

What Makes the Good Shepherd So Good?

John 10:1-21

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Well good morning. Thanks for coming out on a cold day. My name is Andy MacFarlane, and I'm a pastor at North Pointe Community Church, so we are at the other side of town. I was on staff here from 2002 to 2005 as the singles' pastor and was part of the team that launched out of here, a north side church. And many of you were giving and praying for that long before I arrived on the scene so when Bryan offers me a chance to come back and preach, I jump on it. One of the main reasons is to say thank you because a lot of you guys sacrificed and believed in this thing. We are having a great time-- certainly have our challenges-but God is at work and I'm glad to be there, and you can see some pictures up there on the screens. One of the things years ago somebody said, "Andy, if the church you are involved with, if it ceased to exist, outside of the people who go there, would anybody else know it ceased to exist? Would anybody else care?" I thought, "Man, I want people outside the walls of North Pointe to care, so we've looked for opportunities. Well, last fall the Food Bank came to us and said, "You know we partner around the city, trying to get food to people, and your area of town in our demographics is the most unreached; so it's an area where some of the poorest people don't have a food distribution in it. Would you be willing to provide the people and place to do it?" We said, "Absolutely," because we feel like Jesus cares about feeding people and Jesus cares about the vulnerable. So the fourth Monday of every month we are doing that, and this last one in February-it was wicked cold-and there we are unloading the stuff. It comes down to our youth room and, again, it's just a chance for us to practically show the love of Jesus. He cares about the vulnerable; He cares about the poor, and for the people who never will go through our doors, they can say, "We are glad North Pointe is here. We don't quite get it all and we're not maybe wired into this Jesus thing, but we're glad they're here."

From time to time when I'm at home and I'm looking for something to do, I will get online and Amazon is my vehicle of choice to stream a movie. And before I lock into one, I'll look at people's comments and how many stars they gave. But I also want to know what is it about that movie that made them give it 5 stars-what was so good or what was so bad about it that made them give it 1 star. And then after reading their comments, I decide if I want to go forward watching this movie. It helps me make the decision. Well way back in the day, when He was on earth, Jesus Himself gave Himself a 5-star rating. He said, "*I am the good shepherd* " So I want to ask the question, "What is it that would make Jesus say that? What is so good about the good shepherd?" We're going to talk about that this morning. So if you have a Bible, open it to John chapter 10. We're going to start in verse 1 and go through verse 21 and wrestle with that very question: "What is so good about the good shepherd?"

Now as you are turning there, the metaphor of a shepherd is vivid. It's freighted with impact for the people of Israel. They were an agrarian culture, and sheep were a big part of their economy. But sheep were vulnerable. They'd go over a cliff; they could let water go over their heads, or they were targets for predators-lions and bears and other things. So they needed a shepherd to watch over them. Sheep could wander into a place where there was no pasture or no water. The shepherd had to be looking out for that and was always watching out for the sheep, and so God paints Himself as the shepherd. Sadly, also a part of Israel's history is a bunch of shepherds who did not fulfill their responsibility. They were actually masquerading. They were taking advantage of the people and

using their position to feed on the sheep. In Ezekiel 34, God steps in and says to the shepherd, "You're lousy; you're taking advantage of the people; you're out, and I'm going to shepherd the people." And that's what He did. And so, against that backdrop then, we start reading in our passage John 10:1:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber." (*NASB, John 10:1)

He's no shepherd. He's pretending to be a shepherd, but **he's a thief and a robber**. There are people who are masquerading or saying they're a shepherd but they don't care about the people. They are using that position to take advantage of the people, so Jesus says, "Watch out." But then in verses 2 through 4, He talks about the good shepherd and here's what He says:

But he who enters by the door is a 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. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him (why?) because they know his voice. (Vs. 2-4)

How many of you have a dog? How many dog owners do we have here? So if you give me the name of your dog, and I gently call, "Come on Spot. Come on Rover," are Spot or Rover coming to me? No, no they're not. Why? They don't know my voice and they're not coming. And that's what Jesus said: *"My sheep know my voice."* So then my question is, "How do we know the voice of God?" Here is how we know the voice of God. (*holds up the Bible*) One of the reasons the leadership of this church is so committed to opening and walking through this Book passage by passage every week is so that you and I would know the voice of God.

