

# John 10:16-18

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Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[ 0 : 00 ] All right, good morning. Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in John chapter 10. There's never a time that we come together and don't come together with a measure of frailty.

Because after all, we are human. We are not infinite. We are finite. But at times that frailty is felt a bit more.

Or perhaps for our very good, that's the case. We had a men's retreat this weekend and many of the men in this room are feeling that frailty in higher order than typically.

We had a great time, but we are tired. Additionally, I don't know if all of you know this or not, but I'm a type 1 diabetic. Have been since I was five. I'm 46 now.

So for a lot of years, and you would think by now I'd have it all figured out. And I would totally understand how to monitor and regulate. I've got all this cool technology that's helping me do that even as I speak now.

[ 1 : 09 ] But my blood sugar is low. And so I have treated it. So those of you who are medical professionals and know what that means, it's okay. I have had the grape juice. It's probably going to start climbing like crazy right now.

But I'm kind of in a curl up in a ball feeling stage at the moment. So feeling even more beyond being tired, also having a low blood sugar at the moment.

And so we're going to pray before we even look at the text at all today, and then we'll get into it together. Father, we ask as we are feeling frail and humbly recognize that we always are, that you'd help us.

Help us to take up your word together today. Empower the preaching of it and the hearing of it by your spirit. We know that you love your people far more than we love each other.

With all of our greatest effort and intention, you love us more. So we ask that you'd work and that you'd work mightily as we put ourselves humbly before you this morning.

[ 2 : 15 ] And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Okay, so we've been working through John chapter 10. And to set a little bit of context for you before I begin reading, and I'll start in verse 1, although our text for today is verses 15 through 18.

At the end of 9, Jesus has healed a man born blind. It causes all of this commotion, and there's a bit of a trial of sorts, although not formally so.

He's brought before the Pharisees, and he corrects some of their thinking, and they are upset at him, and they cast him out of the synagogue. And then Jesus comes and reveals himself to this man born blind, and then the man truly sees spiritually.

We believe is converted, begins to follow Christ at this point. And what follows is an indictment of these Pharisees, where Jesus presents this metaphor.

It varies in its shaping as we see the chapter go on, and it kind of finds its high point in the text that we looked at last week, where Jesus twice calls himself the good shepherd.

[ 3 : 26 ] Verse 11, and then in verse 14, he says, I am the fourth of his I am statements in John's gospel. I am the good shepherd.

And so we're going to pick up and look at the four verses that follow that declaration. Let's begin reading together in verse 1. Jesus says, This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So Jesus again said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to 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 comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who has a hired hand and not a shepherd who does not own the sheep sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees.

[ 5 : 08 ] And the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he's a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 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 and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold.

I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason, the father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my father.

Okay, so we're going to look at this text in three points. Number one, the good shepherd loves his sheep. Number two, the good shepherd gathers and unites his sheep.

[ 6 : 10 ] And number three, the good shepherd is loved by his father. So firstly, the good shepherd, I'm picking that language up from verse 11 and verse 14.

The good shepherd, the fitting shepherd, the right shepherd for the task of rescuing the sheep. He loves his sheep.

Specifically, the last part of verse 15. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, he says, verse 11.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. This is just between anybody else who's a religious leader, right? Does not care for, does not own.

Therefore, when danger comes, they leave. And the wolf consumes those people. But not so with the good shepherd.

[ 7 : 06 ] He lays down his life for the sheep. And his sheep follow him because they know his voice. He says in verse 14, I know my own and my own know me.

Now, Jesus doesn't just say that the good shepherd is willing to lay down his life for the sheep, but that he actually does. And the interesting, curious thing that he's doing here is saying that he will lay down his life for the sheep.

A dead shepherd, of course, if we're thinking logically in temporal terms, is not any longer any help to the sheep. So the metaphor gets stretched a little bit at this point, right?

What Jesus is doing is that he's teaching what will be necessary to accomplish the safety of his flock. He will die so that they will live.

And I want to speak very simply and very plainly at this point. I just want to think together about the gospel. Maybe we never grow tired of sharing it or hearing it.

[ 8 : 23 ] The implication in saying that the good shepherd dies for his sheep so that they will live does not allow room for the sheep that are not of his flock to go on their merry way, living their lives in whatever way that they see fit.

The implication is that the sheep that are not of the fold of the good shepherd die. The wolf snatches them. The wolf scatters them. The sheep scattered do not stay alive.

They are picked off one by one by one. That's the implication here. The sheep that belong to Jesus, those that he dies for, live. The rest don't get to live some other way.

They die. The sheep of Jesus' fold live eternally. And the sheep not of Jesus' fold die eternally.

