

God Makes Himself Clear

John 10:1-16

Here are two of the **"I am" statements** of Jesus in one passage!

"I am the door of the sheep... If anyone enters by me, he will be saved... I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:7,9,11

Jesus is both *the way INTO* the family of God *and the one who protects us within* the family of God. Being called sheep is not the most affirming thing for us – but having Jesus as our shepherd is the most encouraging thing for us.

If you **trust in Jesus** to get you into heaven and a relationship with God, you will be saved. And we can trust in Jesus completely as our shepherd to lead us and care for us throughout our lives and all of eternity. He laid down His life for us and promises that NO ONE can snatch us out of His hand. Ever. Our Good Shepherd protects us – we are safe in His care!

Today we will see in John 10 some important teachings about Jesus and then some characteristics of true believers. First, let's be encouraged as we learn about Jesus, our Good Shepherd.

Jesus is the True Shepherd

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." John 10:1-2

This is how Jesus opens his teaching – with a contrast between a false shepherd and the true shepherd. This contrast will run through the whole passage because this is another **CONFLICT** passage in John's gospel. We saw this last week – that *Jesus DIVIDES*. You must choose to either surrender yourself completely to Jesus or reject Him altogether. There is no middle ground with Him. People either loved and followed Him or they rejected and persecuted Him.

John 9 describes a conflict similar to what we saw in John 5 with the healing of the paralytic on the Sabbath. In John 9 it was a blind man but this time Jesus made mud and put that on the man's eyes to heal him – another violation of the Pharisee's Sabbath practices.

Jesus Exposes False Shepherds

"Jesus said, 'For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.' Some of the Pharisees... said to him, 'Are we also blind?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, "We see," your guilt remains.'" John 9:39-41

Jesus came "for judgment." **He came to divide**. He came to reveal the divisions that were already there. He came to force people to choose sides. The Pharisees claimed to have

knowledge of the truth when, in fact, they were blind to the most important truth – that Jesus was their Messiah! So while claiming to see they were actually blind. If they had just admitted they didn't know all the truth they could have learned from Him and discovered that **He really is the LIGHT OF THE WORLD**. But by insisting that they already knew the truth – by insisting that they could see, they brought guilt and judgment on themselves from Jesus.

This same conflict spills into chapter 10.

Jesus Forces a Decision

“There was again **a division among the Jews** because of his words. Many of them said, ‘He has a demon... why listen to him?’ Others said, ‘...Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’” John 10:19-21

Jesus Forces a Decision

“The Jews gathered around him and said to him, ‘...If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.’ Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe... You do not believe because you are not among my sheep.’” John 10:24-26

Here is the rub – to believe in Jesus or not. Jesus WAS telling them plainly that He was the Christ – but they did not have eyes to see it or ears to hear it. They refused to believe what was clear as day in front of them. And the reason was also clear – they did not belong to Jesus. **Jesus did not leave anyone UNCLEAR about where they stood with him**. He forced a decision. So here is the question for us today:

Where do YOU stand with Jesus?

“You do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me.” John 10:26-27

Do you know Jesus' voice? Do you listen to Him as YOUR shepherd? Do you follow Him? Does Jesus know you? Do you belong to Him? Are you one of His sheep? Because we'll see some wonderful truths about Jesus today – but **they only apply to you IF you belong to Jesus**.

A central component of Experiencing God is that God speaks. We know that God speaks – He has through history and still does today. The question is – are we listening? Do we hear His voice? And do we obey? The key to hearing from God is knowing that you belong to Jesus. And if you do belong to Jesus by faith – be encouraged today – He is the True Shepherd! We are His sheep! We know His voice and He leads us forward into green pastures. Here are **five ways Jesus relates to us** as our Good Shepherd.

Jesus is the True Shepherd

1. He **Knows** us

“The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name... I know my own and my own know me... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them...” John 10:2,14,27

Jesus knows you. He knows everything about you as your Creator. Ephesians 1 says that Jesus CHOSE YOU before the creation of the world. So Jesus knew you long before you were born and even before he said, "Let there be light," he had your name in mind.

"He calls his own sheep by name." Jesus knew you would be His one day. He chose you to be His. And then He CALLED YOU to become His. This is the progression of Romans 8 – "Those he foreknew he also predestined, those he predestined he also called, those he called he also justified and those he justified he also glorified." Salvation is God's work from beginning to end. And it begins with KNOWLEDGE. Jesus knows you.

This should be tremendously encouraging. There is nothing about you Jesus does not know. Yes, that is sobering and even a little scary. But ultimately it is very comforting. Jesus knew your entire story from conception to death – and STILL He chose you and called you to follow Him. He knew every mistake, every foolish and selfish choice – and STILL He chose you.