When I was in college, I got involved in a dorm Bible study as a freshman-August of 1978. I wasn't a believer in Jesus, and I was there for 6 months and had no idea what I was getting into. It was very evangelistic in nature and if there was one verse that kind of ruined me (one particular phrase) it was Ephesians 2:8-9, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith-and then this was the phrase-not as a result of works."* I wrestled with that for six months and this guy, Ron Tewson who led it, was patient. He and a couple of guys were in the dorm once a week and they would come by my dorm room and ask, "What do you think? What are you processing?" And finally in February, I decided, "I've got to get in on this, or I don't." And I said, "I'm in. I'm taking God at His Word." And so you can imagine, after that when I had a question I went to Ron because he had led me to the Lord. But he said something that I'll never forget. "Andy, you don't take me at my word. Don't you ever take me at my word. You check me out in the Scriptures, and if you disagree, let's politely talk about it, because it's not my voice you're ultimately listening for; it's the voice of God."

So here's my question: Are we people who can be had because we don't know the Word of God? Are we vulnerable to false shepherds? You know, we stand up here and teach this, but we would beg and beseech you to be in the Word the other six days a week because this ain't gonna get it done once a week. You can be had; we can be had if we don't know the voice of God. Would we be people that know the Word of God so that we can discern the voice of Jesus? Well, in verse 5 then, Jesus talks about how to react when strangers come. Here's the deal:

A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

So you're in the Word; I'm in the Word, we discern a voice that isn't right.... what do we do? Then we go the other way! I don't care how good it sounds, how enticing it sounds, you go the other way.

As a little boy we moved to the Detroit area in the first grade. And so first through fifth grade I would walk a half a block; I'd walk a block over, and walk another half a block and I could be to school in about five minutes. If my parents would have let me jump a fence, I could have been there in about a minute but there was no jumping a fence. But there were other kids that were walking 20 to 30 minutes, and every year there would be an assembly. A police officer would walk in and say, "Boys and girls, if a stranger stops in a car and offers you a ride, even if they offer candy or other stuff, go the other way. Never get in the car with a stranger!" Never entertain a teacher who is not lining up with the Word of God! Don't stay aroundmove, go the other direction. Jesus' expectation is that we would **flee** when we hear somebody who reports to be a shepherd but is not teaching according to the Word of God. Verse 6:

This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.

But Jesus is going to keep using this figure of speech; He's not going to explain it but He's going to use concepts to further describe Himself and answer our question, "What's so good about the good shepherd?" so here we go in verse 7:

So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep."

Doors are metaphoric and can be used in lots of ways but in this sentence it's a piece of security. Imagine your house with no doors-you're a lot more vulnerable. You've got doorways, but no doors. Jesus said, "**I'm the door**," and then Jesus said that the shepherd actually laid across the threshold so they would have to step over him to get in and walk over him to get out. That's how committed Jesus is. Verse 8, we continue the contrast:

"All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; (In this sense He's a passageway, a gateway to what?) if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, (salvation-a relationship with God that starts now and goes into eternity) and will go in and out and find pasture." (Vs. 8-9)

Right now **find pasture**. Remember we're talking about sheep; they need a place to eat and graze if they're going to live, and Jesus is using life in the fullest sense: You can find pasture in Me. And here comes the contrast in verse 10:

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;

(I think the thief is ultimately a reference to Satan. He wants to steal life, and these false shepherds are influenced by him, and remember: Satan's main method he uses is deception. And what's more deceptive than, "I'm your shepherd," but I'm really not? They come to steal and to kill and destroy. Jesus then counters saying,)

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. (Fullness of life. So then we finally get to the title I talked about.) Jesus said, verse 11:

I am the good shepherd...