In Matthew, Jesus uses sheep language in another metaphor, but there he makes the contrast much more stark. This is Matthew 25, beginning in verse 31.

[ 9 : 30 ] There he says, To the sheep.

Come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. And then I'll skip down to verse 41.

Then he will say to those on his left, depart from me. You cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And then verse 46.

And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. Right? So a similar but different metaphor, making that contrast much more stark.

The question of your eternal state, whether you will be joyful or in anguish forever, has a binary answer.

[ 10 : 47 ] You will be judged a sheep and inherit a kingdom or you will be judged a goat and receive eternal punishment. In our text, you are a sheep of the fold of the good shepherd or you are not.

It's binary. There's two choices to this question of your eternal state. This binary is determined not by a multitude of ways.

This is not a choose your own adventure book. Some of you may remember those. Now, some want to frame Jesus as somehow cruel, exclusive.

How dare he say he's the way and the truth. That he demands things of them that they're just not willing to give up. I prefer to live my life a different way.

How dare he say? I'm a relatively good person. Can this claim be made? But it is. The claim is made and there's an eternal consequence if we don't heed the claim.

[12:05] And my friends, Jesus, the good shepherd is merciful. It doesn't require a way to be made right with God.

We all deserve death and hell. So the offer to us is a great mercy. In our home, we do some formal catechesis.

And then we have from time to time some informal catechesis. And one of our informal ones, if there's some complaining going on, is I will say to the complainer, what do you deserve?

And the answer that my boys have been taught, death and hell. And so then I will say, well, then slightly burnt pancakes are kind of a mercy, aren't they?

A little perspective for you there. If we understand that what we deserve is death and hell because we are rebels against a holy God, then a way back to relationship with him is a great mercy.

[13:11] A way is a great mercy. Mercy. Just because it's limited to a singular way doesn't make God unmerciful. He's abounding in mercy for those who will turn in faith to him.

He desires your eternal restoration to God the Father. And in the context of these statements, he has purposed to lay down his life for the sheep, right?

He hasn't done it yet. Jesus is in the living the perfect life that God demanded of us phase as we look at his ministry here. But soon we'll see in John, he will sacrificially die the death that we deserve.

And then he will raise again that we would have life in him. And we'll talk a little more about the resurrection here in a moment. You need not get your life all tidied up before you come to Jesus for the salvation of your soul.

Just go to him. Let him do the saving. And then in time, he will tidy you up. He says in Matthew chapter 11, verse 28 and following, Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[14:31] Jesus is talking here about spiritual labor, trying to earn the life to come. Come to me. I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart. And you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy.

My burden is light. Back into the context of our metaphor. If we are his sheep, then he will call us out.

He's laid down his life for us. He's purchased us with his very blood. Acts chapter 20, and therefore he will pursue us to the very end.

I bumbled across a really fantastic quotation by Charles Spurgeon, as I tend to do from time to time. And I included it in your bulletin today that speaks to this very point.

[15:32] I'd like to read it to you. You may want to look at it there in your bulletin. He once said, quote, Oh, what blind slaves we were when we sported with death.

We did not know then what his love had ordained for us. It never entered our poor, silly heads that there was a crown for us. We did not know that the father's love had settled itself on us or ever the day star knew its place.

We know it now. And it is he that has taught us, for he followed us over mountains of vanity, through bogs and miry places of foul transgression, tracked our devious footsteps on and on through youth and manhood, till at last, with mighty grace, he grasped us in his arms and laid us on his shoulders. That's shepherd talk there. Laid us on his shoulders. And is this day carrying us home to the great fold above, rejoicing as he bears all our weight and finds us in all we need.

Oh, that blessed work of effectual grace. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep because he loves his sheep.

[16:56] I hope, I genuinely, earnestly hope it could be said of you this morning, beloved. And if it can't, then the response to that is repentance, a change of your mind, turn from your sin and turn to

faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, a merciful shepherd.

Secondly, the good shepherd gathers and unites his sheep. See verse 16. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold.

I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. Now we see clearly that the fold mentioned in verses one through five represents Judaism in this metaphor.

We talked about that a bit, right? The fold would have been most often a group of families who had hired out a space. Maybe one of them owned it.

Maybe they rented some space, built a fence, and they would have brought all of their sheep together, various flocks together into a fold that would have been protected at night.

[18:08] That's what we see there in those first five verses. Jesus, in those verses, is calling out the true worshipers from amongst Israel who will turn in faith to him.

But Jesus does not conclude his metaphor with that fold, nor his saving work in actuality. The sheep called out at the beginning of the chapter?