Jesus knows us. Second –

Jesus is the True Shepherd

2. He **Leads** us

"He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice." John 10:3-4

Jesus is a shepherd of sheep, not a cowboy driving cattle. Shepherds in those days led from in front. They went ahead of the sheep and called the sheep to follow them. Cowboys drive cattle from beside them and behind them. Cowboys use fear and pain to keep the cattle in line. Shepherds use RELATIONSHIP; they use their **voice**.

Jason reminded us two weeks ago from 1 John 4 that **it is all about relationship**. God's highest desire is a loving relationship with us. And He wants our highest desire to be a loving relationship with Him. This is why Jesus came – to be among us – to enter our experience and lead us OUT OF IT.

Jesus came to us, called to us and **leads us RELATIONALLY** – personally. He goes before us, calling us to come and follow Him. This is the invitation of Experiencing God! Jesus is always working. Because He wants a loving, personal relationship with us, He invites us to join Him in that work. He leads us! Third:

Jesus is the True Shepherd

3. He **Saves** us

"I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved... I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:9,11

Your translation might say "gate," here. The picture of **a shepherd being a door or gate** doesn't make a lot of sense today – but it made perfect sense in Jesus' day. One of the most striking things about Israel is that rocks and stones are everywhere. Finding big rocks to

build an altar – no problem in Israel. Clearing your land to plant crops – big pain in Israel. But once you cleared the land of rocks in order to farm, you had stone fences around your land.

So sheep pens in Israel were usually made with stone walls. Obviously you can't make a swinging door or gate out of rocks. **So the shepherd BECAME the door.** He would lay in the opening and his body would serve to keep the sheep in and predators out. What a beautiful gospel picture! The only way in is through or over the body of the shepherd. The only way out is over the body of the shepherd. This was personal protection and care – very much risking the life of the shepherd!

And, of course, this is **how Jesus saves – through His own body** Jesus is the gateway to salvation. No one can come into the fold of God except through Jesus' body. He is the door. If anyone enters through faith in Jesus, he will be saved. But Jesus is the ONLY WAY to the Father – no one comes to the Father except through Him.

Jesus is not only the doorway in – by whom we are saved in the first place. Jesus is also the Good Shepherd who KEEPS US SAVED – protecting us even at the cost of His own life!

Jesus is the True Shepherd

3. He Saves us

“He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees... he cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd... and I lay down my life for the sheep.” John 10:12,14-15

Here again is the distinction between the True Shepherd and all the other false shepherds – false teachers preaching a different way of salvation. The Pharisees did not care anything for the Jewish people. The Pharisees cared only for themselves – their own reputation and advancement. The sheep – the Israelites – did not belong to them so they cared for them, rather they exploited the sheep, and at the first sign of danger, the Pharisees ran for the hills.

The danger in those days was from Rome. And the Pharisees and religious leaders made sure that they cozied up to Rome and the local governing officials.

But Jesus did not run away from danger – even when it was Pilate, the local governor, and Rome itself coming against him. Still Jesus put the lives of His people, their safety and wellbeing ahead of His own – and He went to the cross for us. Jesus knows us. He leads us. He saves us. Fourth:

Jesus is the True Shepherd

4. He Protects us

“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.” John 10:28

A good shepherd protects his sheep – even if it costs him his own life. Jesus is the ultimate good shepherd. ***He does not sacrifice the sheep to save his own life, he sacrifices HIS life to save the sheep.***

How did Jesus protect us so that we would not perish? He perished Himself! And this was way more than just His physical death on the cross. ***Jesus suffered the fullness of God's wrath for us*** – He endured the punishment each of us deserves for our sin. Jesus endured HELL for us. That's what it meant for Jesus to make this promise – that His sheep would never perish and no one could snatch them away.

The ultimate enemy, who snatches people away, is **DEATH**. But not even death can snatch us away from Jesus – because Jesus is the One who defeated death! He disarmed death through His death and resurrection – so He can truly say “YOU WILL NEVER PERISH. No one will snatch you out of my hand.”

And if we don't have to fear the great enemy, Death, what else or who else do we need to fear?

I remember ***struggling with this verse when I was a teenager*** and thinking of Jesus hand as open, with me in it. Right there – like a little flea on a strong, giant hand. And I thought, “Ok, no one else can snatch me out of His hand – but what if I jump? ***Can I snatch MYSELF from His hand?***”

The point of this passage is NO. **Not even YOU** can snatch yourself away from Jesus. His hand is not open – it is securely enclosing you – even from YOU.

Do you see how all of **these points build together**? Jesus knows you – everything about you. He leads you. He led you to salvation, calling your name, and continues to lead you every day. He saved you by laying down His life for you and promises to protect you from every danger – including YOURSELF. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing OUTSIDE of us and nothing INSIDE of us.

