

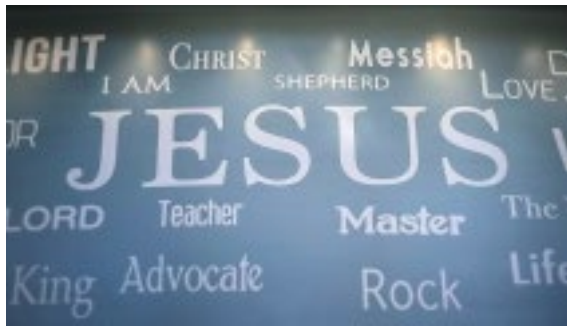


TIME OF GRACE®

Jesus #nofilter: No One Can Keep You Safe Like Jesus Study Notes

Summary

By calling himself the Good Shepherd, Jesus was calling us sheep. At face value, that isn't exactly a compliment to us. It can be downright offensive. So how and why is Jesus our Good Shepherd, and why does it matter? Pastor Mike continues this series that looks at the offensive, unfiltered, hard teachings of Jesus.



- John 10:11 — “I am the good shepherd.”
- John 10:19-21 — The Jews who heard these words were again divided. 20 Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?” 21 But others said, “These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”
- Jesus is our Good Shepherd (_____ and _____).
- John 10:11-14a — “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own 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. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 “I am the good shepherd.”

- Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing:
Jesus sought me when a stranger
Wandering from the fold of God
He, to rescue me from danger
Bought me with his precious blood

Prone to wander Lord I feel it
Prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart, O take and seal it
Seal it for thy courts above

Points to Ponder

1. Evaluate: Just like sheep are safer in the flock, Christians are spiritually safer when surrounded by Christian friends.
2. Study Jesus' entire message in John 10:1-21. What additional truths do you learn from Jesus' words?
3. Jesus once said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). List at least four blessings of being a generous giver of your time and money.
4. Do you have our special Good Friday and Easter Sunday services on your calendar? Have you started to pray about whom you might invite? If not, today is the best day to start.

Homework for Next Week

Read John 15

Time of Grace Ministry
Jesus #nofilter: No One Can Keep You Safe Like Jesus
John 10
March 10, 2024

Pastor Mike Novotny

Jesus Christ called himself a lot of controversial names. In fact, if you've ever worshiped here live at the Core and grabbed a cup of coffee out in the lobby, looked up and seen a wall where we have painted and printed this massive name of Jesus; all around Jesus are the names that he called himself or that other people called him. Just in case you're watching at home, let me show you a picture of the wall I'm talking about. They're in big block letters, the name of Jesus. And then around these titles that when you give them just ten seconds of thought, you realize they're incredibly controversial to call yourself by. Like the title "I am". Have you heard enough of the Bible to realize what that means?

Now, back in the days of the Exodus, the days of Moses, God appeared to Moses the prophet in a burning bush and Moses didn't know what to make of it. Then he said, "Well, God, if I go to your people, who should I tell them is sending me?" And God responded with his name, just two words, "I am." And so, in John 8 when Jesus was speaking to the religious leaders of Israel and he said, "Before Abraham was born, before Moses even existed, 'I am.'" It was a confrontational thing to say. And so, the people picked up stones to stone Jesus. "Who does he think he is saying he's the I am?"

But there's other names too, the names like Lord, and King, and Master, where Jesus wasn't just claiming to be a nice guy or a good example, he was claiming to be the Master and we are the servant. He is the King who gives the commands. He is the Lord who gets the last word. He's not just a nice counselor you pay by the hour. He claims to be the ultimate authority.

In fact, so much authority, he came down from Heaven itself. All these controversial names that divided people back in the days of Jesus. But there's one -- I want to put up on the screen, that seems maybe a little less controversial where Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd." If there's one thing that Jesus called himself that you would think would make people put down their stones, it would be this. Because, come on, what is more tender, and more comforting, and sweeter, and nicer than thinking of Jesus as the good shepherd? It's like little kids' Christian decor, right? Fluffy sheep, here's Jesus with his nice beard and a big smile, and he's holding a little lamb in his arms. That's -- you know, it's 42% likely if Christians open a preschool, they're going to call it "This Little Lamb's Daycare" because it's just so sweet and so nice. Here is Jesus, and he's so loving, he's so kind, and he's carrying a little lamb over his shoulders. "I'm the rock, the Master, the Lord, the great I am," that's confrontational language from Jesus. But the good shepherd is the softer side of him, is it not?

