, something sharp, but often it was stone. And it would be a low wall, it didn't have to be very high.

It could be three or four feet high only. The sheep could not get over it. And there would be an opening at one place, only one place, where the sheep could get in and out.

The shepherd would lead the sheep into there at night, and then he would sleep across the doorway, he would be the door of the sheep fold. And that was because wild animals could not steal the sheep, nor could thieves steal the sheep, without going through the door. They could try, they could jump over the wall, and they might be able to get one sheep over the wall, or something like that, but it would be hard for them to steal any number of sheep that way.

And therefore the door was the main way that people could get in and out of the sheep fold. And the shepherd guarded the door with his own life, because he cared for the sheep. If somebody would go over the wall of the sheep fold, that is if they didn't go through the door, they had no good intentions.

Anyone who had any right to the sheep, or anyone who had any good intention for the

sheep, would come legitimately to the shepherd, and seek access to them through his approval. But someone who was going over the wall was avoiding the shepherd, and therefore they were not shepherds, they were thieves. Now what he is saying is that the leaders of Israel are bad shepherds.

They are more like thieves than they are like shepherds. They are not coming to the sheep through Jesus. They are not operating under His authority.

They are not seeking His approval or His authorization. He, being of course the Son of God, is the owner of the sheep, and He is the good shepherd of the sheep. And therefore anyone who wishes to lead the sheep must do so with His approval.

And any attempt to avoid Him, or get around Him, do an end run around Him, and have control of the sheep, is that work of a thief who doesn't really own the sheep, and has no right to them. Now the leaders of Israel who had manifested their colors in this last story with the blind man, were doing everything they could to avoid acknowledging Jesus. He had acted sympathetically toward the man, they had no sympathy for the man.

They in fact kicked him out, though he had done no crime. He had done nothing wrong. They didn't like what he said, because what he said was drawing them to have to acknowledge Jesus.

That Jesus was in fact sent from God. That Jesus was the shepherd that God would send. But they didn't want to acknowledge that.

They wanted to lead the people, but they didn't want to do it through Jesus. They didn't want Jesus to have anything to do with it. In this they showed themselves to be the wrong kind of leaders, the wrong kinds of shepherds.

In Ezekiel chapter 34, which we have looked at on another occasion in another setting, we have that denunciation of the leaders of Israel, calling them shepherds. Bad shepherds of Israel. In Ezekiel 34 1, the word of the Lord came to me saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel.

Prophesy and say to them, thus says the Lord God to the shepherds, Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves, should not the shepherds feed the flocks. Then he goes into a list of the things that shepherds should do that these shepherds do not do for them. And he is referring to the leaders of Israel in Ezekiel's time, but obviously it applied to the leaders of Israel in Jesus' time as well.

But despite the fact that these shepherds are in place and afflicting and abusing and neglecting their duty toward the sheep, as certainly the Pharisees showed they were doing toward this man who was born blind, they should have welcomed him, they should have welcomed his testimony, they should have congratulated him for his good fortune and for the blessing that had come on him. But instead they just saw him as a problem

because he was confronting them with the claims of Christ and they didn't want to deal with that. And so God says in Ezekiel chapter 34 verse 11, For thus says the Lord God, indeed I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out, as a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among the scattered sheep, so will I seek out my sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.

Notice the wrong shepherds actually scatter the sheep. Verse 6 says, My sheep wandered throughout all the mountains and on every high hill. Yes, my flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth.

No one was seeking or searching for them. This man was expelled from the synagogue. He was scattered away from the shepherds and from the fold.

But Jesus went and found him. That's what we found in chapter 9 of John. And verse 35, John 9 verse 35, Jesus heard that they had cast him out and he went and found him.

Jesus searched out the scattered sheep that the other shepherds had driven far away. And so in Ezekiel 34 he says, I indeed will search out my sheep and seek them out, as a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out my sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. And I'll bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and I'll bring them to their own land.