(The most well-known psalm in the Bible I would argue is Psalm 23. It starts this way: *The Lord is my shepherd*, and Jesus said, "I am the ultimate fulfillment that you've been looking for-that shepherd-I am He. I am the one all of this pointed towards.)
I am the good shepherd... ("Jesus, why do You say that? Here's why:)
...the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

He gave Himself a 5-star rating, "**I am the good shepherd.**" "Why do you say that?" *He laid down His life for you and for me.* Verse 12: (And the contrast is):

He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, (and does what?) leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. (Vs. 12-13)

Jesus walked into Jerusalem, knowing what was going to happen. He could have walked out. He didn't do that. He continued to walk into the mob. The contrast-verse 13-the hired hand **flees**. Why? He doesn't care; **he's not concerned about the sheep**. How concerned was Jesus for you? He laid down His life. So we're asking this question, "What's so good about the good shepherd?" What's so good? Here it is: He laid down His life. He laid down His life for you and for me. So He can legitimately give Himself the 5-star; He can legitimately say He's the good shepherd.

Now I know many of you in here are in. You've made that decision; you said, "I believe that Jesus is the good shepherd," and there is a point of application for us, and it comes out of verse 10. Jesus said, "**I came that they might have life and they might have it abundantly.**" He didn't put a condition on that verse. He didn't say, "I offer you abundant life *if* or I offer you abundant life *when*." "I alone can give you fullness of life. Are you in on that? Do you believe?" There is no mistake Jesus alone can give me abundant life-end of statement! "Well sure, Andy, why do you ask?" "Well, I'm just wondering if you're anything like me because after I came to faith, the guy who led me to the Lord said, 'You know, Andy, it would be good to start memorizing Scripture.'" So that's one of the first verses we memorized: **The thief comes to kill, steal and destroy; I came that they might have life and have it abundantly.**

So it's in those 7 years from 1979 to 1986 and I'm working with a group that was then called Campus Crusade for Christ which is now called Cru. I was on a summer mission in Turkey; we spent 4 weeks in Istanbul, then we had a week in the center of the city on vacation, and then we had three weeks to be back to the states. At that week we are in a hotel and we're around the pool and I'm sitting there watching things going on around the pool, and I can see that that couple kind of likes each other....and there's something going on there and those two? I think they're just getting started. And this one I think kind of likes her, but I'm not sure she likes him.... and I got nothing! Zero going on! I'm 25 at the time and in my mind I thought I'd like to be married by 26 and I'm going to be turning 26 that November. This is July! I'm going to have to be hoofing it; *(laughter)* I'm going to have to work to get there-I don't think I'm going to make it. and I am sad, sad, sad! Sad Andy-and in that, I didn't hear a voice but I felt an impression of the Lord speaking to me saying, "You know, Andy, you've been working on that verse for 7 years and it's an unconditional verse-and you've put a condition on it. You, Andy, think you can have an abundant life when you've got a girlfriend-when you've got a serious relationship going. If that's not the case, it's not true. John 10:10 is not in play for you unless you have this going." And I had to wrestle with that. It was a two-year process and it involved counseling-it involved a lot of stuff.-but it began with that unsettling right there! You know what I realized over time? I needed, so I

thought, a girlfriend to have fullness of life-and that made me needy in relationships-and that worked against me, ironically. It was a process to work that through but I had to come to the point where I was satisfied in the belief that Jesus could provide fullness of life as a single person. "I **came that you might have life and you might have it abundantly**" -end of statement!

So I'm wondering if you, like me, have put conditions on that verse. I want to have fullness of life but I won't have it abundantly unless I get a girlfriend...or if we can have a child...or if I get into graduate school...or if I can finally get another job...or if I can have that vacation experience like people have on Facebook...or if my loved one gets better...or if I get better-and I'm waiting for abundant life and I'm putting this condition on it. If you're doing like I did, you've made yourself a slave to getting that boyfriend, or having that child, or getting that job, or getting better, or to having that vacation experience and Jesus says, "I want you to be free. I want you to have fullness of life period, in Me!" But you say, "Andy is it okay if I want a boyfriend?" "Is it okay to want a child?" "Is it okay to want a new job?" "Is it okay to want...?" Yes it is, but let me turn the question. If you don't get that thing, can you still have fullness of life? Do you believe that? Because Jesus says you *can*. Where are we taking direction to get fullness of life? We want it-that's God given-but where are we taking direction?