And yet, and yet, if you'd open your Bible to John 10 and look at the original time when Jesus called himself that, what you'll find in the verses that follow are not crowds of people saying, "Aww, isn't that nice of Jesus." Instead, let me show you the reaction that people had when Jesus claimed to be the good shepherd. "The Jews who heard these words were again divided. Many of them said, 'He is demon possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?' But other said, 'These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'"

Some of you know the amazing spiritual story of the man who later wrote "The Chronicles of Narnia." C.S. Lewis kind of grew up in church but then he rejected it. Incredible, brilliant kid but he became an atheist in his teenage years. He started to teach, I believe, at Oxford and Cambridge, one of the brightest minds in all of Europe. But then, through his friendship with J.R.R. Tolkien, the Lord of the Rings guy, he became a Christian. And C.S. Lewis used his brilliant Oxford mind to actually read the unfiltered Jesus in the Bible. And he came to the conclusion that you really have three options with Jesus and there's not a fourth.

You can call Jesus a liar, you can call him a lunatic, or you can call him Lord and there's no fourth option. A guy who claims to be the great I am, the Lord, the Master, the rock, the bread that came from Heaven, the light of the world, the one that you need to survive. You can call him a liar if you want, or you can be convinced that he's convinced of it, but he's kind of crazy, demon possessed, raving mad. You can call him a lunatic or option three. As Christians claim, you can believe him, follow him, call him the Lord who gets the last word.

But C.S. Lewis would say, "Jesus did not leave us open to a fourth option." He was blunt, in fact, he said, "Let's give up this patronizing nonsense about calling him a good example or a great moral teacher. He did not leave that door open to us."

So, back to my big question for today. What do you think of Jesus? Is he a liar who knew he was not God but claimed to be? Is he a lunatic who thought he was God but was incredibly deceived or is he the Lord that will get the last word over every part of every day of the rest of your life? Today, I want you to think about that question as we go back to one of the more familiar things that Jesus said about himself, but we're going to look at it today with fresh eyes.

Let's look at maybe one of the more controversial things that Jesus claimed when he said that he is our good shepherd. If you're taking notes in your program or you're watching at home, I'd love for you to write this down. I think the proper way to understand Jesus' words would be by saying this, "Jesus is our good shepherd, no offense and thank God." Today, Jesus and these classical words from John 10 are going to offend us and hopefully send us out with gratitude and thanks in our hearts. You might be so offended, you will leave. You might be so thankful, you'll stay. But today, I want to leave you with no room in between.

So, let's jump back into our Bibles. John 10, we start with verse 11 where Jesus himself, the unfiltered Jesus, spoke these words, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own 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. But I am the good shepherd."

To describe himself, Jesus chooses something that every one of his neighbors would have been familiar with, but most of us are not. How many of you here have ever raised sheep? Two hands. Alright, that was one to two more than I was expecting for this church service. Yeah, let's think for a second. Jesus uses the word shepherd, shepherd, shepherd three times and sheep, sheep, sheep, sheep four times. So, let's think critically about sheep for a second. Actually, I brought a friend with me today. Let me introduce you to my friend, the sheep. Alright, so, what do you know about sheep? Sheep are a huge animal in modern life and they were a huge animal in ancient life for a bunch of good things that sheep could provide. Alright, sheep grow wool. We turn wool into fabrics. We stuff our mattress, our pillows. Maybe you had a good night sleep last night, thanks to our friendly sheep. Sheep provide milk which is turned into cheese. They can provide meats. People in the ancient world, if they were rich and wealthy would have tons of sheep because they could clothe you, they could feed you, they could make you rich.

But sheep had two really big flaws. Remember that, jot a note about these flaws. Number one, sheep by their very nature were prone to wander. Alright, sheep would very rarely pop up their heads, look around and make sure they were staying close to their shepherd. Instead, what they would often do is notice a little patch of grass, and notice another one, and notice another one. And bit by bit and bite and bite, they would end up rather far from their shepherd. They were prone to wander. Most sheep weren't rebellious. You know, they didn't give the middle hoof to their shepherd, "Here we go," taking off for some other pasture. They just got interested in something that wasn't necessarily bad. It was good, it fed them, they just pursued it so much that they ended up with a big distance from the shepherd who would care for them.