And he goes on. And so God himself says he will be their shepherd because the shepherds he has appointed have failed. Jesus is talking about himself being the good shepherd.

He hasn't used that expression yet in the first six verses of chapter 10. He will. But the point here is he is coming and doing what a shepherd should do.

He's taking care of God's sheep, the house of Israel. He is, when they are cast out and scattered, he gathers them back in to himself. The people who scatter them are like, well, they're not even like shepherds at all.

They're evil shepherds, they're evil leaders, but they really would be qualified more to be thieves. They're not legitimate leaders. They are not coming through Christ.

They don't want him in the picture, so they climb over the wall rather than going through the door. And they try to have power over the sheep, but they don't have a shepherd's heart for the sheep. And that's what Jesus is saying.

Now, he says, now, for the sheep's part, they know the voice of their real shepherd. They won't follow the stranger. They'll follow the real shepherd.

Now, of course, not everyone in Israel was following Jesus. Not everyone in Israel was

recognizing him. But he points out later in his discussion, some of them were not his sheep.

His sheep were not just the nation of Israel, but the remnant of Israel. Throughout the Old Testament, there was always a remnant of Israel that were faithful to God. And most of the Israelites were doing their own thing.

A lot of times, worshiping other gods. They were apostate, not faithful to God. Not keeping his laws.

Not recognizing him as their king. And yet, there was always some. There was always a remnant in Israel who were true followers of God.

The prophets would come in the Old Testament to rebuke the nation, but there were a remnant of faithful who actually would join themselves to the prophets, listen to the prophets, and hear from God because they wanted to hear from God. They were the true sheep. The rest of Israel were, as Jesus put it in John chapter 8, of their father, the devil.

But the ones who were the true children of God, the children of Abraham, the true believers, they were Jesus' sheep. And he said, they're going to recognize me. They're going to follow me.

They will hear, in my words, the true voice of their shepherd. They will recognize that I'm speaking from God when others are not able to see that. And so, he used this illustration, verse 6 says, and they didn't understand the things that he spoke to them.

Then Jesus said to them again, Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before me are thieves and robbers. But the sheep did not hear them.

I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, to kill, and to destroy.

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. Now, it is not until the next verse after this that he says, I am the good shepherd. Before he gets to calling himself the shepherd, he calls himself the door.

The reason for that is because he has introduced the concept of the door in the earlier portion of the chapter where he has indicated the door is the only legitimate access to God's sheep. And he says, I am the door. Anyone who wants to get to God's sheep, anyone who wants to pretend to have any legitimate access to them as leaders, have got to recognize me.

They've got to come to the door first. If they don't go to the door, they're climbing over the wall, and they show themselves to be not honest or legitimate leaders. And so he has spoken of the door, but they didn't understand what he was saying, it says.

They didn't understand the illustration. And so he makes it clear, I'm the door. If you're going to come and be a leader in Israel, you've got to come through me.

If God's going to trust his sheep to anyone, they're going to be people who are subject to me. And of course, Jesus called his own disciples who were subject to him. They came through the door.

They came to Jesus. And he did commit his sheep to their keeping. Remember when Jesus spoke to Peter later on at the end of this book in chapter 21? And he said, Peter, do you love me? And Peter said, I love you.

And Jesus said, well then, tend my sheep. Feed my sheep. Tend my lambs.

Jesus committed the care of his sheep to those leaders who recognized him as their leader. He was the good shepherd of the sheep. Peter, to whom Jesus said all that, wrote similarly about it in 1 Peter chapter 5. 1 Peter chapter 5, he's writing to Christian leaders, leaders of the churches.

1 Peter chapter 5, verse 1 says, the elders who are among you I exhort. These are the elders, the leaders of the churches. I, who am a fellow elder and a witness of the suffering of Christ and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed, shepherd the flock of God which is among you.

The same thing Jesus told Peter to do, he now tells the elders of the churches to do, to shepherd the flock. Serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly, nor as being lords over those entrusted to you but being examples to the flock. You lead the sheep, you don't drive the sheep.

