

# I am Christ's Sheep

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[ 0 : 00 ]     The Gospel of John in chapter 10. Find your New Testament. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And John is the fourth gospel.

And we're going to turn to John chapter 10. And we're going to read the first 21 verses. And after that, we're going to turn to 1 Peter. Jesus tells us, I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.

The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger. In fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.

Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them. Therefore, Jesus said again, I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.

[ 1 : 18 ]     All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved.

He will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep.

So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me. Just as the father knows me and I know the father and I lay down my life for the sheep.

[ 2 : 19 ]     I have other sheep that are not of the sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

The reason my father loves me is that I lay down my life. Only to 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 authority to take it up again.

This command I received from my father. These words, the Jews were again divided. Many of them said, he is demon possessed and raving mad.

Why listen to him? Others said, these are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? 1 Peter chapter 2.

1 Peter chapter 2. We're going to begin reading it in verse 24 and just read 24 and 25. 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 24.

[ 3 : 24 ]     Let's hear God's word preached.

Next, in importance to the question, who is God, is the question, who am I?

And the devil is ever whispering into our ears the answers to that question. Sometimes puffing us up. You're Mr. Wonderful. You're Mrs. Invincible.

You can handle anything. And other times tearing you down. You're a worthless failure. You can't do anything. And the world is ever chiming in, telling us who we are.

Very often, they're nothing more than the devil's megaphone to repeat his lies about our identity. And then there's our own flesh that's all too willing to take up these false identities.

[ 4 : 40 ] But the true Christian wants to know, what does God say I am? Who does he say that I am? And so he turns to the scriptures and he finds this book continually telling him who he is.

And then calling us to be what we are. To live in line with our true identity. And according to the Bible, knowing who and what you are exerts a powerful shaping influence upon the way that you live.

Your behavior grows out of this sense of who you are. And so today we're returning to our series on the Christian's identity.

What does the Bible tell me when I ask this question of it? Who am I as a Christian? Now so far, we've seen the following. I am a human being created by God.

Therefore, I'm a dependent creature and was never meant to live independently from him. I am a new creation in Christ Jesus. And that carries tremendous ramifications.

[ 5 : 50 ] The old is gone. The new has come. I'm chosen by God. I am a believer. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ.

I am a Christian. I bear his name. I am a temple of the living God. And all of these aspects of our new identity in Christ then are to shape the way that we think of ourselves and as we do, the way that we actually live our lives.

So I trust as you keep bumping into these expressions of your identity, as you're reading your Bibles, you'll keep bumping into them. And I trust they'll bring to mind who you are and indeed shape the way you think and live.

Well, we come today to another aspect of the believer's identity in Christ. Who are you, Christian? According to the Bible, you can say, I am Christ's sheep.

So say that with me. I am Christ's sheep. Well, that is your identity in Christ. And this morning, you need to pinch yourself and know that that is real.

[ 7 : 05 ] You're not dreaming. You really are a sheep in Christ's fold. And that fact oozes with all kinds of comforts and encouragements to us. We have a whole psalm that just glories in this fact, don't we?

that the Lord is my shepherd. And because of that, I shall not be in want. It celebrates the amazing things that my shepherd does for me, the blessings that I receive from him as one of his sheep.

For 3,000 years now, the Lord's sheep have been singing that song in their praises to the Lord. We know it as the 23rd Psalm. And there are so many tunes and different paraphrases of it.

There's a reason why the 23rd Psalm is a favorite among God's people. It speaks deeply to our identity. And we have other psalms that tell us that our identity as Jesus' sheep is to affect our very emotional aspect in worship.

It's the reason that we should worship the Lord with gladness. It's because, and it's also the reason we should come before him with joyful songs, with thanksgiving and praise, because the Lord is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the sheep of his care, of his flock, the sheep of his pasture, the flock under his care.

[ 8 : 36 ] And so, our identity as his sheep is song-worthy. It's something we like to sing about. 250 years ago, Henrietta Van Haan wrote the song I Am Jesus, Little Lamb.