Ethnic Jews. The other sheep that are not of this fold is everyone who will ever be saved who is not. An ethnic Jew. I presume this is us.

Perhaps somebody here is ethnically Jewish. People of non-Jewish descent, most of us, that have also listened to the voice of the Good Shepherd.

Recognized it. Seen him as such. And followed him. One people called together for God's praise. United under the headship.

[19:11] Of Jesus Christ. Stated as a grand reality. We don't always see this play out in the way that we think it ought to. The unity of the church.

Lots of fragmenting. But true worshipers are united because we are united under the headship. Of Jesus Christ. And to us, this is so glorious.

What a thing to have a God who has a redemptive purpose for the world and is saving people from every tribe, nation, and tongue.

We are so isolated, I think, when it comes to conversion. We are so connected in the world. You could know all of the calamities that are happening in the world right now.

But God is doing a saving work around the world right now, even this morning, that we can't see from this vantage point. One day we will get the scope of it.

[20:08] And we will praise our merciful God forever. Remember, to Jesus' audience, what he has said here is untenable. We revel in it.

They rejected it. Jesus got himself into trouble at other times with language like this. Join me if you would. Keep John 10 Mark.

But go to Luke chapter 4. Let me show you another instance when he speaks this way. And the Jewish people, broadly speaking, became furious with him.

Luke chapter 4. I'm going to begin reading in verse 16. This is just after his wilderness temptation. The beginning of his earthly ministry.

Luke records, and he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

[21:11] This was a regular practice in the synagogue. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind.

Does that sound familiar? John chapter 5. John 5. To set at liberty those who are oppressed. To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. An understood messianic text.

Everybody he's reading this to knew this part of the scroll of Isaiah was speaking of this one who would come and accomplish these things. And then verse 20.

And he rolled up the scroll and he gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

[22:13] He says, I am the Christ. And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth.

And they said, is not this Joseph's son? And he said to them, doubtless. You will quote to me this proverb. Physician, heal yourself. What we have heard you did at Capernaum.

Do here in your hometown as well. So he anticipates the question. Do some signs. Right? Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. We're marveling. Perhaps this guy is the Christ.

But we also know him as Joseph's son. And he gets out ahead of them asking for a miracle. And then he says this, verse 24. And he said, truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown.

But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah. When the heavens were shut up three years and six months and a great famine came over all the land. And Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath in the land of Sidon to a woman who was a widow.

[ 23 : 23 ] Don't miss the detail. Right? Lots of widows who could have used help in this day of famine. But who was Elijah sent to? Not an Israeli woman.

Right? To a Sidonite. I'm going to guess that's how you would say that. Right? Only to Zarephath. Somebody who was not ethnically Jewish.

Verse 27. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha. And none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.

Not ethnically Jewish. Okay? Now, we just read that and go, oh, how interesting. Those are fun details. What's Jesus talking about?

If you look at the context, I'm going to have to read to you. What he's saying is that the mercy of God went beyond Israel. It was shown to people who were not ethnically Jewish.

[ 24 : 22 ] And look how they respond to what he says. Right? He stands up and says, I am the Christ. All of this good blessing that is promised in the book of Isaiah is coming. It is here. It has arrived.

They question him. They want a sign. And his response is, his response is, yeah. Prophets aren't accepted in their hometown. And let me tell you something about God's mercy.

Look at verse 26. When they heard these things, all in the synagogue, everybody whose eyes were fixed on him marveling, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.

This is a stronger word than anger. Wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built so that they could throw him down the cliff.

They went from marveling to murderous. Because of this, God is a merciful God. And he means to save peoples.

[ 25 : 27 ] Verse 30 says, but passing through their midst, he went away. This is my proof text for ghosting at a party. Hi, kid.

Nobody ever tries to throw me off a cliff at parties. God always had grand plans to fill the earth with his praise. That was always the intention, right?

To fill the entire earth with his praise, his image everywhere. I don't know that I've ever heard this verse as a primary text for a missionary sermon.

But what a text it is as a primary text for a missionary sermon. We go and send. We give and we pray for those who have gone because we believe that our God is worthy of praise and that he has a saving purpose for the nations.

But we recognize that we ourselves are not Israel. And so we are one of those nations. So even in our sending abroad, we also go.

[ 26 : 36 ] We go to our neighbors and our workplaces, to our family. We know that Jesus did not accomplish this in his day.

He did not go to the ends of the earth, but he does that now through his church, through this one flock. We are sent everywhere to share the good news.

And he is bringing out his sheep because he's the one who's empowering that work. Lived, died, lived again, ascended, sent to us the helper, the spirit to empower this work.

