



BETWEEN YOU AND JESUS

John 10:1-21

Pastor Eddie Idefonso

I think the one image people use to identify with Jesus more than any other is the image of Him as a shepherd. The very word makes us think of love and comfort; of being taken care of; and being kept safe.

Jesus is, in fact, our Great Shepherd. He is our constant protector, always on guard and who does not sleep.

In **PSALM 91:1-4** it tells about Him. *'He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely, He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.*



He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.'

In **verses 9-10**, it goes on to say – *'If you make the Most High your dwelling – even the Lord, who is my refuge – then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent, for He will command His angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'*

Now, you might be saying that you

believe in Jesus, yet some bad things have happened to you in your life. We have spoken before about the two realms of our beings; the physical and the spiritual. We have said that the spiritual is the most important because it lasts the longest. And that is where God will protect you with every bit of power He has. And, He will also protect you physically, as it glorifies His name. So, the bottom line is; if Jesus is your Savior, you will be kept safe; if He isn't – you won't be.

I think all of us would agree that we need as much protection in this world as we can get. It is such a negative place, and it is only getting worse with each passing day. It has been said that those who contemplate suicide do not want to die, but they cannot find a reason to live. You know in your own life that whether it is in the home or the workplace, emphasis is given often on what you do wrong but is rarely given on what you do right. How often have you been having a great day when all of a sudden someone you know throws a negative at you and in an instant, your attitude is shot?

This happens every day to each one of us, but we are told in the Bible to be of good cheer, because in the midst of all this negativity and turmoil; amid all of this chaos and trouble, God gives us the picture of our Great Shepherd. The One who will lead us and the One who will watch out over us.

PSALM 23 is a message of God's powerful love for us. And today, I will give it to you in the words from the New Living Translation.

'The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; He leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to His name.

Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You welcome me as a guest, anointing my head with oil.

My cup overflows with blessings. Surely, Your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.'

In **REVELATION 7:17**, it again tells us,

'For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; He will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'

In that passage, we are given another image of a loving protector. One in whom we might find safety and rest and peace.

In **JOHN**, we read where Jesus is teaching His disciples about the kind of relationship He wants with us. We are going to look at this relationship today in the image of a shepherd and his sheep. And, as we also look at other characters, it is my hope that we see the sacrificial love Jesus has for you and if there is any one of you who isn't fully in God's fold, now will be the moment of decision for

you.

JOHN 10:1-21 [READ PASSAGE]

Let's go over the background that led to this passage. Have you ever noticed how Wiley Coyote is always so focused on catching the Roadrunner? His focus is so obsessed with catching the bird, he becomes blind to the traps he set, and how they are going to backfire on him. Sometimes we do the same thing in our lives. We get so obsessed with pursuing something, we become blind to everything else, including the truth.

Several years ago, for instance, I had a supervisor who was out to destroy me at work. What was my sin? I was a friend to someone he despised. He was so obsessed with hating that friend; he was blind to the fact that I meant him no harm. And just like Wiley Coyote, his focus backfired on him, and he ended up being forced into retirement.

The same thing was happening during the time of this passage.

Jesus is in the midst of a controversy with the Pharisees over healing a blind man on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were so obsessed with finding something wrong with Jesus, that instead of looking at the miracle of healing, they focused in on the law and started accusing Jesus of working on the Sabbath. An argument ensued between the Pharisees and the man, and he was thrown out of the synagogue for defending Jesus.

Jesus then comes to his aid again. First He leads the healed man to have a personal faith in Him, and then He turns His attention to the Pharisees. The passage I just read is what Jesus said to them. In **verse**

21, we see that some understood what Jesus said, but others did not.

Jesus was trying to tell them that He is the Savior; the Way; and the only Life that is available. In **JOHN 8:12**, He says that whoever follows Him will not walk in darkness because He is the light of the world. In **2 CORINTHIANS 6**, it is made clear that light and darkness cannot mix. It is of utmost importance that each one of us realize that we are to have no spiritual connection at all with those who do not look upon Jesus as their final authority.

That does not mean we are to avoid all non-Christians in every way. If we did that, we would never be able to evangelize the lost. But that does mean that we are not to hang out with them for the sole purpose of hanging out with them. It means we cannot make them our best buddies. It means that when we are around them, we do and say what we can to persuade them to come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ.

In our passage, we find that the Pharisees were listening to Jesus with a closed mind; one that was so focused on "getting something on Him" that they couldn't hear the simplicity of the truth Jesus was laying out before them. Looking back on it, we can see that they threw the blind man out of the place of worship, all because he was healed and was defending the healer from an onslaught of curses and insults.

Let's talk about ...

1. THE SHEPHERD

Is there anything we might learn from these Pharisees? After all, they knew the Scriptures and they followed them religiously. In fact, they knew them better than most

Christians know them today, and they followed them certainly a lot better than most of us do today, too. So, what was the problem? The problem is that they never had the Holy Spirit in their hearts. To each of the churches in Revelation, seven times John said, ***“He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”***

It is the Spirit of God that convicts us and helps us understand what God wants from us. It is the Holy Spirit that guides us as we walk with the Lord. And it is the Holy Spirit that gives us the power to live for Jesus. The Pharisees wanted power, but Jesus came offering peace and so He was not accepted.

In our passage, Jesus talks about two kinds of shepherds. In **verse 12**, He talks about the hired shepherd. He would have had no relationship with, or commitment to, the sheep. If a wolf had attacked a sheep, he would have left it while he fled for his own safety.

We find the same thing in churches today. It isn't a person, but an attitude. That is the attitude of legalism. I am not saying it is wrong to know what God's word says and then to make sure it is done, but while we are doing that, we are commanded to use compassion for others. The Pharisees knew God's word, and they did it, but there was no compassion in their hearts except for themselves.

The second type of shepherd Jesus talks about is the good shepherd. The good shepherd is the owner of the sheep. He has a special relationship with them. He could call each by name and He could recognize each sheep on sight. That is the kind of shepherd that Jesus said would lay down his life for his sheep.

In **verses 17-18**, Jesus informs the people that he was not only laying down His life for His sheep, but that he also had the authority to take it up again. No other shepherd could do this; only the Son of God could do it.

The shepherd would herd the sheep into the pen and then lay down across the opening of the pen for the night. Nothing could go in or out without his knowing it. Many a shepherd lost his life as wolves tried to get one of the sheep while he was asleep. When Jesus laid down His life for us, he saved us from being ravaged by our enemies, too.

Had the story ended with Jesus dying upon the cross, it would have been a tragedy for His sheep. When a shepherd dies, the flock is left without a leader, and they will soon wander away into the wilderness where they will soon perish. But the story does not end at the cross.

Jesus is talking about laying His life down for His sheep and in **verse 18**, He says:

‘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.’

And, in so doing, God has given us our Good Shepherd back again. Christianity does not just mean being saved from sin – it also means having a living shepherd guide us and protect us in His love. If you have ever wondered what was involved in a deep, deep relationship, read **verse 14** again.

‘... I know My sheep, and My sheep know Me.’

There are three relationships that exist spiritually. The relationship that God and Jesus have; the relationship that Jesus and we have with one another; and the relationship we are able to have with God the Father through Jesus the Son.

Jesus is our spiritual shepherd. He is the One we follow and trust.

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