And notice how this identity affects her. I am Jesus, Little Lamb, ever glad at heart I am, for my shepherd gently guides me, knows my need and well provides me, loves me every day the same, even calls me by my name.

Day by day, at home, away, Jesus is my staff and stay. When I hunger, Jesus feeds me, into pleasant pastures leads me.

When I thirst, he bids me go where the quiet waters flow. Who's so happy as I am? Even now, the shepherd's lamb.

And when my short life is ended, by his angel host attended, he shall fold me to his breast, there within his arms to rest. Do you see the encouragements flowing out of the fact that she is Jesus, Little Lamb?

[ 9 : 55 ] Boys and girls, can you sing that? With confidence? I am Jesus, Little Lamb? Now, we moderns are not as familiar with sheep as people who lived in Bible times.

Today, you might have to go to a zoo to see a sheep. Or to the Blair's farm, maybe. I don't know if they've got sheep. But in the Bible times, sheep were everywhere.

And many families had sheep. But that doesn't mean that we living in the 21st century cannot understand or profit from this identity of the believer.

It's interesting how often the Bible likens people to sheep. In fact, more so than any other animal. And it tells us why and how they are similar.

And in doing so, it teaches us both something about sheep and something about us as people. And if you could sum up all that the Bible says about sheep, it comes down to this.

[ 11 : 00 ] Sheep are animals that desperately need a shepherd to take care of them. They are animals that desperately need a shepherd to take care of them.

And we need to take note of that. We sheep-like people that we too desperately need a shepherd. Now consider several reasons why this morning.

Why do sheep need a shepherd? Well, first, they're defenseless and helpless and so they need a shepherd to protect them. Other animals have their own defense mechanisms and resources to defend themselves against predators.

The lion has its teeth. The bear has its paws. The porcupine has its quills. The turtle has its shell. A skunk has its scent.

The bombardier beetle has its poisonous gas. Birds have wings. Deers have swift legs. A chameleon has its camouflage. And on and on we could go in the Lord's animal kingdom.

[ 12 : 03 ] But a sheep has no defenses of its own against the predator. They're as helpless as fresh cookies laid out on the table for anyone who walks by.

A quick and easy snack defenseless sheep. That's what they are. Micah 5.8 speaks of a lion among the sheep that mauls and mangles at will with none to stop it.

The lion has his way in the sheep pen because they don't have any defenses to stop him. They are completely dependent upon the shepherd for protection.

number two they need the shepherd to heal their wounds. There's no fingers. A sheep doesn't have fingers to pull out the thorns and briars to anoint those wounds with their scrapes with oil and salve.

No, for this they depend upon the shepherd's care. Third, they're dependent upon the shepherd to feed them to lead them into healthy green pastures to give them drink by still waters where they will not be too skittish to actually drink from the water.

[ 13 : 20 ] Sheep can't distinguish between the poisonous plants and those that are healthy plants. They don't know where to find this food and water that is beneficial to them so they depend upon the shepherd to feed them.

And fourth, to lead them not only to green pastures and still waters but away from the dangers, away from the cliffs and pits and snares in the open wilderness and then to lead them back into the safety of the fold at night.

They're followers and they need to be led in safe paths. And fifth, they need a shepherd to seek them when they wander off because sheep easily go astray.

They easily get lost and get into trouble. In fact, if there's any trouble anywhere near to be found, they will find it. It's almost like they gravitate toward it as if they were hell-bent on self-destruction.

Maybe you've had some pets like that or horror of horrors, some kids like that. They're always bending toward trouble. trouble. Years ago, World Magazine carried a photo and a report on some sheep outside a town in eastern Turkey.

[ 14 : 40 ] A large flock was grazing when one sheep decided to stray. And he strayed off and jumped off a cliff to his death.

And to the horror of the shepherds, the rest of the flock began to follow this straying sheep. and nearly 1,500 of them took the plunge into the ravine below.