What made it even worse is that sheep have something within them that you might have heard of called the flocking instinct. Sheep sometimes get separated all by themselves, but that's very rare because their instinct is to stay with the rest of the flock. And so, if their buddy Shaun the sheep, you know, pursues a little bit of grass, our instinct is to stay with Shaun, even if Shaun is separated from the shepherd. We feel like we're in the right spot when we're close to them even if they are very far from him. A sheep's fatal flaw is that it's prone to wander from the only one that can keep it safe.

And here's the second flaw. When a sheep has wandered, it ends up in grave danger because of this guy. It's amazing what you can find on Amazon these days, is it not? Alright, here's the wolf. Let me make sure I get all these claws out here so you can

see them. I did a bunch of Google research. Sheep on average run about 20 miles an hour, top speed, they hit 25. Jamaican sheep can get to about 27. That's not true. I don't know if there's Jamaican sheep. Right, so, they're fast. They could out sprint me if I was chasing it, but not a wolf. A wolf can easily run 25, 30, up to 37 miles an hour. He's going to -- like a JV wolf can catch a varsity sheep every time. And once it catches it, a sheep's fatal flaw is that it has no natural defenses. Alright, there're no claws here like a bear to fight back. There're no jaws like a shark to bite back. There're no scales on the back to protect it from the wolf. There's no strong tail like an alligator.

A sheep, in fact, as its wool grows, it gets heavier and slower. If it wanders from the good shepherd, if it gets isolated, what we'd say, a sheep is dead meat. The two fatal flaws that Jesus wants us to think about today is that sheep are prone to wander and sheep end up in very, very great danger. And no offense, but Jesus called you and me sheep, sheep, sheep, sheep. You realized what an insult this is once Covid hit, didn't you? You see it online when someone would share a new story about this side of the pandemic or that. You're not people, you become sheeple. You're followers. You'll believe anything that they tell you. You're prone to wander after half-truths and lies.

Well, Jesus would say, "No offense, that's all of us." We as human beings are prone to wander from God. Very often we're not trying to be spiritually rebellious. We're not tearing up the Bible in our backyard and burning its pages. Instead, what so often happens is we notice something that makes us happy and we pursue it, and then we pursue it, and then we pursue more of it and more of it and more of it without popping up our heads to look and wonder, "How close am I to Jesus right now?"

It's not that something is inherently bad, it's just that pursuing so much of it can go from a good thing into a forgetting about God thing, which is a very, very bad thing. This ever happened to you in your life where just unintentionally you were going after some goal, some hope, some dream, and you ended up maybe in a not so safe and strong spiritual place? Sheeple, Jesus said that is what we are. We are prone to wander. Whether you don't know Jesus or you do, there is something in your heart that sees something good and then pursues it and pursues it and pursues it. And very rare is the soul that is sensitive enough to think, "Where is Jesus right now? Am I close to my good shepherd?"

And even worse, if you've wandered, you are in grave danger. I would love to drop some modern American mantra on you that you're brave, and you're strong, and you can do it, but if you're a sheep, you can't fight back against the wolf. You might be a better human being than your brother or your sister, you might be the fastest sheep in the whole flock, but you still can't outrun the wolf of regret, and sin, and death, and hell. You could try harder, you could run faster, but if you're separated from the only God who can protect you, you will not be protected.

Jesus says, "You are sheep, sheep, sheep, sheep, prone to wander and in great danger." And now you understand why people said, "He's demon possessed. Come

on, Jesus. I'm not in danger. I'm a decent human being. God's not going to be mad -- Me? Come on, why listen to this guy?" Instead of flattering people, Jesus called them sheep. Instead of saying they were strong, he called them weak. Instead of calling humans good, he called all of us wicked. Why would you listen to him? That's the right question.

I want you to think about that question. Why would you listen to Jesus? Let me read to you one more time these words from John 10. He said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own 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. But I am the good shepherd."

