

A message from the past

By David Simpson

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Bible Text: John 10:11-21

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Providence Church

104 Foust Carney Rd.

Powell, TN 37849

Website: www.providenceundergrace.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/providencetoday

Providence for Today welcome you to the study of God's precious and unchanging Word. This is pastor David Simpson on behalf of Providence Church in Powell, Tennessee and, friends, with the gospel of God's sovereign grace. We trust God will powerfully and effectually reveal his Word to our hearts and apply it to our lives. Providence Church place of worship is located at 104 Foust Carney Road. You will find us on Clinton Highway just up from Claxton Elementary School. And when writing, please address mail to PO Box 1467, Powell, Tennessee, that is simply TN 37849. Our website is www.providenceundergrace.com. Many of our sermons are available on SermonAudio.com and then type in pastor David Simpson. Your interest in attendance with us in worship on Sundays at about 10 AM and 11 AM where I will be bringing a message from God's Word in both hours is certainly welcomed.

In our study of the encounters with Jesus in John's gospel we have considered 15 encounters and now we move to a second part of this same encounter for we trace these words back to the healing of the blind man at the pool of Siloam beginning in the ninth chapter in the first verse. The confrontation with the Pharisees which ensued from that miracle continues.

Again, they are trying to stone him and I call this Jesus and his winter encounter with the Pharisees. And I call it so because it says in verse 22 that this was the feast of dedication and it was winter. It was probably about our December the 20th and therefore we are within three months of the trial and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The 10th chapter falls easily into three divisions. Christ the door in verses one through 10. In verse 10 he said, "I am the door." In verses 11 through 21, which will be our focus today, Christ the good shepherd. He said in verse 11, "I am the good shepherd." And then Christ one with the Father in verses 22 through 42. In verse 30 the Lord Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." Today we will consider the second of these, Christ the good shepherd.

Now the religious leaders, the Pharisees, were called the shepherds of Israel. Listen to what Ezekiel said of these shepherds of Israel. It says in chapter 34 of Ezekiel:

And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.¹

So this is a picture that goes back to the time of Ezekiel which was the time of the Babylonian captivity and it continued down to the day of Christ. However, God also in the book of Ezekiel, continued in that same passage distinguished himself from the false shepherds. It says in verse 11 of Ezekiel 34:

For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.²

Well, that is the kind of shepherd that the Lord Jesus Christ was. And good shepherds are types of Christ in the Old Testament. There are actually six of these that are spoken of. Let me try to set this for you quickly. Abel is referred to in Genesis 4:2 as a keeper of the sheep. Jacob said to Laban his father-in-law, "I will feed and keep your flock," in Genesis 30 and verse 31. It says of Joseph, the first time we hear of him, that he was feeding the flock, again, Genesis 37 and two. And it says of Moses that he kept the flock of Jethro—that was his father-in-law—in Exodus three and verse one.

"David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him."³

That is in 1 Samuel 17:34 and 35.

And then number six there was one referred to as the idol shepherd. It says in Zechariah in chapter 11:

"Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock!"⁴

¹ Ezekiel 34:1-4.

² Ezekiel 34:11-12.

³ 1 Samuel 17:34-35.

⁴ Zechariah 11:17.

The false shepherd is the one that he is talking about here having the devious doctrine of antichrist.

I don't think it is any mistake that he is the actual sixth shepherd that is spoken of, for six is the number of man. It is the number of all false doctrine, all antichrist doctrine. It is the idol shepherd. I don't think it is also a mistake when we come to the seventh shepherd and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He says in this passage, "I am the good shepherd." He was the one distinguished from national Israel's shepherds. Rather, he is the shepherd of spiritual and elect Israel, the one typified by the patriarchs of the faith in the Old Testament, the one appointed, called and sent of the heavenly Father.

Isaiah said in chapter 40 and verse 11:

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."⁵

That is in Isaiah 40 and verse 11. Christ claimed to be the divine shepherd, the gracious and merciful shepherd. He is called the good shepherd who gives his life of the sheep, he said of himself. Good is a word that here means constitutionally good, naturally good, good within. It expresses beauty and harmony, completeness, balance, proportion, entirely worthy. He is good in every way.

And then he says the good shepherd gives. This word gives is a word that means to place or to set. Christ set himself in the place of sacrifice. In verses 15, 17 and 18 of John 10 that same word is translated lay down. That is a good translation, for he set himself, he laid down himself. You see, no man takes his life. Remember, he laid it down.

By reference to his life is a reference to all that he is. Goodness is expressed in him by him laying down his body and his soul. Isaiah said:

"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin."⁶

Yes, both his body and his soul were an offering for sin in Isaiah 53 and verse 10.

He gave his life for, it says. The preposition for is one that means in behalf of, for the sake of, in the room of, in the stead of. It is substitution in the most absolute sense. He stepped into the place of the fallen sinner and took his place. In John 17 and verse nine Jesus said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." That means he set aside himself. He set himself apart. He laid down his body and his soul on behalf of those given to him by the Father. And then he distinguished those given to him by the Father as the sheep. I give my life for the sheep, those distinguished from the sheep fold earlier spoken of in John 10 and verse one, those identified as the sheep also here in 10 and verse seven, the door of the sheep. And the sheep are so by election from the foundation of the world. They are

⁵ Isaiah 40:11.