Thankfully, as the woolly pile kept getting higher and higher, it provided something of a cushion to shield the blow and only 450 out of the 1,500 actually died.

The rest survived their cliff dive. sheep have this proneness to wonder. They easily go astray to their own destruction and this is another reason they're utterly dependent upon the shepherd to defend them and to lead them and to seek them when they stray.

And it's interesting that the Bible draws special attention to this waywardness in comparing people to sheep. Isaiah 53, 6. It's a verse we're all familiar with.

[ 15 : 57 ] We all like sheep have what? We've gone astray. Each of us to his own way. Notice the comparison between straying people and straying sheep is universal.

We all like sheep have gone astray. We're all like sheep in this way. We go astray. We have gone astray. Indeed, the Bible says that from birth we've gone astray.

From the womb we are wayward. Our first step into this world is with our backs toward God and going away from Him. And every step thereafter is one away from God.

We're like sheep that stray. Not one has stayed with God as his or her shepherd in the path of righteousness that leads to eternal life.

We've all strayed away from God and away from his ways. We didn't like those paths of righteousness. We didn't like where he was leading him and we preferred to go our own way, my way, doing what I want rather than what he commands.

[ 17 : 10 ] And we confess this, don't we really, believers? We sing it here. We'll sing it at the conclusion, Lord willing. as our testimony, I was a wandering sheep.

I did not love the fold. I did not love my shepherd's voice. I would not be controlled. I loved afar to roam. The greater the distance between me and this shepherd, the better off I was.

We didn't like him or his ways. And so we ditched him and went the way that seemed right to us, even though it led to destruction. Alone without the shepherd, helplessly exposed to damning dangers that would take me to hell forever.

And the reason we all had these wandering feet that strayed from the Lord is because we all had wandering hearts. There are people whose hearts go astray, was our memory verse last week.

Remember? Psalm 95, 10. people whose hearts go astray and wayward hearts cause wayward feet. They're drawn to forbidden paths.

[ 18 : 25 ] They find sin attractive and desirable and the Lord in his ways undesirable. And it leaves us helpless before the tempter who comes and offers us some of these forbidden paths.

us. The sad thing is that in ditching the Lord we walk away from the only one who could ever cure our wayward hearts. So sheep, they desperately need a shepherd.

And so do we. We were never created to be independent of the shepherd. We were never created to live one day, one hour, one moment on our own without God as our shepherd.

We were never hard wired for independence. We were never given the resources, the wisdom, the strength, the discernment to make our way through this wilderness without him.

Even in our sinless state, we were absolutely desperately in need of a shepherd. And now in our sinful state, in a fallen, cursed world, it's only all the more great.

[ 19 : 47 ] We need the shepherd. And so absolute is this need of the sheep for a shepherd that Jesus could find no more pitiful picture of helplessness than sheep without a shepherd.

Do you remember that occasion in Matthew chapter 9? Jesus is going around and he's preaching and multitudes are hearing him. And Matthew records these words in chapter 9 verse 36.

When he, Jesus, saw the crowds, he had pity on them. Here they come, masses of people, and Jesus' heart hurts for them.

Why? Because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Sheep without a shepherd.

brothers and sisters, we've never rightly pitied lost people until we've seen them as sheep without a shepherd. Harassed by Satan and sin and guilt before God, hassled by the trials of this life and all their pains, and yet helpless, absolutely helpless, totally unfit to deal with all that threatens to destroy their lives and damn them forever.

[ 21 : 05 ] Sheep without a shepherd, the most pitiful sight to behold. And that's what we were. We were all like sheep without a shepherd because we had wandered and gone astray from the shepherd.

We'd chosen our own way without him, content to live without the shepherd. shepherd. Now we need a shepherd, but it's not just any shepherd that will do.

And that's something we need to give thought to. It's not just any shepherd that can meet my need as a lost sheep. It must be a good shepherd. And that's what Jesus was saying in John chapter 10, wasn't it?

We need someone to whom we can safely entrust the care of our eternal souls and know that we are in good hands and that he will get us safely home to heaven.