Jesus protects us from ALL OF IT! One more:

Jesus is the True Shepherd

5. He Provides for us

“I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” John 10:9

Good shepherds lead their sheep to gentle waters and green pastures. They go ahead of their sheep to find potential dangers, pitfalls and holes – and lead the sheep around them so they don't get stuck or wander off. They direct the sheep to places where they will be safe from predators and from the weather – where they can eat and drink and flourish.

Sheep are so dumb they will walk back and forth in the same line until they eat everything within reach, starve and die. This is where the phrase, **“stuck in a rut”** comes from. Sheep

would literally walk back and forth and not even think to move on to another place where there would be more grass to eat.

Have you ever been “**Stuck in a rut?**” spiritually? You’ve been doing things the same way for years – maybe decades – and have eaten all the spiritual nourishment from your favorite Bible passages, and you feel like your soul is starving?

Let your good shepherd lead you to some new pastures! Let Him guide you to some fresh, gentle waters!

Jesus is the True Shepherd

5. He **Provides** for us

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” John 10:10

Jesus came to open the way for us not only into eternal life but into abundant life NOW. He came to provide for us everything we need. And the primary thing we need is **HIM!** He came to connect us with Himself, in whom we have every spiritual blessing.

This is the love of Christ!

- **He knows us.** He knew you before you drew your first breath. He saw you in your deepest valley – and still He called you to be His own!
- **He leads us.** He called you by name and goes before you, walking with you through every dark valley, lifting you out of every little pit you fall into.
- **He saves us.** Our good shepherd laid down His life for us – His stupid, wayward sheep.
- **He protects us.** No one can snatch us away from Him. He places His own body between us and danger – and nothing can overcome His body that already overcame death and hell!
- **And Jesus provides for us.** He came to give us LIFE in Himself – both now and forever!

Jesus is the TRUE SHEPHERD. There are other false shepherds out there who promise life and salvation in other ways. Certainly the **other religions** fit in this category. The other false versions of Christianity that corrupted the gospel into a religion of works or that deny the need for salvation at all.

But aside from false religions, there are a million other false HOPES. **Anything we look to, to give us what only Jesus can provide is a false shepherd.** Only Jesus is the true good shepherd. Only Jesus can save us and give us what our souls long for!

We’ve seen how Jesus relates to us, now let’s turn and see how true believers relate to Jesus.

True Believers:

1. Know Jesus

“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.” John 10:14-15

Do you KNOW Jesus? This is a question of personal relationship. You wouldn't have to think long and hard about whether you know your MOTHER or FATHER, or your HUSBAND or WIFE. If you have a relationship with someone you know it!

When you go to pick someone up at the airport – you drive up and scan the crowds looking for that face you KNOW. Your eyes glance over person after person that you DON'T KNOW until you see that familiar walk, that familiar hair, clothes – and then that familiar FACE. That's the person you know. That's the one you were waiting for.

Especially when it's **a family member** – a son or daughter – there is a resemblance to you that you know, a familiarity that goes back to when they were born. The way Jesus knows us is like the way He knows the Father and the Father knows Him – back to eternity past. This is perfect, intimate, complete knowledge. He knows us and sees in us a likeness to Himself.

Do you know Jesus that way? Do you see in Him the older brother you are trying to become? Do you see in Him the likeness to the Father you long to please? True believers know Jesus. He becomes increasingly familiar to us. We recognize His purposes and patterns. We get used to His ways. Secondly, we:

True Believers:

2. Hear His voice

“The sheep follow him, for they know his voice... And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.” John 10:4,16

Sheep will not follow a stranger. They will scatter in fear if they hear an unfamiliar voice. But their shepherd draws them all together, because they know His voice. He is THEIR SHEPHERD.

I don't know if any of you are **dog people**. Cats are pretty notorious for ignoring their owners. You really can't call a cat to come – they may look at you and sort of flick their head with a “you wish,” sort of attitude as they raise their tail and walk away.

Some of you have dogs that are perfectly trained – that sit and lie down and roll over and fetch and bring you your slippers. They know your voice and do what you tell them.

We have two dogs but they are not at all trained. And the older one is now 13.5 years old and is getting blind, deaf and more and more confused. She used to listen to us and come

pretty quickly when we called. Now she goes out into our little yard and acts like a cat. She takes her sweet time and only comes in after she has explored every part of the yard.

The smaller, younger dog, has started to copy this over the last few weeks – picking up from the older dog, “Oh, we don’t have to obey anymore. Sweet.” So he doesn’t come when we call him either. And he’s only 3 pounds so we have to play a game we call, “chase the rat” to get him back into his little enclosure.



