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JOHN 10:1-21

John Series

Open your Bibles with me to John 10.

[PRAYER] Lord, as we do open your word now, we ask that you would speak to us and teach us. Not just on the logical side of our brain, Father, but on the experiential side. That we would experience your grace and your care that we desperately need this morning. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

John 10:1 says, *"Very truly I tell you Pharisees."* So in the passage He's talking to the religious leaders. He wants to communicate a message to the religious leaders about who God is. Will they get it? We'll see.

"Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out."

Now He chooses (that is, John as he's writing this story and now Jesus as He's telling the story to the Pharisees), Jesus uses an illustration that the people there will understand, that they would easily relate to. He talks about shepherds and sheep.

We don't typically relate in that way. Unless you have sheep. I don't have any sheep. I live in the city. They don't even let us have sheep where I live. So it's hard for me to relate to this. But in Bible times people had sheep all over the place.

The Bible tells us in Job that he had 7,000 sheep, just talking about his wealth. At one time Solomon wanted to give a sacrifice and dedicate it to the Lord. In that day, they sacrificed 120,000 sheep. That's a lot of sheep. Just illustrating his sacrifice and what he wanted to do. Having sheep was often an indication of someone's wealth. If they had a lot of sheep then they were wealthy. But you could look on the Judean hillsides and you could see shepherds.

I remember when I visited Israel (it must have been thirty-five years ago) that we would be driving our car and as we drove our car the sheep were crossing the road and we'd have to stop the car. The sheep would just kind of go all around us as the shepherd led the sheep.

They didn't eat pork in their Jewish rules and lifestyle and so they ate a lot of sheep. I mean, they could eat beef, but you don't have a refrigerator. So if you're going to kill a cow you're going to

have to feed 100 or more people. If you're going to have twenty to fifty people you could kill a sheep or you can share it with your neighbors. A goat – maybe twenty people. So whenever they killed a sheep it was an opportunity for lots of people to eat some food because you have to eat it within a couple of days for it not to go bad. So there was lot of sheep around.

If they looked on the hillsides they knew what sheep were, they knew what shepherds were all about. If you were to go to the Appalachians today, if Jesus were to go there, He would probably have chosen the idea of mining and talked about mining. If you go to Houston, Houston is known for its oil. Kansas City is known for their steaks. Southern California is known for their surfing. New Jersey, what are we known for? Snow.

I visited my brother this week in southern California with his son and daughter and wife. I had brought some chemical snow just to illustrate. I was saying, "What are you known for around here? In Houston they're known for oil and in Kansas City for steaks and for southern California surfing. Do you know what we're known for in New Jersey?" And my brother says, "Corruption." I don't know.

All I know is that Jesus chose this idea of a shepherd to describe what it was like to have a relationship with a sheep. He's going to describe this in such an intimate way, a beautiful picture of how the shepherd works with the sheep.

A shepherd had a very simple lifestyle. He had probably a string or a rope belt and in it would have a pouch that maybe had some dried fruit or maybe would have some stones that would go with a sling that was also in his pouch, maybe some oil. Often shepherds would have oil that they used when the sheep would go at it. Sometimes there would be an injury that would take place and the oil would help in that regard. He would often carry a rod, which was a small club or a small instrument, to protect and the staff to either use also as a weapon or to guide the sheep along. So the shepherd had these kinds of things as he would go along. As he did, he would lead the sheep along and guide them.

It's in the midst of that picture of the sheep that the psalmist writes Psalm 23. I think the reason we like Psalm 23 so much is because of the description of the intimate nature of the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep and the relationship that God has with us, that He cares for us in very personal ways.

Psalm 23 says, *The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.* Maybe you came here today because you need your soul refreshed. You get that from the Shepherd.

He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Maybe you're here today because you just need guidance and you need the Lord to direct you. It's the Shepherd that provides that for you.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley. Maybe you're here today because you've got some real struggles that you're walking through and trying to figure out. In the midst of that we

just know that he says, *I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.* The shepherd was linked to the sheep. There was this intimate close relationship.