That's what we need. And Jesus says that many shepherds had come before him. Many had come claiming to be shepherds, but were in fact hirelings and thieves and robbers who had only come to steal and kill and destroy.

[ 22 : 16 ] Now you know what a hireling is? That's a word we don't use. It's a hired man. And he cares nothing for the sheep because they're not his. He's just watching the sheep for somebody else.

It's just a job. It's just a paycheck. Nothing more. So if a wolf comes, he's out of there. He abandons the sheep to save his own skin. And so if the wolf makes off with a sheep, the hireling isn't going to go risk his life to recover the sheep.

And if the wolf kills half a dozen, it's no loss to him. You'll have that is his response. There are a few casualties in this business of shepherding and it's no great loss that portrayed the heart of these so-called shepherds of Israel.

These who had come before Jesus claiming to be the shepherds of Israel. So in the Old Testament, we're not surprised when the Lord himself speaks to and about these shepherds and pronounces judgment upon these bad shepherds.

These were Israel's leaders, their prophets, their priests, their kings, their shepherds that were to take care of the flock of Israel. But they were shepherds who cared nothing for the sheep, but rather fleeced them and ruined them.

[ 23 : 33 ] And so the Lord says in Jeremiah 23, 1, woe to the shepherds, judgment upon the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture.

In Ezekiel 34, he says, woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves. Should not shepherds take care of the flock? Is that not a reasonable question to ask of shepherds?

Should not the shepherds take care of the flock? Jehovah asks. And so he goes on, because they haven't, the flock has been plundered and become food for all the wild animals.

Therefore, God says that he's going to judge these shepherds and in their place. this is what he says. I myself will tend my sheep. I myself will search for the lost.

I myself will bring back the strays and I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David. He will tend them and be my shepherd.

[ 24 : 41 ] Well, which is it? Is it the Lord himself? That's going to be the one shepherd or is it? My servant David, who's going to be the shepherd? Well, yes and yes.

It is both. There's not two shepherds. No, there will be but one shepherd and one flock and he will be at one in the same time. The Lord himself and his servant David.

Now, it's not a reference to David himself. When Ezekiel wrote that prophecy from the Lord, David had already lived and died several hundred years before. Then why is this coming singular shepherd referred to as Jehovah's servant, David?

Well, simply, perhaps for many reasons, he would be a son of David as to his earthly nature, his human nature, and he would be the shepherd king that was promised in that covenant with David that he would have one of his descendants ruling over God's people forever.

And furthermore, this shepherd is called David because David, as you know, was a shepherd. As a young boy, we find him out on the hills outside of Bethlehem shepherding the family sheep.

[ 26 : 04 ] And David was no hireling, was he? He was no hireling with no interest in the sheep. They were his father's sheep and therefore his by inheritance.

He has something in this, you see, the sheep that were his. And so when a lion came into the flock at night and snagged just one of the lambs with his teeth and headed off with it, David doesn't just keep strumming his harp and singing.

No, he's got his rod and he's tracking him down. And when the lion turns, he strikes him and he kills him and he rescues that lamb from his mouth and he holds it to his breast and he takes it back to the safety of the flock, singing and rejoicing as he goes.

It was no different another time with a bear that made off with a sheep. That one sheep was worth risking his life and chasing down the bear, killing it and bringing the sheep back to the fold with rejoicing.

And God himself, who deeply values his sheep, saw in David a heart after his own heart.

[ 27 : 16 ] And so he chose David, the scripture said, and took him from tending the sheep to be the shepherd of his own people, Jacob, the flock of Israel, his inheritance.

So he's anointed as a teenager to be the next shepherd king of Israel. But before he's actually taken the throne and has the coronation as the king, danger came to God's people when Saul was still king, but David was the anointed shepherd king to come.

And when that Philistine giant Goliath scorned Jehovah's armies and everybody else ran for fear away from Goliath, David flew into action.

He counted God's name worth risking his life for. He counted God's people worth risking his life for. So he stepped between Goliath the giant and God's people.