⁶ Isaiah 53:10.

sheep by redemption at the cross. And they are sheep by the effectual call of grace by the Holy Spirit in time and experience.

Now verse 12 says here in John 10:

“But he that is an hireling...”⁷

So he starts of saying he that is a hireling and so in this verse and verse 13 he is going to distinguish those who are the false prophets. He calls him a hireling. He is not the owner, but one who is hired and motivated by gain. They are typical of false ministers who translate themselves into ministers of righteousness, Paul called them in 2 Corinthians 11 and verse 15, but they are truly minister of Satan. They love not the gospel of free grace. They feel a system of requirements and conditions and works. They despise and perhaps are ignorant of justification by the imputation of righteousness at the cross. But when they hear it they spurn it and turn from it.

On the other hand when God’s sheep hear the message of free and sovereign grace, that grace by which one is justified in connection with the work of Christ at the cross and that alone, they love it. They are attracted to it. They want to hear more about it.

So he says that he is a hireling and not the shepherd, not the redeemer and not the redeemer’s servants. Listen to the tenderness in the apostle Peter in 1 Peter five.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.⁸

That is in 1 Peter chapter five beginning with verse one.

You see, these hirelings are not the shepherd, for the shepherds of the Lord have a ready mind and they are examples and they love the flock of God.

And then he goes on to say:

“... whose own the sheep are not...”⁹

Not theirs by redemption, not theirs by calling. They may have a large following of goats, but the sheep are not theirs. You see, the sheep are only going to follow the shepherd.

⁷ John 10:12.

⁸ 1 Peter 5:1.

⁹ John 10:12.

And he sees the wolf coming, he says, and leaves the sheep and flees. The wolf catches them and scatters the sheep.

Notice the power of these action words, these verbs: sees, leaves, flees, catches, scatters. Very strong words, the very same that is said of the idol shepherd in Zechariah 11:17 we spoke of a little earlier. He scatters them and leaves them.

In verse 13 he says the hireling flees because he is a hireling and cares not for the sheep. When exposed to falsehood, danger or the devil himself, they flee. They have no investment in the truth or in the sheep. When their dark hearts are exposed to light they choose darkness.

The word care is an important word. It says the hireling and he cared not for the sheep. The word care means concern and interest of genuine nature. It is care that results in taking care of. They are devoid of care for others, neither their everlasting souls nor their temporal well being. They are indifferent. That is the worst state of life, to become indifferent. And they are indifferent because they are not their sheep.

But Jesus then turns away from describing the hirelings, the false shepherds in verse 14 and he said:

“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep.”¹⁰

I love this because Christ has an eternal, perfect, universal, exact and special knowledge of his sheep. They are the choice of the godhead, not because of who the sheep are, but because of who God is.

It is true we cannot explain grace totally. Why God would choose one and not another is not for us to determine. But he knows them. He knows them affectionately. He knows them by name. He even knows the hairs of their head. And he knows the days of their life upon this earth. He knows them by predestination. He knows them by providence and he knows them by preservation.

How different is this from what he said to the religious leaders? “I never knew you,” which means that I never at any point, at any time knew you in a personal and saving way. Then he said, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” What is it to work iniquity? Why it is to proclaim a gospel of works and conditions.

The words never that Jesus used here when he said, “I never knew you,” is a combination of two words. The first part of that word means not even and the second part of that word means at any time. So not at even and not at any time. It has the power of a double negative. I know never at any time ever had a saving knowledge of you. He didn’t know them in eternal election. He didn’t know them in his saving purposes. He didn’t know them in his shedding of blood. He will not know them in the call of grace. And he will not know them in the glorification of his saints.

¹⁰ John 10:14.

Oh, it is a sad and dark thing when he says, “I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep.” And then he says, “I am known of mine.” Not a general, but a special, a spiritual and a saving knowledge. “I am known of mine.”

His own delight in him and have fellowship with him, love him because they... because he first loved them. They rest in him. They find pleasure in him. And they learn to trust him. His sheep know him as the good shepherd by his death in this verse, as the great shepherd by his resurrection in Hebrews 13 and 20, as the chief shepherd by his return in 1 Peter five and four. They know him as the sovereign and Lord of the universe. They know him by the completeness of his suffering unto death to put away the sin of his elect and earn righteousness in their behalf. And they know him because the Father accepted that righteousness and reckoned it to the people that he gave to the Lord Jesus Christ. And this resulted in their full and free and forever forgiveness and justification.

In verse 15 Jesus said this.

“As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father.”¹¹

Now this thought, of course, is connected with verse 14 concerning knowledge as the Father and Son mutually know each other the Son and his sheep mutually know each other.