In this story of John 10 we're introduced to more parts of the analogy. If you look at what we already read in John 10 it talks about the sheep pen. The sheep pen was either a makeshift sheep pen where they took some brambles and created a circle so that the sheep couldn't escape. Or sometimes it would be one that was more fixed, made out of stone where that may be closer to a city because the sheep pen was a place where all the shepherds could put their sheep.

Sometimes multiple shepherds would bring multiple flocks and they would all get into the sheep pen. Then the shepherds would go into town and they would leave the sheep in charge of someone there, maybe a hired hand. Sometimes there might be a gate on the pen. But often they're open and the shepherd or the person in charge would lay down in there or they would stand in the doorway. As they did then that would be the gatekeeper.

So he's talking about it in the verse. He says, *The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*

He calls each one by name. I love that picture. It says, *he leads them out.* You don't drive sheep like you do cattle; they're led out. That's the picture that they have. So the shepherd's leading the sheep out of wherever they are, taking them, and leading them from one place to another. And they know his voice and they follow. That relationship is the same kind of relationship we have with our Good Shepherd – we know His voice, we hear Him calling, we respond to Him, and we appreciate that.

Look at verse 4. *“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.”*

There's a contrast being made between the shepherd and the stranger. The stranger is the one whose voice the sheep don't recognize. So what we need to do is we need to recognize the voice of God. We want to follow Him. We don't want Him to be a stranger to us. But when we get to know Him, that's a very comforting voice.

He calls out to us and He says, “Wow. You just look like you're spiritually dehydrated. Let me give you some water. Come over here to some quiet waters. Wow. You look like you're famished. You need some food. Let me nurture you with some food,” and so He gives us that food. Or He says, “Oh, you're getting a little close to the edge over there. Come back from the edge.” And so the Shepherd's voice protects us, it guides us, it leads us. It says, “Come on. Spend some time with me. Come over here and be with me.” That's the voice of the Shepherd.

I think that we all need to listen to the voice of the Shepherd calling us. “Come away. Come away from your busy schedule. Come away from the frustrations of life. Come away from the anxiety that you experience and get to know me. Spend some time with me so that I can restore your soul so that I can provide you for what you need.”

If you had multiple flocks inside of the sheep pen then the shepherd comes and calls, and only the sheep from that shepherd are going to come out. That's how they would separate the flocks because they know the shepherd's name. That's the illustration that's given there, the name.

You see there, He knows the name of every sheep. The idea here is that God personally cares for you and me. He knows my name. My name is Scott. I think we have at least three or four generations of Franks here. What is it, four generations here? We've got Frank and Frankie and his dad, Frank, and the grandfather's name is Frank too. The name is important.

My son, Ben, and his wife, Galan, are going to have a baby and this week we found out that it's going to be a girl. So Carrie says, "Do you have a name that you're thinking of?" Ben says, "Yeah. We're going to name him Baby Bama Turanksy." I'm thinking, "I'm not sure about that."

I asked him later, "Do you really have a name?" And he says, "Yeah." He told me the name that they're thinking of for this baby right now. It's just fun. The name is important.

God knows your name. That's the idea. There's this personal relationship that's there. When He calls your name, you come.

Now the shepherds often would have a particular call and this call that they had the sheep knew. When I was a boy there were four kids in our family and my dad had a whistle. I don't mean a whistle that he carried, a whistle that he made with his mouth. So if we were somewhere in a mall or the fairgrounds or we were in the church or somewhere, when we heard my dad whistle we'd come running because we knew. Everybody else is going, "What's that?" They don't know it. They don't know anything about that. But I heard it. It was a message, a personal message from my father calling me to come.

As I was doing my research this week I found a shepherd calling the sheep. I'm going to play a video for you of the shepherd calling the sheep in the fog. He's calling them with words that we don't even recognize, but I want you to see the sheep coming. As I was playing it before the service, Peter's saying, "Look! Look! A sheep's not coming there. He must not be the same sheepfold there."

Watch the shepherd call his name.

[Video – Scott talking under video] Here they come. He's got the food on his back. They're running.