Taking on the nine-foot giant with a sling and a stone and he killed that giant enemy of Israel and all Israel shared in David's victory.

[ 28 : 35 ] He was a shepherd for Israel after the shepherd heart of God. And though he was flawed, David was flawed and not the perfect shepherd as time would prove.

Yet he becomes the type and the shadow of the good shepherd king as the one good shepherd that was promised to come. And that's why the Lord calls him David, my servant.

So 600 years after Ezekiel's prophecy, God's own eternal son made flesh looking like any other common Galilean man stood up in Jerusalem and said, I am the good shepherd.

At last our David has come, one who truly lives up to the name, the good shepherd, the good shepherd, not one among many, but the good shepherd, the one that was promised, the one who is at the same time the Lord himself and of the two seed of David, the perfect antitype of David.

he's no hireling who cares nothing for the sheep. No, these are his sheep. They are his father's sheep and they're given to him by his heavenly father.

[ 29 : 54 ] And over and over John 10, he calls them my sheep, my sheep, my sheep. He's invested in them. How do we know he's the good shepherd? How do we know?

They all claim to be the good shepherd. shepherd. How do we know him from anybody else who's come before claiming to be this shepherd king of Israel? Well, he tells us how we can know.

I am the good shepherd. And the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. That's it. That's how you'll know him.

He lays down his life for the sheep. He's no thief who comes to steal, to kill, to destroy. I have come. that they might have life and have it to the full, more abundantly, eternal life.

He comes not to take from the sheep, but to give them the ultimate gift of eternal, abundant life. And how does he do that? How does this good shepherd give this new life, this abundant, this eternal life, to straying sheep?

[ 31 : 03 ] He does it by laying down his life for them. And so when he saw shepherdless and helpless straying all alone, helpless under the power of sin and Satan, under the guilt of our sin, the wrath of God coming upon us, he didn't say, well, that's what you sheep who stray from me deserve.

you made your bed, now lay in it. You didn't want me as your shepherd, now suffer the eternal consequences, to live forever without me in hell.

No, the good shepherd pitied us when enemies. Though we didn't want him as our shepherd, he wanted us as his sheep.

And so he flew to our relief in the most costly sacrifice of all, not running away to save his life as the hireling, not even risking his life as David when he went after the bear and the lion and Goliath.

But as the good shepherd, he actually laid down his life. He actually laid down his life as a sacrifice. He gave up his life. His life was given.

[ 32 : 24 ] It was taken that the sheep might live. And that, folks, is the only way we could be saved.

Somebody must pay with their lives for our sins. Our offenses against the shepherd are so great. When we did this to him, and we just turned and went astray and said, I'm content to live without you, that offense is so great that somebody must die.

Someone must be damned forever. And it's either the straying sheep himself or the good shepherd laying down his life instead of the sheep.

sin must be punished. It's his life or theirs. And so he lays down his life for them, and in doing so, he proves to be the good shepherd, the one shepherd over the one flock of God.

Now, I quoted from Isaiah 53, 6, that familiar passage that likens us to sheep for straying. Do you know the really shocking thing about Isaiah 53, 6?

[ 33 : 45 ] It's not the comparison of us and straying sheep, it's the way it ends. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, we have each turned to his own way. And it doesn't end, therefore, that's why we all go to hell at the end of our lives forever.

No, it ends, we've all, like sheep, gone astray, we've turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him, the good shepherd, the iniquities of us all.

Now, believers, that's what's being said about you. He didn't just consign us to the hell that we had chosen when we ditched the shepherd, but instead the Father laid upon his son, shepherd, the iniquities, the sins, the strains, sins, all of our offenses against that shepherd.

He laid them on him. Now, when an Israelite had sinned against God in the old covenant, he would bring an animal as a sin sacrifice to the temple, and he would bring it to the priest, and before it was killed, he would lay his hand upon the head of that sheep.

And the sinner would lay his hand and confess his sins. It was a symbolic transfer of his sins and his guilt before God onto that sheep, that innocent lamb.