And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. So, there's a chief shepherd that Peter acknowledges. That's Jesus.

Jesus is the good shepherd, he's the chief shepherd. Everyone else who leads God's people are subordinate shepherds. They are the elders of the churches, they are the leaders that God has appointed or provided to lead the sheep.

And they must acknowledge Jesus, they must come through the door of the sheepfold to have access to his sheep. And his sheep will recognize his voice spoken through true shepherds. One who is a legitimate shepherd will be recognized by God's sheep.

Which is one reason why many people who are true Christians leave the churches they're in because they don't hear the voice of their shepherd there. They hear the voice of man, they hear opinions of man, they don't hear God speaking to them there. And so they go out just like this man was thrust out of the synagogue.

So, many times Christians who are seeking to follow Jesus are not welcome in the

institutional churches because the institutional church has become very much like the synagogue was in Jesus' day. An organization where leaders have political power, where they lord it over the sheep. And the sheep are looking for someone who will lead them by example.

You see, Jesus said the good shepherd goes before the sheep and they follow him. That means he leads them, he sets an example, he goes himself where they need to go. His life is what they need to emulate because he's already doing the thing he's telling them to do.

That's what Jesus is saying. For a while our school was in Bandon, Oregon on the Oregon coast. And my brother-in-law at the time had a ranch.

It was not his, it was our father-in-law's ranch and he had put the son-in-law in charge. But the son-in-law had never tended sheep before, there were sheep on it. And Kenny, my brother-in-law, was over at our school once talking to me.

I asked him how he was doing with the sheep since it was a new project for him. And he said, well I'm having the hardest time with the sheep. He said there's a creek through the fields and there's kind of a narrow bridge that crosses the creek that I have to take the sheep across there because the grazing is on the other side.

And he says I have a really hard time getting the sheep to go on that bridge because they're afraid of the water and they don't want to go near the creek. And I was just curious. I didn't know, I don't know anything about leading sheep myself.

I said, well are you going in front of the sheep or are you behind them trying to get them to go? And he later told me, and I just asked it out of curiosity because I don't know much about sheep. And I didn't know how he was doing what he was doing. I just wondered.

I didn't mean it to convict him or anything. But after he came back the next day and said, that really convicted me what you said. I said, convicted you? Why would that convict you? He said because I was actually not leading the sheep.

He said I was actually just trying to herd them from the rear. He said I tried going in front of them across the bridge and they all followed me across the bridge. And I wasn't making some kind of great spiritual insight.

I was actually just asking a question that I was curious about. The reason I asked is because I knew Jesus said the shepherd goes ahead of the sheep and they follow him. I thought maybe that works better than you herd cattle from behind.

You lead sheep from the front. The sheep are scared. They don't know if it's safe.

But when the shepherd who they trust goes ahead of them, he shows them that it's safe and they can follow him. So they want to be close to the shepherd and they see that what he's doing, he's blazed the trail as it were. He's crossed that little bridge and they can see that it's okay.

And so they follow him. Spiritual leaders are supposed to do that. They're supposed to do the thing that they want the sheep to do.

To go ahead of them, to be the example. And that's what Peter says to these shepherds. He says when you shepherd God's flock, you need to first of all recognize that you are under shepherds.

Under the chief shepherd. And you need to not be lords over them. You don't want to drive them like you drive cattle.

You want to lead them by example. Now this is what the Pharisees were not doing. The Pharisees, as Jesus put it in Matthew 23.

He said they bind heavy burdens, grievous to be born and put them on people's backs. He says they won't lift one finger themselves to carry those burdens. So they're putting obligations upon people.

They don't keep those obligations themselves. He says the scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore, whatever so ever they bid you to do, that observe and do.

But do not do after their deeds because they say and they do not do. This is all in Matthew 23. Jesus is talking to the scribes and the Pharisees.