Brothers and sisters – I sincerely hope that with JESUS ***we are more like well trained dogs than our dogs or your cats.*** I worry that we may not be very well trained to listen to Jesus’ voice and obey. This is why we are going through Experiencing God – to retrain ourselves to hear His voice and respond in faith-filled obedience, promptly! This is the third mark of a true believer: we know the Lord; we hear His voice and we FOLLOW Him.

True Believers:

3. Follow Him

“The sheep follow him, for they know his voice... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” John 10:4,27

You do not have to wonder if you belong to Jesus. It is very clear if you do – because you know His voice; you hear Him speaking to you; you sense when you’ve stepped out of bounds and you immediately hear Him calling you back. You know which way Jesus is going and you WANT TO follow after Him.

Even though, as the old hymn says, we are **“prone to wander,”** – like the sheep we are – we also come right back to our shepherd. One of the best signs of a true relationship with Jesus is that you CANNOT continue in sin. You can’t. Even if you stray into some old habit, you feel the Lord calling you back. And a sign of maturing faith is that you don’t stray as often or as far – you come back more quickly.

Jesus’ sheep ***respond to His correction and to His guidance.*** As He leads us forward, we go with Him. You get familiar with those little nudges that make it clear it’s time to say hi, it’s time to extend a hand, it’s time to put an arm around a shoulder, it’s time to send an email or a text.

These **wristbands are meant to be a reminder** that God is always at work around us. This becomes a daily invitation to join in God’s work. I was at Dunkin Donuts a couple of weeks ago meeting with someone. After our meeting an older gentleman struck up a conversation

with us. It was clear he wanted to talk – so I listened to that little nudge from the Holy Spirit and stayed with him at the Dunkin Donuts for another 30 minutes. My meeting was over, but it worked out I had a gap in my schedule. Yes, that day I went from Panera to Dunkin Donuts and then to Macaroni Grill. It was a good Thursday.

So I sat down with this gentleman to hear his story. He shared about moving here from Mexico, meeting and marrying his wife – the best decision he ever made. He had a stroke a year ago and is still recovering. I asked him if he was familiar with the Bible – since I was there for a Bible study, I showed him the New Testament we were using. He talked about his Dad taking him to mass – still in Latin – when he was a kid. And how he had run away from his dad and church and everything.

I said, “It’s never too late.” And I shared the gospel with him – walking him through the Romans Road while sketching the bridge illustration. I keep hoping to see him join us for worship.

I try to respond to this kind of opportunity. I know not everyone is as obnoxiously extroverted as I am. Hearing Jesus’ voice and following Him looks different for you than it does for me. But the point is that you do hear His voice and where He leads you, you do follow.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” It’s what we do. We belong to Jesus. He is our shepherd. We follow him, quite simply, because:

True Believers:

3. Follow Him because 4. We Trust Him

“You do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice... and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.” John 10:26-28

In the end, hearing and following Jesus is not an obedience issue, **it’s a faith issue**. If you don’t follow Jesus it’s because you don’t believe in Him. If you do believe in Him, it naturally results that you will obey and follow after Him.

The same thing is true of **whatever you do follow**. Everyone is trusting in something or someone to save and lead them. Whatever you obey and serve, that is your true master – the thing you really believe in. For many people:

- That’s **money** – your faith is really in your bank account so you live your life in service to making money. It is your functional savior and Lord.
- For others, it’s **success**. You deeply believe that if you can just succeed in your job and get to that next level, everything else will work itself out. You believe that and your life lines up accordingly with your faith in success as your savior and Lord.
- For some, it’s **family**. You believe that being happily married and having kids will fill that vacuum in your soul – that then you’ll be happy. At first it’s having kids, then it’s getting your kids out of diapers. Then it’s getting them through the teen years and

out of your house. Happiness in family is a mirage that keeps moving just out of reach.

And that's how it is with **any master except Jesus**. It promises happiness and security and fulfillment but cannot deliver. It's just a mirage in the desert. Only Jesus can actually save you, protect you and provide for you. And praise the Lord – that is exactly what He has done!

Jesus is the True Shepherd	True believers:
1. He knows us	1. Know Him
2. He leads us	2. Hear His voice
3. He saves us	3. Follow Him because we
4. He protects us	4. Trust Him
5. He provides for us	

Jesus is the one True Shepherd. He knows each of us personally, intimately, completely. Even with that perfect knowledge, He called us by name to follow Him. And He leads us as our shepherd. He saved us by laying down His life for us. In His love, He protects us from all dangers, especially from sin and death. And He provides for us everything we need – leading us to green pastures and still waters, nourishing us with His love and power and grace.

We are His sheep. We KNOW HIM. He is our shepherd. We hear His voice and recognize it. And so we follow His leading. We heard Him call us to come to Him in the first place, and we listen as He directs us each day. We follow where He leads us because we trust in Him.

Let's pray.