[ 35 : 21 ] And once he had done that, from that point on, the innocent lamb was treated treated as the guilty sinner.

And the guilty sinner was treated as the innocent lamb deserved. And so the lamb had its throat slit, its blood shed, its life taken and sacrificed on the altar.

And the sinner went scot-free to live his life in freedom from sin and guilt and death.

Now, believers, that's exactly what has happened on Calvary's middle cross. Only it wasn't us laying our hands upon his head. That's perhaps a picture of our faith, something we do by faith.

But it was the Lord who laid on him the iniquities of us all. On our shepherd, there, he put him on his son.

[ 36 : 33 ] All our defections laid on him. Not by us, but by the heavenly father. And not merely symbolically, not just a symbolic transfer. This was a real transfer. The sins of God's people were all put upon their shepherd.

And Peter says he bore our sins in his body to the tree. And from that point on, Jesus the good shepherd was treated as the straying sheep deserved.

And we the straying sheep were treated as Jesus the good shepherd deserved. He bore the wrath that was due to us eternally. That we might enjoy the favor due to him.

He takes our damnation that we might be justified and go free. His life is laid down that we might not lose ours but have life eternally, life abundantly.



Shocking love, isn't it? Uninventable love. That the shepherd would die for sheep that love to wander. That he would be pierced for our transgressions, that he would be crushed for our iniquities, that the punishment that brought us peace with God would be upon him.

[ 37 : 51 ] And by his wounds we are healed. Now, turn back to that text in 1 Peter. That's where we want to end. 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 24 and 25.

The last two verses of 1 Peter chapter 2. There's no doubt where Peter's mind is as he's writing these verses under the inspiration of the scripture. He's got his mind back in Isaiah 53 5 and 6.

As he writes to the people of God, this is what he says about their Savior. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness by his wounds.

You have been healed for you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. Notice the time markers in verse 25.

You were, but now. Believer, here's your new identity in Christ. You were a straying sheep without a shepherd running from God, harassed and helpless under sin and Satan's power and under the condemnation and wrath of God for your sin forever.

[ 39 : 09 ] You were, but now. You're no longer a sheep without a shepherd. You're no longer astray from the living God. That is no longer your identity.

No, you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your soul to Jesus Christ, the good shepherd who is the Lord himself. You're one of his sheep.

And you've returned to Jesus. You went astray from birth and you've returned. Now you've returned to Jesus to have him save you from your sins, to have him forgive your sins, to save you from hell under God's wrath, the penalty for your sin.

And all because he was bearing your sin to the place of punishment on the tree of Golgotha, laying down his life for you.

But you've also come back to him, not just to have him forgive your sin, but to have him rule over you. you didn't want him or his ways, and that's why you strayed, but you've come back.

[ 40 : 12 ] You've had a change of mind. I now want him. I now want his ways. And so you have come back to him.

To have him oversee your soul as a shepherd who watches over the flock and oversees your soul to feed you, to lead you in paths of righteousness.

That's why you've returned. You've returned to no longer stray from him, but to follow him. That's part of your new identity as Christ's sheep, as we'll see next week in John chapter 10. Over and over, he says, my sheep, listen to my voice and follow me.

You didn't do that before. You were straying from God, but now you've returned and you follow him and his word. And this too is the fruit of Jesus dying on the cross for you.

Jesus laid down his life on the cross for you, not only to secure your forgiveness of sins, but also so that you might die to sin and live for righteousness.

[ 41 : 22 ] You see how he puts it? This is a fruit of his cross. Verse 24, he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness.

righteousness. Everyone who returns to the good shepherd dies to sin and lives for righteousness. It's a new life that they live in Christ.

The same Savior who forgives, sanctifies, the same Savior who died for us, teaches us to die to sin and to live for righteousness, which is to say another language, he heals us.

You see that? By his wounds, we are healed. Verse 24, healed from what? A straying heart that gave us straying feet that wandered away from the shepherd.