And so he's saying the Pharisees tell you what to do but they won't do it themselves. They're not leaders. They're lords.

They give commands. Where a good shepherd goes ahead of his sheep. That's what Jesus said in verse 4. When he brings out his sheep, he goes before them and the sheep follow him.

And so also, he hasn't yet spoken of himself being the shepherd. But he's talking about himself being the door. If anyone wants to lead God's sheep, they have to come through Jesus.

They have to be his followers first. And then they can be leaders of the sheep. He said all who came before me, verse 8, are thieves and robbers.

But the sheep didn't hear them. Now all who came before me probably is not a reference to all the different religions that existed before the Buddha. You know, Hinduism and you know those things.

Because those people didn't really come to Israel. The ones who came to Israel, he's probably not even referring to the prophets in the Old Testament. They came before Jesus and they were spiritual leaders of a sort.

But they were never really referred to as the shepherds. The shepherds were the political and temple leaders of Israel. And he's saying Israel has never really had good shepherds.

All those who came before, including those that are there now. Those that were there who drove this man out of the synagogue. Those shepherds.

They were thieves and robbers. They're not worthy to be called shepherds. They're taking authority that isn't really theirs.

God has not authorized them because they don't recognize Jesus. He says they're just thieves and robbers. The sheep don't hear them.

And that was apparently true. Apparently the remnant of the flock, though they attended the synagogue, didn't really respect the hypocrites who were leading them. And so they heard in Jesus the voice of truth and a genuine spiritual shepherd.

He says in verse 10, The thief does not come except to steal and to kill and to destroy. Now this statement is often quoted by Christians as being a statement about the devil. Is it not? Don't you hear people all the time say the devil does not come except to rob and to kill and destroy.

They're quoting this verse. Jesus didn't say that about the devil, though it may be true. It may be fair enough to say such things about the devil, but that's not what this verse is saying.

It's not really telling us about the devil. It's talking about the thief, and he's already said who the thieves are. The thieves are the false shepherds.

These people who are positioning themselves as leaders of the sheep, but aren't legitimate and aren't coming through Christ. They're false shepherds. They're thieves.

And when he says the thief, he's not talking about one individual like the devil. He's talking about a category. That generic thief, like any of these thieves here.

A thief comes for the purpose of harming, not for the purpose of benefiting the sheep. Now sheep are very vulnerable creatures. They have no natural defenses.

They are not aggressive animals, and they are defenseless. It's hard to know how sheep would ever have evolved without people there to take care of them. They are not fit for survival outside of the care of human beings.

Now mountain sheep and so forth, they can get along by getting up in the high, craggy mountains where predators have a hard time getting at them. But the average grazing animal, a sheep especially, is weak. It's small compared to the predators, the wolves and the bears.

And it needs protection. But there are people who are as predatory toward the sheep as bears and wolves are. A sheep needs people, but people can be just as bad for the sheep and can exploit the vulnerable sheep as much as the predators can.

But a good shepherd is there to help them, to benefit them, to prolong their life, not to kill them like a thief wants to do. And he's saying that I have come, unlike the thieves there who are ruling in the synagogues and in the temple, unlike them, I have come that they might have life and that they may have it more abundantly. Now that he came to bring life is something that was introduced right at the very beginning of the book of John.

When it said that he was the word, it says, in him was life and that life was the light of men. And on many occasions Jesus has talked about his role assigned by God to give people life. And he means of course eternal life.

And it says in chapter 5 of John, verse 21, John 5 says, as the father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the son gives life to whom he will. So Jesus is the one who gives life. And he says in verse 24 of chapter 5, John 5, 24, Most assuredly I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life.

They shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. He comes and gives them life and here he calls it everlasting life. The father has given Jesus this assignment to bring life, everlasting life to his people, to his sheep.

He came to give them life. In John chapter 8, in Jesus' argument with those Jews who initially believed in him but seemed to change their mind, he says in John 8, 51, most assuredly I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he shall never see death. That is he'll have eternal life obviously.