So Jesus uses this very personal illustration, figure of speech. Notice verse 6: *Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. Why? Why couldn't they understand? Maybe they had a view of God that prevented them from understanding. Maybe they had a view of God as distant or a judge or the lawgiver. Maybe they didn't have a picture of God as this personal God.*

Today if you're here and you don't have a personal picture of God, you want to do that. You want to understand that God personally cares for you. He knows your name. He's concerned about you personally. The key word here is that He cares about us.

Verse 7: Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They 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."

In this verse Jesus is providing a contrast between the shepherd and a thief and robber. We already saw the contrast between the stranger – the sheep won't know his voice. He's a stranger. And now we see the contrast being made between the thief or the robber and the shepherd. The thief's desire is to take advantage of the sheep and sometimes provides probably enticing elements that the sheep would go after.

I can think in our own lives that there are some habits that we find ourselves in that appear to be very attractive. But in the end the attraction leads to these words in verse 10. They *steal* our joy. They *kill* our peace. They *destroy* our lives. *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

There's this picture of the shepherd that says, "I care for the sheep. I care for each one of you."

Again, in my research I was looking at the whole idea of the shepherd. I came to that passage that you've heard of and that you know in Luke 15 where Jesus is talking to the tax collectors and sinners. These are the bad guys and He wants to illustrate to them how much God cares about them independently, individually. So He tells a story about a shepherd.

He says a shepherd had a hundred sheep and one of the sheep gets lost. So he leaves the ninety-nine and goes after the one who's lost. If you look in Luke 15 the idea is that he finds him so that he can repent. The word *repent* is there which means that the sheep went and did the wrong thing. Just like the tax collectors and sinners – they did the wrong thing. So the sheep gets lost because he went the wrong way. He disobeyed God, he disobeyed the shepherd. He went away from where he was supposed to be.

The passage says (as He's talking the sinners and the tax collectors) that the shepherd goes and finds him, puts him on his shoulder, and brings him back to the fold. That's a very personal shepherd.

God cares for each one of us. He knows your name. He knows your needs. He knows everything about you. He comes and He shares, He collects us, He gets us, and He brings us back. And He offers us this life *to the full*. I really like that word because I think a lot of people have life, but they don't have the fullness of life, this abundant life that we could have.

I don't want you to think today that if you come to Jesus all your problems are going to be over. But I do want you to know that you will have someone who will carry you through those

problems as you go through because God cares. He cares intimately about each sheep that's there.

He continues in verse 11. He says, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."* Now we're going to come to another comparison. We have the shepherd versus the (verse 12) *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.* When time for wolf fighting comes, forget it. I'm just paid help here and they don't pay me enough to do this job. So I'm getting out of there. *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.*

Verse 14 starts: *"I am the good shepherd."* Jesus is not a hired hand. He's trying to say, "I am different from a stranger. I am different than the thief or the robber. I'm different than the hired hand. I'm the shepherd." And the difference between the hired hand and the shepherd is what? The level of care. The hired hand is willing to care to a certain point. As long as he's getting paid he'll care. There's a point in which the wolf comes and he says forget it. But the shepherd goes far beyond that and he cares.

You just have to understand that in your own personal relationship with God that God goes far beyond what you might expect. He cares about you in a very personal way. Cares. That's the word. That's where I get today the application for my own heart. That God cares about me, He cares about you, and the Shepherd is known for that care. That's the real message of Psalm 23 or John 10.

In 1 Peter 5:7 we have another verse and that verse says the same kind of thing, that we can *cast all our anxiety on him because he cares for you.* That means we can take our cares – it's a different word for care, this word *anxiety*, but it has the idea that the concerns that bother us, we can take all those concerns that we have and we can cast them. Where do we cast them to? We cast them on Him. Why? Because He cares personally about us. He takes those things and He then carries them.

Back to John 10. *I know my sheep and my sheep know my voice—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.* Jesus died. He was crucified for us because He cared so much.