Matthew 28, verse 18 and following. Jesus says all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. All of it.

I rule over all things with the primary purpose of calling together my people for the praise of my name. And we know that because verse 19 says, go, therefore, because I have all of this authority.

[ 27 : 58 ] Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Peoples. That work to be translated. Peoples. Yes, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Right? Jesus has other sheep, not of this fold. We are counted amongst that number.

And there are others that he also must bring. And he commissions us to be part of that saving work, not because he really needs us.

But because he intends to include us in his glorious purpose to save his people. Thirdly. The good shepherd is loved by his father.

So I want to pick up back up the beginning of verse 15. Jesus is talked about in 14 about about his sheep and him knowing one another.

[ 29 : 01 ] And then he says, just as the father knows me and I know the father. And then he says, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

This is deeply intimate language. We do the word no and we just think about facts and figures. I think.

That's what my mind does at very least. It's a fairly cold word in my mind. But this is not that kind of knowledge. That's not what he's talking about. He's talking about intimate knowledge.

In men's retreat, we talked about friendship, Christian friendship. It's that thing. That thing we've been talking about all weekend. It's really, really knowing someone. Knowing all of the ins and outs. All of the intricacies. That's what he's saying here. The father knows me and I know the father. But then he says, for this reason, the father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

[ 30 : 05 ] And I think what needs some clarification here is that Jesus is not communicating that the father's love for him is conditioned on his obedience. It kind of reads that way, doesn't it?

This is why the father loves me. Because I lay down my life for the sheep. I lay down my life. And therefore, the father loves me. But we don't want to separate this out from the fact that, verse 15, they already know each other in this intimate, familial, loving way.

In eternity past, the triune God had intimate knowledge within the Godhead. Love within the Godhead.

Just as the father knows me and I know the father. That's not a conditioned statement. It is a fact. The Trinity is something to marvel at.

And it is difficult to understand. So maybe, maybe I hope to help us see what Jesus is saying in some measure. Maybe we could bring it down to our knowing of Jesus.

[ 31 : 17 ] John chapter 14 and verse 15. There he says, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. Now, there he's not saying, I will love you if you keep my commandments.

But if you love me, you will keep my commandments. And what I think he's expressing to us here is that if we have rightly ordered affections for Christ, then the natural response is going to be to obey the things that Christ has asked of us.

We know who he is. We're familiar with this character, the things that he deeply desires. We also deeply desire. And so we obey. I think that's what's following in this case.

And so as Jesus is trying to explain in some measure the nature of the son with the father, which is complicated, it's a thing to marvel at.

The son is obedient. And so the father in unison with him admires him, has affection for him because he's carrying out the purpose of the Godhead.

[ 32 : 28 ] Now, if I confuse you more than help you in that case, I just want you to not think that the father's love for Jesus is conditioned on his obedience.

I don't believe that's what he's trying to communicate to us here at all. Jesus says, again, I lay down my life. And then he says that and it could be translated in order that I may take it up again. Again, dies so that he will rise. Once again. I appreciate that the times that Jesus is speaking of the laying down of his life, he's always quick to also talk about his resurrection.

And he says in verse 18, no one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. Lord, lest you think that what's going to happen to me is some kind of mistake.

I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my father. The purpose of the Godhead has been given to me and therefore I will die and rise again.

[ 33 : 47 ] D.A. Carson in his commentary wrote of verse 18, the sacrificial death of the shepherd when it occurs must not be taken as an accident of fate or merely as a tragedy perpetuated by misguided men.

But as the father's plan. Part of the son's obedience to that plan is his consummate awareness that he lays down his life of his own accord.

The authority he has received from his father sanctions not only this, but also his own resurrection. I think that this is why I wrap our minds around this in closing.

Paul's prayer. Paul prays in Ephesians chapter one that the Ephesian believers would understand the power of the resurrection for salvation.

He says, for this reason, because I have heard of your faith, this is verse 15 and following in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints. I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

[ 34 : 57 ] And he tells them what he prays. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.

Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you. What are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints?

And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe? According to the working of his great might. Did you catch all of that?

I know you're not looking at it. That we would have the eyes of our hearts enlightened. We may know what is the hope to which he's called you. What are the riches of his glorious inheritance of the saints? And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe?

According to the working of his great might. And then and then here's the proofing of that. Right. He's praying that they would understand this.

[ 35 : 53 ] Wrap their minds around the significance of Christ's resurrection. Because he's working by this great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead.

Seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named. Not only in this age but also in the one to come.

That's a good thing for us to pray. The good shepherd loves his sheep. The good shepherd gathers and unites his sheep.

And the good shepherd is loved by his father. Let's pray in closing.