And so Jesus has already indicated that his role is to give life. Now he says this in contrast to the leaders who were just deadly. They come to take from the sheep, even to kill them perhaps.

Not that the religious leaders were out there actively killing people, although they did kill Jesus and they did persecute the apostles and the disciples. The apostle Paul, before he was the apostle, before he was a Christian, was sent out by these very leaders to arrest Christians and to harm the sheep. In some cases to kill them.

They killed Stephen with their own hands. So while these religious leaders had not at this point made a career of actually killing the Jewish people, their flock that they were

entrusted with, they eventually showed their murderous nature by persecuting Jesus and his disciples, and in many cases killing them. So they were true thieves.

They come to rob, they come to kill, they come to destroy. But Jesus said I don't come to do any of that. I've come to give them life.

By the way, there was a time when the disciples mistakenly thought that they really would do God a service by killing some people. And James and John, let me get to it here. In chapter 9 of Luke, it says that the Samaritans, in verse 53, did not receive Jesus as he was passing through and he and his disciples wanted lodging there.

But the Samaritans were inhospitable to him. And it says in verse 54, when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them just as Elijah did? But he turned and rebuked them and said, you do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

So Jesus said, even in this case where this town was insulting him, certainly the kind of thing that Elijah would have called down some she bears about or fire out of heaven about. Jesus said, that's not what I'm here to do. I'm not here to destroy life, I'm here to save life.

And so also here, unlike the false shepherds, the thieves, who were leading the Israelites at this time, Jesus has not come to rob, to kill or destroy, but to give them life, that they may have it more abundantly. Now, it's from this verse, John 10.10, that we often hear people talk about the abundant life. I have come that they might have life and they may have it more abundantly.

Many today, when they talk about having an abundant life, think that means an abundance of stuff. This is a term often used by the health and wealth advocates to say, you know, God doesn't want you to be poor. He wants you to have an abundant life.

And by that they clearly mean that he wants you to have a lot of stuff. He wants you to have abundance of stuff. That's not what he means.

Because Jesus elsewhere said that a man's life does not consist of the abundance of the things which he possesses. There was a time when a man came to Jesus and asked him to arbitrate in a dispute between himself and his brother. And Jesus said, beware of covetousness, for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses.

So Jesus does not define life as abundance of possessing things. When he says, I have come that they might have life and that they may have it more abundantly, he means more life, not more stuff in your life. It's not the abundance of the things you possess that makes up your life.

What you possess is more life. If you don't have eternal life, and then you do have eternal life, you've got more life. Not only more quantitatively, but also more qualitatively, because the life you have is life in Christ.

It's divine life. It's a different species of life. Not just more durable, that lasts longer, but it's a different kind of life.

It's God's life. And the word was life, but he was God. And that life was the light of men.

And so you receive a different kind of life. You become a different species of human being. Because you have a different species of life when you have God's divine nature given to you.

It says in 2 Peter 1, verse 4, that we become partakers of his divine nature. And that is because of his life given to us through the Spirit. So Jesus came to give a different kind, a different quantity, a different quality, an abundance of life, rather than less life, more life.

Rather than killing and taking away, he's come to give it abundantly. Now they say, well, but this is contrasted with the thief that comes to steal. Isn't that taking stuff away? Isn't it the devil that wants to take stuff away and Jesus wants to bring abundance in contrast to that? No, the thief in this statement is not trying to take stuff away from the sheep.

They're trying to steal the sheep, not steal the sheep's stuff. It's not like they're breaking in the sheep's house and taking their furniture. The thief is taking the sheep away from the shepherd.

That's the stealing. It's not taking away things from the Christians. It's taking the Christians away from God that the thief is interested in doing.

The thievery has nothing to do with depriving somebody of their stuff. It has to do with depriving the sheep of life. Depriving the sheep of their rightful owner, the good shepherd.