Well, why would someone choose that boring job of watching sheep shivering on a cold night to keep the flock together? Well, this is the simple answer. They would do it for themselves, right? If sheep can produce wool and clothe my family, if they can produce milk and feed my family, if I can sell them for meat and get rich, it might be hard work, but I will shepherd this flock for myself to feed me, to keep me alive, to make me prosperous. And I'll -- I'll lay down my comfort, I'll sacrifice because in the end, the ROI of being a shepherd with these sheep is positive.

But now think about Jesus. When he's up in Heaven and he sees all of us wandering like lost sheep on earth, why does he become the good shepherd? Does he need clothes from us? No. He's clothed in splendor and glory up in Heaven. Does he need food from us? Need us to make him lunch? Feasting with saints and angels for all eternity. What does he need from us? The answer is nothing. So, why would Jesus become a shepherd? Here's the answer, for the sheep. What shepherd in all of human history will not just give his time or his energy or his wealth but his life for the sheep? And the answer is only one, only Jesus. The reason Jesus is the good, the most moral shepherd is because he laid down his life for the sheep. When he needed nothing and we needed everything, Jesus did something. When we could offer him nothing and we owed him everything, Jesus did something. He laid down his life in the greatest sacrifice, and the greatest act of pure unconditional love that history has ever known.

If someone asked me today, "Why would you stick with Jesus? He calls you a sinner, dependent, weak, a sheep." My simple answer would be, "Who else has loved me like Jesus?" You got me a birthday present? Thank you. Jesus laid down his life for me. You raised me when I was a kid, mom. That's beautiful. Jesus gave way more than a few years of his time. He gave his very body and his very blood. Some people in this world will flatter you, some people will do nice things for you, some people will love you, but no one, no one, no one, will be like Jesus for you. "I am the good shepherd," he says, "the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

I'm going to invite our band to come back up on stage as I tell you the amazing story of a 22 year old who wrote one of Christianity's most classic hymns. His name was Robert Robinson. He lived about 300 years ago in the 1700s. If Robert knew one

thing about himself, it was that he was prone to wander. Before he became a Christian, he was prone to wander into all sorts of things that Jesus wasn't okay with. And in fact, Robert was pretty honest because he said even after becoming a Christian, after to going to church, and after knowing the truth, his heart was still prone to wander. He was so easily tempted by words and choices that he should not have chosen. And yet he also realized at the same time the immense goodness of his good shepherd Jesus.

And so, in the 1700s Robert Robinson wrote the classic words of a hymn entitled "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing." Have you heard it? He wrote classic lyrics like this, "Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold or the flock of God. He, to rescue me from danger, bought me with his precious blood." "I wandered. I was just a stranger and yet Jesus sought me. He bought me. He rescued me from danger with his precious blood. He is the good shepherd."

Then he came back in the final stanza to say this, "Prone to wander Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, O take and seal it. Seal it for thy courts above." God, it's so easy for me to be led astray, and yet you love me. Take my heart. You're worth it. No matter how much you challenge me, how much you want to change me, you're worth it. Take my heart and seal it for thy courts above. Or as the Old Testament prophecy so beautifully said, "We all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way, but the Lord has laid on him," on Jesus, "the sin of us all."

So, I want to invite you to please stand. We're going to join in this classic hymn. As you catch on with our musicians, I invite you to sing. I invite you to sing at home too. Let's lift up our praises as wandering sheep to the good shepherd Jesus Christ. Please join us as we sing, "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing."

Let's pray. Dear God, we feel it and for some of us, it's jealousy or insecurity, for some of us, it's pride and thinking too little of others, for some of us, God, it's sexual temptation, it's alcohol, it's addiction, it's fear, it's worrying about the future as if you're not in control. God, we feel it. We are so prone to wander and that's why we love you. When we were in great danger, you sought us, you fought for us, you bought us back with your precious blood.

Heavenly Father, we deserve none of it and you gave all of it. So, today once more we remember that Jesus is worthy. Jesus is worthy. Jesus is always worthy. Help us to sing his praises now and forever. God, we call you today, not just Lord, not just King, not just Messiah, not just Christ, but today we lift up that beautiful name that you are the great I Am, the I Am who calls himself our good shepherd. It's in your name that we pray all these things. And all God's people say, Amen.