Indeed, this is what God had promised in Hosea chapter 13 and verse 4, chapter 14 and verse 4. I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.

[ 42 : 34 ] I will heal their waywardness. Where can we find healing from a wayward heart? We can get a sheep out of a wayward path, but how do you get the waywardness out of the sheep?

In the wounds of Jesus on the cross. By his wounds, we are healed. What a shepherd. Where have you ever heard of this kind of healing?

He's wounded and we're healed. He's wounded that I might no longer live for sin, but die to sin. He's wounded that I might no longer stray from the shepherd, but now follow him and live for righteousness.

He's wounded that I might live the entirety of my life with my good shepherd, dependent upon him, no longer content to live without him. There's sanctifying power in the cross, in the life that was laid down.

And that blood will never lose its power until all the ransomed church of God be saved to what? To sin no more. You see, there's healing in the atonement. He heals our waywardness so that we will sin no more.

[ 43 : 46 ] Now we're in process. He is healing us. He has healed us. He is healing us. He will heal us from our waywardness completely one day when we see Christ.

Some application and we're done. First for believers, let's not forget what we were harassed and helpless sheep without a shepherd. Pitiful, powerless to save ourselves from God's wrath in hell forever.

Powerless to free ourselves from our own wayward hearts. What a blessed thing to be saved from a straying heart that would have eventually led us to hell.

That was me and that was you. Let's not forget what we were. Second, believer, don't forget your new identity in Christ. You are now Christ's sheep.

You're a sheep in Jesus' fold and I wonder, is that how you think of yourself? When you think of yourself, do you just see yourself as a sheep, a generic sheep?

[ 44 : 47 ] No, there are only two kinds of sheep. There are straying sheep and there are Jesus' sheep that have returned to the shepherd and oversee. So which are you? Well, believer, you're in Jesus' fold.

You're one of his sheep. You've returned. So refuse to think of yourself in any situation in life apart from your ever-present, faithful, good shepherd who watches over you, is caring for you, is loving you, don't do life without the good shepherd.

He's there at your right hand. Set him there in your mind's eye. See him, the shepherd, with his comforting staff and rod and protection and provision and presence.

Never meant to live an hour without him. Don't forget your new identity as a sheep of Jesus. And then third, don't forget that if you are in this flock of Jesus, then you owe it all to the good shepherd, willingly laying down his life for you.

Though you didn't want him as your shepherd, he wanted you as his sheep. And so he bore! He bore your sin to the place of punishment and he paid the awful debt. He turned God's wrath and anger away from you, how?

[ 46 : 01 ] By taking it upon himself. And that's what it cost the shepherd to make you his sheep, to lay down his life for the sheep.

The shepherd dies for sheep that love to wander. Don't forget that. Don't forget that's what it cost the good shepherd to make me one of his sheep.

Remember that. Remember that. What are you doing tonight that's more important than remembering that? What it cost the shepherd to lay down his body and his blood, his life for you.

It's the good shepherd who says, come and do this in remembrance of me. And come tonight ready to give yourself up afresh and love to him who loved you unto the death.

Did you, Lord Jesus, lay down your life for me? Then I'll live for you who died for me. You ready just to recommit to that reality?

[ 47 : 16 ] Did you love me and give yourself up for me? Then I'll love you and give myself up for you. Did you hold nothing back but gave your very self for me?

Then I will surrender all to serve you, to love you. Love so amazing, so divine demands my soul, my life, my all.

Don't forget, this is what it costs to make you a sheep of Jesus. And fourth, the cross is the assurance of the unchanging heart of the good shepherd. Your good shepherd's going to lead you through life.

And he's going to go through some dark woods and into a deep valley of death, the shadow of death. He's going places where you don't want to go and where you won't understand why you're there.

And it's all important for you to know what is the heart of my shepherd who is leading me. Can I trust him? Do I know he's got my good in mind in this place, in this circumstance, in this trial?

[ 48 : 24 ] You can know that. How do you know that? How do you know that he's for you? Because he did not withhold himself from you.