But verse 12 says, John 10, 12, He who is a hireling and not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees. And the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

I am the good shepherd and I know my sheep and I am known by my own. You know what, I skipped by accident verse 11. My apologies, that's an important verse.

I started at verse 12. I need to start at verse 11, so let's fix that. Verse 11, he says, I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. Now, he didn't come to steal and to kill

the sheep. He came to die himself for the sheep.

So what? So that they could have life. He gives his life for them to have life. And what life do they get? They get his.

It's the life of Christ that is given, not simply in dying, but also in rising, the resurrection life of Christ is then given to us through the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul makes some interesting comments along those lines in 2 Corinthians 4. He says in verse 10, We are always carrying about in the body, our body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

This is not in the resurrection of the last day, but in our mortal flesh. Not in our immortality at the resurrection, but in our present life. In this mortal body, we experience on a continual basis the dying of the Lord.

He's talking about the persecution he's receiving. He's talking about the sufferings he's going through for Jesus' sake. He is experiencing the rejection and the dying and the sufferings such as Jesus has experienced.

But he's also, as a result, seen the life of Jesus manifested in his body. That is, when people saw Paul, they saw the life of Jesus in him. Not the life of Saul of Tarsus, but the transformed person who is now no longer I, but Christ living in me, as he put it in Galatians 2. He said, for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

He said that in Philippians 1. And in Colossians, he says, when Christ who is our life shall appear, then we shall appear with him in glory. All this reference that Christ is our life, to live is Christ, the life of Jesus is manifested in our bodies as we enjoy him in spite of our sufferings. So Jesus said, the good shepherd came to give his life for the sheep.

Of course he's referring to dying, giving his life in that sense. But in another sense, he's already said, he came that they might have life, and it is his life. He's giving up his life so they can have his life in them.

Now, he said, the person who is the hireling, verse 12, is different than that. He who is a hireling and not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees. The wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.

The hireling flees because he's a hireling and does not care about the sheep. He will not give his life for the sheep. They aren't his.

He's not attached to them. He's a paid worker. He's a contractor.

He's a hireling. Now, I don't know if Jesus is now shifting the imagery of the spiritual leaders of his day from being thieves to being hirelings. There are different ways that

they can be seen in connection to the sheep.

They could be seen as thieves who are trying to take God's sheep away from him because they won't come through Christ. They won't come through the door, so they're a thief and a robber. They could also be seen as persons who are fulfilling their role for money only and hirelings.

Or maybe there's different persons involved. Actually, a hireling shepherd is different than a thief. But it's possible that he's using mixed metaphors to criticize the same people.

On the one hand, they're illegitimate leaders. On the other hand, they're doing it just for the money and it's just a job to them. And if real danger comes, they're going to look out for themselves, not for the sheep.

Not like David, who was definitely a good shepherd and that's why he qualified to be the shepherd of Israel. Because when he saw a wolf coming, he'd go out and confront the wolf. If he saw a bear coming, which would be even more formidable, he'd go out and confront the bear and he'd kill the bear.

Now, he did this with his hands. He said he struck the lion and when it rose up against him, he took it by the beard and struck it again. He wasn't doing this from a distance with his slingshot.

He's out there wrestling with a lion or with a bear. Why? Why not just let it take a sheep and run off with it? Why risk your life? That's just the commission of a shepherd. His attachment to his sheep is very strong.

He knows that the sheep depends on him and can't take care of itself, so he's got these instincts of protection for the sheep. He'll even lay his life down for them. This does not mean that sheep are as valuable as people or that we should consider a sheep's life as valuable as a man's life.

The shepherd doesn't really intend to trade his life for the life of the sheep, but he's willing to risk his life for the life of the sheep. That's different. He actually hopes to live.

He doesn't attack the lion saying, take me, don't take the sheep. I'll be your victim. No, he's going to make the lion to be the victim.

He doesn't plan to lay his life down, but he's willing to. He'll put himself in harm's way, even mortal danger, to protect his sheep. That's what Jesus is like.