So this is in the '*time flies*' category when I hired on here as the Single's Pastor in October of 2002, our kids were 4 and 1 so that's 16 and 1/2 years ago. That means our youngest is now 17. He's a junior in high school, and we've began the where/what are we going to do college process. Last fall we were going to *Explore Engineering Day* at the University of Nebraska in Omaha. I'd never been there, so diligent fellow that I am, I get on my computer and get on Google Maps and I get a document printed out with directions. So I told Drew, "I'll drive up and you drive back. Here you go-you'll be my navigator." So we follow our directions: we get on 1-80; we get off on 72nd street; we turn right here, we turn left here, and we reach our destination. But I'm in the parking lot of Baxter Arena, and I need to be at the Peter Kiewit Institute on the Scott Campus of UNO. So I'm confused. I'm looking at my paper, looking at the parking lot, and the good news is there is no other car in the parking lot so I have my pick of parking spaces. (*laughter*) But I'm thinking that since there is no other car there, "I'm in the wrong place." So in my consternation I'm looking and I'm confused. My son is 17, so what does he do in the time I'm looking at my paper and I'm going back and forth? He gets out his phone and hits a few buttons and says, "Dad, we need to go straight; then we need to go right and go left and we can get there." But that's not what my paper says. (*laughter*) You know what I had to do with the paper? I had to put it in the back seat and quit looking at it. What we could *not* do is have him give me directions and me go, "Whoa, Drew, that's not what the paper says." That would have been a crazy-maker. Where are you taking direction to get fullness of life? Because culture will tell you that they'll give you direction and they'll tell you where to go-and they will put you squarely in the parking lot of Baxter Arena-but Jesus has got other directions. He said, "It's Me!"

Where are you taking direction? And like I did that day, you need to take the direction of the culture and put it in the back seat and quit listening to it, because it's messing you up. And you're coming here on Sundays to church and buying in, "Yes, Jesus is the way!" But Monday and Tuesday culture is telling you to get this phone, get this and that, and you're like me looking at my paper and listening to my son. You can't do it; it will drive you crazy. Jesus says, "I want to give you direction and I want to give you fullness of life and I want to free you from all that other stuff." Do you believe Jesus is the good shepherd and that He laid down His life for you? Then the application point I am suggesting is in fullness of life which you legitimately want, you need to look to Jesus. He says, "I'll give it to you." You say, "Well, Andy, how can you be so sure? Because you know

I'm leaving a lot of stuff on the table... I just don't know... " Well, let me tell you why I can be so sure. Here's Jesus speaking in verse 14 and 15:

I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Do you know what Jesus is calling you and me to? A relationship! The same relationship He had with His Father. Father, Son and Spirit have been eternally satisfied for Me, and Jesus said, "I want to give you that! Regardless of circumstance, regardless of what you have, what you don't have, I want to give you that relationship and that relationship will carry you. And maybe you get this other stuff and maybe you don't. You're not enslaved by it; you don't have to have it in order to have fullness of life."

Are you in? Where are you going to take direction for fullness of life? The good shepherd says, "I'm your man. I laid down My life for you. Would I shorten you? You look to Me for fullness of life." Now you need to know, you're going to be surrounded by people in your workplace, in your neighborhood; you're going to go to school with them that have no idea what you're talking about. They are confused and they are looking for another place, and Jesus is saying, "I want some of those people to be a part of My family!" And He talks about that in verse 16:

"I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd."

So I live north of "O" Street, but you know when I hear about the things Lincoln Berean is doing together, it's outstanding! Here's what I hear, "Hey, we didn't have money in the budget for a Habitat for Humanity house but if we could come through with it..." and, hey, the money comes through and you were about the building of a house. Does your church matter? Yes, there's some people that can have a home that didn't and they're glad Lincoln Berean is here. Then the opportunity to go into the prison and make a difference-so awesome-keep going; it's encouraging! There's also an individual part. It's not just together, but what are we doing individually in our neighborhoods, our schools, our workplaces? There are people in your neighborhood, your school, your workplace-you're sitting at lunch with them; you're doing life with them; you're in the gym with them. God's put you there for a reason. They are not of the fold, and you know what? The pastors and the elders and the worship folks-God's not working through them to get to those people; He's working through you! Are you in?