When it was you or him being damned, he laid down his life for you. It's at the cross that we read his heart. It's at the cross that we see, I can safely follow this shepherd anywhere he leads me.

he died for me. But crying out loud, John, he laid down his life for you. Where would you not follow him? What are you afraid of?

What are you afraid of losing out on? He lost his life for you. He lost the smile of his father for you. He was abandoned for you. What you should have been feeling forever and ever.

not the pain and the loss for a few years but forever and ever. Eternal torments, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[ 49 : 28 ] That's what you would have had had he not laid down his life. See how he loves you. Spurgeon says when you can't understand your shepherd's mind, you can trust his heart.

And where do you see his heart? You see it. At Calvary, I'm the good shepherd. I laid down my life for the sheep. And Calvary is the guarantee then of everything we need in life.

If he's my shepherd, if this Lord who laid down his life for me is my shepherd, then everything I need for life and godliness is guaranteed. I won't come up lacking.

That's why I can say the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be in need. I shall not want. If he's given the greatest thing of his life, do you think he would withhold the lesser things to get us safely home to heaven?

And lastly, is your purpose in life in line with the purpose of your good shepherd when he bore your sins and laid down his life for you? Is your purpose in life in line with his purpose in laying down his life for you?

[ 50 : 39 ] Why did he lay down his life for you? Why did he bear your sin? Well, one reason is so that you might die to sin and live for righteousness and stray no more.

Is that your purpose? Is that why you came today? You want to be done with straying? You want to get closer to your shepherd?

And he's here in the gathering of his people and so you've come. You're coming to your good shepherd. You want to get closer. Father, and sin is the thing that puts distance and no nothing between my soul and the Savior.

No, he died for me that I might come back to him and return from my straying and be healed from my waywardness. Is that your goal?

To get as close to the shepherd as you can? What a Savior.

[ 51 : 40 ] What a Savior. If you're lost, you've seen the picture this morning, your pitiful picture. You're a sheep without a shepherd. And you've got all the trials of this life to face, no less than the sheep in Jesus' fold.

You've got trials to face. Heart-shattering trials. And you have no shepherd. You're all on your own now. You walked away from the good shepherd.

And you must face all of your trials in life alone. And then you've got a day of death in front of you. You must face death. And you will be alone that day too without the good shepherd to go with you into the valley of the shadow of death.

And then there's a day of judgment after that. When you must stand before God and give an account for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

And you will be there alone with no shepherd to answer for you. Do you see why Jesus said that's the most pitiful sight in the world? A sheep without a shepherd? And I would beg you to have pity on your own soul.

[ 52 : 51 ] Jesus, when he said, I am the good shepherd, he said, come to me. Come to me. And if you will have me, I will have you.

You ditched me because you didn't want me. But if you will repent of that and want me and come back to me and put all your trust in heaven upon me, I'll take you. I'll receive you.

I will never turn anyone away that wants me as their savior, their shepherd, to save them from sin, to oversee their souls and to get them safely home to heaven at last.

What a savior. What a good shepherd. Don't let this good shepherd's invitation go unheeded today. Let's pray. Lord, I don't know how, if I ever would have come to see my identity as a sheep had your word not spoken.

And yet, having spoken, I can see it written all over my heart that I desperately need a shepherd. I never can make it on my own.

[ 53 : 58 ] And so, your word has this ring of truth in my heart and I thank you for that. And it just shows me how much I need Jesus. I need him today.

I'll need him in the day of my death. I'll need him to answer for me in that day of judgment. that by his wounds I'm not only forgiven but I've been healed.

Healed from my waywardness. The one I did not love I now love. And oh, I want to love him more. So Holy Spirit, pour out that love of God in my heart and in the hearts of all of your sheep here that we might embrace our identity and find great comfort and joy in it and then live up to it.

as those who have been saved from sin to live for righteousness. Bless us then with the thought of our Savior. Never let him out of our view.

Draw some poor wandering sheep to yourself this day. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.