A hireling doesn't do that. Someone who's paid and it's just a job, they do as little work as they can get away with and try to keep their employer happy. He said, I'm the good shepherd and I know my sheep and I'm known by my own.

As the Father knows me, even so, I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Now, this is a very important verse too. It's been greatly misunderstood. People who aren't Christians sometimes make the mistake of thinking it's not about life on other planets.

You know, there's other sheep I have elsewhere. I've got to go to those planets and collect them up too. The Mormons believe he's talking about the American Indians.

And Jesus said, I have to go to America. I have sheep over there too. And I'm going to collect those and bring them into the flock too.

Literally, this is what they believe. They use this verse to prove it. But really, the most obvious meaning of the verse is that the other sheep that are not of this fold means Gentiles who are not of Israel.

Israel was God's sheep. The Gentiles were not his sheep. In fact, in the Old Testament, the Gentiles were often contrasted from Israel in just this respect.

Israel was like the sheep, and the Gentiles were like the predators. In chapter 34 and in chapter 37 of Ezekiel, when he's talking about God coming and shepherding his people, he talks about he'll deliver them from the mouth of the predators, the nations that had preyed upon them. The Gentiles were like the wolves and the bears, and so they were depicted.

In Daniel chapter 7, when four Gentile nations are seen coming up out of the sea, Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece, and Rome, they're depicted as a lion and a bear and a leopard and some other kind of carnivorous beast. It's unidentifiable because it has ten horns. But the point is, these are the kinds of creatures that shepherds have to defend sheep from.

These are the enemies of sheep. If the Gentiles were the enemies of Israel, Israel was God's flock, the Gentiles were the danger to God's flock that he defended them against. He says, now that's changing.

Just like I have some sheep who are the remnant here in Israel, so there are some of my sheep among the Gentiles too. I've got to evangelize those regions as well. The Gentiles who are my sheep must come in as well.

He said, I must go to them, and says, there will then be one flock and one shepherd. That is, when the Gentiles become believers in Christ, they are in one body, in one flock, not two, with one shepherd, Jesus. In Ephesians 2, Paul says that God has taken the Jew and the Gentile, that is, the believing Jew and the believing Gentile, and has broken

down that middle wall of partition between them and made in himself one new man, so making peace.

It's very important because there are people today who think that God has two flocks, national Israel and the church. There are many who believe that ethnic Israel are God's chosen people according to one set of promises, and that the church are God's chosen people according to another set of promises. Some of them actually say that ethnic Israel will forever have a different destiny than the church, that God has a positive destiny for Israel and a positive destiny for the church, but they're separate.

Jesus didn't know anything about that. He said, I've got my Jewish sheep here, there's Gentile sheep out there, I'm going to go bring them, and then when I bring them, there's going to be one flock, not two, one shepherd. I'm not interested in having two flocks.

There are not two chosen people, there's one chosen people. They are the people who follow the shepherd. Therefore, my Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it again.

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from my Father.

Now, back when he said in verse 11, I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep, he's implying not only that good shepherds, unlike hirelings, are willing to risk it, but he, as the good shepherd, is going to go further, and he's going to rescue the whole flock by literally laying his life down. Now, he's not doing it because his life is less valuable than theirs. He's going to take it back up again.

This is not a permanent loss. He's going to lay it down and take it up again. He said, I have the power to do that.

He had said something very much like that back in John chapter 2, when they said, give us a sign that you have the authority to do these things. He said, well, destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days. They said, how can you raise it again? It's been 46 years in building.

But actually, he was talking about his body. He was talking about them killing him, and he would raise himself from the dead. Now, Jesus was not the first man who died to come back to life.

Jesus himself had raised people from the dead. Jairus' daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, Lazarus, they were all raised from the dead before Jesus was. And even in the Old Testament, Elijah and Elisha both raised the dead.

