

John 10: SHEPHERD “He knows us, and we must know him”

Before we get to reading our passage this morning and me sharing one or 2 thoughts with you, I want to tell you why I believe today's text is important. Because it reminds us who Jesus is, it reminds us why we worship Jesus, it reminds us that his one sacrifice was for the all, it reminds us that he is the truth, that without him we are lost and wandering, but in him through faith we are saved, watched over and cared for. More simply, there's no more important time than to be locked into Jesus!

You might say Ross that is so basic, I get all that. Here's what I've realised this week, even if/when we've been Christians for a long time, sometimes the basics can wear off. We can be a lot in our heads and less in our hearts. I know I can get very complacent, thinking oh yeh, I've done that, read that, know that about God, thought I trusted with...but then, it's like that feeling you get when you catch yourself about to go through a compulsory stop and a truck goes flying by, it's like ok, pulse is racing and I'm awake now! Sometimes God arrests our attention to himself, to remind us of the basics, this morning I want to encourage you with two things: **I want us to know, he knows us, and I want us to know, we must know him.**

Our scripture this morning is John 10:11-17...**first some context:** if you were to look at the whole of chapter 9 you'll see that Jesus had healed a man born blind – that he was born blind is important – and as the account unfolds you'll see that it's almost like his sight becomes clearer (9:38¹) and the blindness of the Pharisees gets darker (9:24²).

The contrast between the belief and worship of the blind man, and the unbelief and denial of Jesus in the Pharisees could not be more extreme. Jesus' teaching here in John is that the man born blind, is healed and has “seen” the shepherd, (knew) and the Pharisees, with eyesight, and all the religious trappings, don't see, what is immediately in front of them: **they didn't know him.**

Furthermore, Jesus' issue was that not only were they spiritually blind, out of that blindness they were leading people astray. Take a look at Vv. 1-6, Jesus calls them thieves and robbers, because they were stealing people away from Christ by their false shepherding. Jesus says (v.5) they are the strangers, they are not faithful shepherds and they don't know the faithful shepherd.

¹ Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

² A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. “Give glory to God by telling the truth,” they said. “We know this man is a sinner.

I am the Good Shepherd, Jesus says, and those who are truly my sheep recognise my voice, when I speak their name, and they follow me. They had the opportunity to listen to the Saviour.

Verses 11–18 – where our focus will be today – give us an opportunity to listen. ***Listen for what?...***

Jesus explains in 11-18 how he gathers and gives life to Christians. And how he gives life to Christians is through laying down his life and being raised up again. And how he gives life is through being our Good Shepherd, by knowing us, and us knowing him, his voice and his leading, as the 'sheep' in his care. ***So we must know him.*** In a world of confusion, he quite literally, as shepherd, must be our reference.

It seems to me that, though Jesus is primarily addressing the Pharisees, we might say the sheep of Israel, here the teaching and encouragement from this passage is don't ignore what Jesus says, listen to what he says, believe what he says and who he says he is. *In summary* that would be ***know he knows us, know that we must know him.*** To know him, is for him to be Lord of all, and is for him to be the most important person in our lives. It may not be to the extreme of who Jesus is talking to here, but themes of listening and unbelief and spiritual blindness are not lost on us. Let's listen to what Jesus says, because all that we are, what you believe and everything we do in our lives (in these times) depends on where you end up after listening to him.

¹¹ ***"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;*** I know my sheep and my sheep know me— ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. ¹⁸ 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."

And, just our key verse, V. 14 again, ***"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...***

As Jesus speaks using sheep analogies and metaphors it is because he "assumes his audience understands the scene he is constructing"³. Sheep enclosures were (and are) often built against a cliff or canyon end, using stones piled waist high, with one entry/exit. The shepherd himself would be the "gate" or he might collect some thorny branches to form the gate. Such an enclosure was purely for the safety of the sheep, to protect them from any prey. So the scene Jesus is setting here is of a flock of vulnerable sheep in a threatening desert, where food and water are scarce, surrounded by predators. It's a hard place, but Jesus, is there!