Verse 16: *I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen.* What a fascinating statement and a good reminder to all of us. *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."*

There are other sheep pens. I think it's very important for us always to remember that. Sometimes someone may come to Calvary here for a while and then go off. I don't want you to ever think, "Oh, that person must not be spiritual because they didn't stick here with our church." No. Godly people leave our church at times. They go to another sheep pen. There are other godly

churches in this area who are teaching the word or helping the people to grow. We consider it an honor to stand in the same community with other sheep pens, other churches, other leaders that are serving the Lord. It is a privilege for us to do that.

I don't know how long you'll be at this sheep pen. Maybe you don't even know how long you'll be at this sheep pen. But for the length of time that you're here, I want to care for you. The reason I use the same word that we're talking about the Shepherd is because God calls pastors "under-shepherds." There's a chief shepherd, Jesus. But then He calls under-shepherds are pastors. That's what it means to care for sheep – pastor. That's what He calls us. So it's my desire, as long as God has you here in this particular sheep pen, to care for you.

We're going to care for each other. We're going to grow together in this sheep pen. And then when you're sent out to another sheep pen, you're going to go out, I hope, with greater maturity than you had when you came. God is going to build into you some great things while you're here. That is my desire.

We always must remember that there are other sheep pens out there and the humility then in our own representation before God that we are only a piece of the big thing that God is doing. For a period of time we have the privilege of walking next to each other as we serve the Lord and grow together. That is our desire as we move forward.

Verse 19: 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 others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

See, that's what a gate does or a door does. It divides. It separates one from the other. God beckons us to come through the door and enjoy who He is. So God is painting in human colors a very important picture of who He is in this passage in the gospel of John.

Now if you're just joining with us as we study the gospel of John, I'd encourage you to go back to the beginning of the book and read every one of the chapters up to John 10. The reason I say that is because the purpose of the book, the gospel of John is to convince of us something. It's to convince us that we can all believe in God or believe in Jesus as God. It's one of the four gospels, but the purpose of this particular gospel is to draw us to belief in Him. Belief – that is, to put our trust in Him in order to enjoy who He is.

I think I'm going to stop there and we'll pick up the rest of this in verse 22 and following next week as we talk about Hanukah. That's what it says. *Then came the Festival of Dedication.* That's Hanukah. Because I just want to leave you with this idea today about the care that God has for each of us.

If you've come here today and you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you're going to want to do that right away. Because you enter into a sheep relationship with a

Shepherd who delights to have you as part of His fold and who takes care of you and guides you and leads you and takes you to a place where He restores your soul. It's just a beautiful thing.

But it's not just a message for those who are not yet believers. This is a message for all of us because as Christians we want to continually remember that if we're straying away, we're pulling back, we're not taking advantage of the blessings that the Shepherd has for us. He cares for each one of us. He wants us to give our concerns to Him, to cast our concern on Him because He cares for us. So much that He laid down His life for us. He knows us by name. He knows everything about us. You know the Bible says that He remembers us by writing our names on His hands. We remember things in different ways, but He writes our names on His hands to remember. It's just a very personal picture of God.

So I hope today that when you think of God, you don't think of Him in a distant way or you don't think of Him primarily as a judge. He is a judge. We must remember that. But He is also a Shepherd that empowers us and encourages us and loves us and cares for us in a very personal way.

Let's meditate on those thoughts as we sing this song, *He Knows My Name*. As we do, we're going to stand in just a moment and if the Lord is speaking to you and you just need some care in your heart, would you just go to one of the prayer counselors on the side and allow them to pray with you, to pray for you.

If you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you want to do that today, you can. Just go to the prayer counselors. They'll pray. Last week a lady accepted Jesus Christ into her life right here in our worship service. We're about introducing people to Jesus and helping them come into that caring relationship with the Father.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your love for us and your care. We need that so much. In a world where many of us are just identified by a number – a credit card number, a social security number, or take-a-number-and-we'll-wait-on-you – it's so refreshing to know that we are not just a number to you, that we are engaged in a personal relationship, a love relationship with you. Lord, we admire so many things about your character, but thank you. I just want to thank you for caring for each one of us. So now, Lord, as we remember that care, we lift up our praise and our singing to you. As we do that, speak to our hearts. Remind us of that love that you have for us. In Jesus' name, amen.