Back in the day, it was *Everyone...Everyday*. Is everyone involved in the mission? It's our hope, because doing great things together-that's awesome! What about us all over the city? God's put you there. They are buying the system: they think fullness of life is in *this* or *that*; they spend their money to get *that*; they get the promotion; they get the phone; they get the look-and they're not satisfied and they're exhausted. Jesus said, "They're outside My fold. They need to come in." Are you on mission? Would you pray for these people? You don't have to dump the truck-the Gospel! Just begin to ask questions. Take an interest in their lives. "Do you have kids? Who are your kids? Where are you from?" I mean begin to unpack those issues with them and watch them reciprocate with those questions. You're not there by accident. God has you on mission. Verses 17 and 18 then, Jesus reiterates that He is the good shepherd:

"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I

have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

So Jesus walks into Jerusalem that Sunday knowing what's going to happen. The time has come; Thursday night He goes to the place where He knows Judas can find Him. He's not walking away from this; He's walking right into it. So the mob walks up to Him and Jesus says, "Who are you looking for?" "We're looking for Jesus of Nazareth." And you can read this is John 18:6, Jesus says, "I am He." Do you know what happens to the mob? They are laid out-flattened! The power of His words, "I am He," flattens them. If Jesus wanted to walk on that deal, He could have. Just given them the, "I am He," and walk out. They didn't see that coming. Jesus *intentionally* walked into it for you and for me. He's worth trusting; He's the good shepherd! Instead of chasing all these fool things to find fullness of life, would we come to Him and He gives us abundant life! End of statement!

Now, if you're buying this and you think, "You know, I'm going to make some changes. I'm going to stop doing this and stop doing that," you have to know there are some people you go to work with, you go to school with-they are going to think you're crazy-and it goes all the way back to the days of Jesus. Look at verses 19 and 20:

A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?"

You're going to have people, you're going to have neighbors, you're going to have family that say you're taking it a little too far, a little too seriously. "You're listening to that preacher a little too much." Don't be alarmed. There were people that said that about Jesus, even after the stuff He did, because it's a heart issue, and some people have a hard heart. But there are also some people in this same crowd who said this:

Others were saying, "These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he? (Vs. 21)

And that's a reference back to John chapter 9. A guy born blind from birth encounters Jesus-and he can see! And the Pharisees are freaked out because people are going crazy about this guy. So they call his parents and say, "What do you know?" And they say, "Well, we don't know much. He's on his own." So they call the guy in a second time and the guy says, "Look, I don't know much. I haven't had much theological training, but here's what I know: I've been blind all of my life, and now I can see. We know that God doesn't listen to sinners. No one has ever done this in history and you're trying to tell me that Jesus is a sinner? I don't think so." Well they booted him out, not because they couldn't withstand his logic but because they just didn't want to know. But there were enough people saying there was no way a guy like this is demon-possessed. "This is the Son of God! We are getting on board and we are going to follow Him." Is that where you are? The good shepherd laid down His life-worthy of our complete trust-the source alone of an abundant life!

Five years ago this summer, we went to Chicago on a family vacation. And so I talked to people who had been to Chicago, "What should we see? What should we do?" and got all sorts of input. Almost everybody I talked to, who had been there, told us we needed to try the pizza. "Why do I need to try the pizza?" "Well it's thick and it's got the cheese, and the sauce " And finally one guy said, "Andy, here's the deal. You just need to try it. It's beyond explanation. There's nothing

in Lincoln to compare it to. You just need to try the pizza." Look, we can explain Jesus-Him laying down His life, and it's all true; it's all legitimate-but you need to try Him. He's like nothing of this world. He can give you life like you wouldn't believe. Would you take that next step of faith and lay yourself on Him fully, and watch Him come through and give you fullness of life? Yes, He's the *Good Shepherd*. How did He prove it? He laid down His life for you and for me. Let's pray:

Our Father in heaven, what a good reminder Jesus is the Good Shepherd Lot's of people masquerade as shepherd, but when it gets hard, they split; they're gone. Not Jesus! He walked right into it knowing what was coming. He could have walked away a number of times but stayed And then He tells us, "I'll give you salvation; I'll give you fullness of life, abundant life here and now. " And, Lord, forgive us because we try to find abundant life in this and that and we stake our hopes in this and that and we're disappointed and enslaved, and You want to free us. Holy Spirit, would you empower us to take You at Your word? John 10:10- "I came that they may have life and might have it abundantly," -end of statement-and may we would not put conditions on that. This I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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