Elijah raised a dead boy, and Elisha's bones raised a dead soldier. After Elisha was dead, and was buried, this dead soldier was thrown into a cave where his bones were, and

touched the bones of Elijah, and sprang back to life. People coming back to life from the dead was not something unheard of before Jesus.

But none of those people raised themselves from the dead. All of those people, once they were dead, they were powerless to do anything for themselves. Not only could they not raise themselves from the dead, they couldn't wiggle their toes.

They couldn't do anything for themselves. They're dead. They're helpless.

Jesus is not helpless. He is able to lay his life down. No one can take it from him.

And he's able to take it up again. The reason is, of course, because he didn't deserve to die. Everyone else is subject to death.

He is not. We're subject to death because the wages of sin is death, and we've all sinned. Jesus never sinned.

Therefore, death had no claim upon him. He's the only man of whom this could be said. Because, although we have the power to lay our lives down, people have the power to take it from us, too.

Death has a claim upon us, and it will come and lay its claim one way or another, because we're sinners, and all sinners must die. Jesus was not a sinner. Therefore, he didn't have to die.

No one could actually kill him. That's already been seen numerous times in the Gospel. They sought to take him, but they couldn't.

His hour had not yet come. They took up stones to stone him, but he passed through, and they didn't find him. He disappeared from among them.

He was not going to die unless he volunteered to die. He was not subject to death. The only way he could die is if he laid his life down.

And he did so by volunteering to be the sacrifice for our sins and taking our iniquities upon himself, which he did. That made him subject to death. He couldn't have died otherwise.

He had to take sin upon him. Death is the wages of sin. And no one could take his life.

So, who crucified Christ, really? The Bible indicates the Jews crucified Christ, in one sense, because they're the ones who put the Romans up to it. The Bible says that the Romans nailed the nails in his hands, so they crucified him. But, in a sense, anyone that Jesus died for crucified him.

No one could take his life from him. He laid it down voluntarily for somebody, for his

sheep. And, therefore, it's our sins that crucified him.

It's we, in a sense. If we had not sinned, he wouldn't have to have died. He wouldn't have had to lay down his life for us.

But he did that. He came to rescue the wandering and the lost sheep. And so he says, I've received this command from my Father.

I have the power to lay my life down and take it back up again. Therefore, there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings. And many of them said, he has a demon and is mad.

Why do you listen to him? Again, he has a demon is synonymous with saying he's mad. He's crazy. Why listen? There have been several times so far that they've said this about Jesus previously.

On one occasion, though not recorded in the Gospel of John, his enemy said that he was operating through demons and casting out demons by the print of demons. But in John's Gospel, we don't have that recorded. In fact, we don't have any exorcisms recorded in the Gospel of John.

But we do have multiple cases where demon possession as a phenomenon is acknowledged to be known to the people. And they thought Jesus was demonized, but not because he did things that devils do, but because he said things that sounded irrational to them. They couldn't understand him, so they thought he was just nutty and speaking unintelligibly.

And many of them said, he has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to him? Others said, these are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? So this miracle he did in the previous chapter is still very much the setting.

They're still saying the same thing. Some of the Pharisees had been raising this very point back in chapter 9, verse 16. Therefore, some of the Pharisees said, this man is not from God because he does not keep the Sabbath.

Others said, how can a man who is a sinner do such signs? And there was a division among them. They're saying, to say he's evil does not quite account for the facts, because he's done this sign. He's opened the eyes of a blind man.

So there remains the same division among them at this point as there was in the previous chapter. And this actually ends the story of the previous chapter, because the next verse takes us to another setting weeks or months later. The Feast of Dedication.

This would be late December. The last date that we were notified of was the Feast of Tabernacles, which was in June, right? No, September. Yeah, September, right.

So we're going to come to late December in the next verses next time. And Jesus, again, has a chance to talk about his sheep and him being the shepherd again, but at some interval from the previous discussion. So we stop there, and we'll pick up at the natural break next time.