1. (v.14) "*I am the good shepherd*"

- a. "*good*" – he is noble and of good character. Can't compare to anyone else if we say you're good. "*Good*" in Jesus' case, he is perfect.
- b. "*Shepherd*" – The image we have in mind might be of Jesus cuddling little lambs. Not what he has in mind here! A shepherd's task was hard, tiring, and dangerous. The contrast Jesus speaks of is the "bad shepherds" (hired hands) (10:12) lack of commitment to his sheep. When danger comes, he's out-of-there! (10:13). The good shepherd, by contrast, knows, loves and "*owns the sheep*" (10:12a), and is committed to them.⁴

i. As our Good Shepherd...

1. He provides for and protects his sheep
 - a. John 10:9 *I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.*
 - b. John 10:28 *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.*
2. He lays down his life for his sheep⁵
 - a. John 10:11 *"The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*
 - b. John 10:15 *"I lay down my life for the sheep.*
 - c. John 10:17–18 *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.*
 - d. The Father sent him to die for his sheep. And the Father commanded that he not abandon his sheep, but rise from the dead. And he did.

2. (mid, v.14) "*I know my sheep...*" **Jesus Knows Us**

³ Burge, Gary M. "The Good Shepherd (10:1 - 18)" In *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: John*. By Gary M. Burge, 289. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.

⁴ Burge, Gary M.

⁵ The bad shepherds weren't willing to do that.

- a. John 10:27 *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them*
 - i. Jer. 1:5 *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you*
 - ii. 2 Tim. 2:19 *Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his..."*
 - iii. He knows all about you. Every detail of your life. Every nook and cranny, good and bad...
- 3. (last, v.14) "...and my sheep know me..." **We Must Know Him**
 - a. In the late 1980s the Israeli army decided to punish a village near Bethlehem for not paying its taxes. So the officer (in charge) rounded all the animals up and placed them in a large barbed-wire pen. Later in the week he was approached by a woman who begged him to release her flock, arguing that since her husband was dead, the animals were her only source of livelihood. He pointed to the pen with hundreds of animals and...quipped that it was impossible, because he could not find *her* animals. So she asked that if she could separate them, would he be willing to let her take them? He agreed. A soldier opened the gate and the woman's son produced a small flute. He played a simple tune again and again — and soon, sheep heads began popping up across the pen. The young boy continued his music and walked home, followed by his flock of twenty-five sheep.⁶
 - i. Jesus knows his own sheep; his sheep know his voice.
 - 1. John 10:3 *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.*
 - 2. John 10:4 *...his sheep follow him because they know his voice*
 - 3. John 10:27 *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*⁷
 - ii. Every day we are all faced with a barrage of noises and distractions and untruths ("predators") that compete for our attention. In all of that we've got to decide who we're devoted to and what voice it is we listen to. Jesus 'voice' will ALWAYS lead us⁸
 - iii. We need to know the voice of the shepherd, that is the volume of his voice, the tuning in to his voice needs to be above any other voice in the mix. **What's his voice?** It is what he has said in his word.⁹

⁶ Burge, Gary M.

⁷ 1 John 4:4-6 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

⁸ [Safe in His Arms](#)

⁹ We know it's his voice because his voice always aligns with his word

4. How do we know, we know him?

- a. You know him when you are born again, you know him when you discern the difference between false shepherds and the Good Shepherd, and you know him when there is fruit in your Christian life of following him, listening to him, knowing him and Jesus being Lord, over and above every part of your life.

Communion

I began this message by explaining why I believe this text is important. My response was, it reminds us who Jesus is, it reminds us why we worship Jesus and reminds us of his one-time sacrifice for all who might call him Lord. That last point is important **as we come to share communion**. But there's one more reason Jesus being our Good Shepherd is vital to know. And it has to do with a dichotomy of belief in our Christian lives.

What do I mean? When there are huge uncertainties (be those Covid or otherwise), lot of frustration, when we have family challenges and marriage issues, we, distance ourselves (*we wander*) from prayer, the word of God, fellowship and God himself. When these are the very things we must do. We withdraw instead of drawing near to Christ.

We allow other influences and voices to draw us away from Jesus' voice. I don't think you need convincing that the environment of the world today is as dangerous as the desert Jesus was standing in.

Whatever challenges you have, *be led by him*, wherever you might be confused *listen to him*, whatever doubts you might have, *he cares for you*. **He alone is our Good Shepherd. He knows you and you, must know him.**

Jesus said 3 times in our text today, I lay down my life for my sheep...

John 10:11 *"The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.* John 10:15 *"I lay down my life for the sheep.* John 10:17–18 *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.*

1 Peter 2:25 *For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*