Now, dear friend, that is a thought to ponder. We can say this and we can know this is true. The Son emptied himself, surrendered his place in heaven, took on the place as a servant, was obedient unto the Father in everything from the heart. The persons of the God have perfect trust in each other. In like manner, the elect, the called children of God know the Son. They know him in obedience. They know him in trust. They know him in love as the Father knows the Son.

And then we have this most significant statement in verse 15.

“I lay down my life for the sheep.”¹²

Clearly he spoke of the cross. He spoke of a limited and particular and effectual laying down of his life.

Paul said this in Romans five beginning in verse six, “For when we were yet without strength...” meaning to help ourselves, nothing we could do, no work to perform, no faith to exercise, to prayer to pray. We were yet with out strength. In due time, at the right time:

...Christ died fro the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But

¹¹ John 10:15.

¹² Ibid.

God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners,
Christ died for us.¹³

Again, that word for is in behalf of, moreover, in the stead of, as the substitute for. Again, so complete was the death of Christ that God could and would require no more. He conditioned the justification and redemption of his chosen sheep on nothing but the obedience of Christ unto death.

In verse 16 Jesus said:

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.”¹⁴

Again, by this fold he meant the Jews. And when he said other sheep he meant the Gentiles. So I have others from among the Gentiles that are going to be part of mine. And he went ahead to say them also I must bring, an imperative, I must bring, meaning he will not and he cannot fail. It was his mission. It is his mission. And they will hear his voice, the effectual call that God extends to the elect.

“...and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”¹⁵

Now this word fold that is here is a Greek word ποιμνη (poym'-nay) and it means flock. That is the best translation of this word. So there shall be one flock. Previously he had used the word fold which refers to a farm. So he calls Israel a farm, but he refers to his elect here as a fold. And both Jews and Gentiles who were called of God are of this one flock. The fold represents the Jews, but the flock refer to his elect, both Jews and Gentiles. And they will have one Lord and one shepherd. The elect Jews and Gentiles bow to and trust in the one shepherd.

In verse 17 Jesus said:

“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.”¹⁶

Now the Father loved the Son as his equal, but Jesus is talking about his mission. And regarding the Son's mission the Father loved the Son due to his perfect obedience from the heart unto death. However, his death wasn't the end for it was followed by resurrection, ascension and session at the right hand of the Father where the Lord Jesus Christ is now seated as the mediator between God and his people upon this earth. But he said, “The Father loves me, because I lay down my life.” He loves him in the midst of his mission, that I might take it again in resurrection.

Verse 18.

¹³ Romans 5:6-8.

¹⁴ John 10:16.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ John 10:17.

“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”¹⁷

In life, death and resurrection he remains sovereign. While he was in incubation in his mother’s womb he was still the sovereign. At the cleansing of the temple he declared:

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”¹⁸

John 2:19.

They thought he spoke of Herod’s temple, but, no, he spoke of his own body and his own resurrection. By this commandment he referred to his perfect agreement with the Father because he said this commandment have I received of my Father. He is referring to the perfect agreement between himself and the Father and this truth he will further develop as the chapter unfolds. The Lord willing we will look at that next week.

In verse 19 it says:

“There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.”¹⁹

Isaiah had foretold this. Isaiah said in chapter eight and verse 14:

“And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel.”²⁰

By that he meant the southern kingdom and the northern kingdom.

“...for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”²¹

Wow, that is quite a statement. Now we might surprise this, that God could have turned the whole nation towards Christ. He could have brought them to bow at his feet. He could have brought them to obedience and to love of Christ. But this is what we actually see. He only brought a small number and left the rest to their wicked ways, to their rebellious hearts, to their darkened paths and their rejection of their own Messiah. It is the same today. The Lord Jesus Christ was purposed to be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. It was that way in the first century. It is that way in the 21st century.

And then in verse 20 it says—John added this in verse 20:

“And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?”²²

¹⁷ John 10:18.

¹⁸ John 2:19.

¹⁹ John 10:19.

²⁰ Isaiah 8:14.

²¹ Ibid.

Now the human heart is capable of many vile thoughts and in each of us there is a proneness to rejection. But unless God by sovereign power breaks in upon us, turns us to himself and away from ourselves and produces repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be no different than the vile Pharisees.

Then it went on to say, John did, in verse 21:

“Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?”²³

So, you see, he referred back to the incident recorded for us at the beginning of the ninth chapter.

I want you to notice two words here. It says in verse 20 that many of them said. But you will notice in this verse others said. So many called him a devil, but others confirmed his words as true. These must have been a few, for example, like Nicodemus who was among them, that spoke up. And I don't know about you, but when I think about this, I have no desire to be one of the many. I want to be one of the others. I know that the world of religion may frown upon that thought and that position. The majority may have might, but they certainly don't have right. And I would rather be one of the others rather than one of the many.

Well, we have come to the conclusion of our 16th study of the encounters of Jesus in John's gospel. As I have said to you before, each encounter builds on a single premise. And that single premise is that the eternal Word of God entered the human race to put away the sin of his chosen people and earn the righteous satisfaction of the whole law of God. There resulting righteousness God imputed, reckoned or transferred to the spiritual and eternal account of his chosen people. And by that righteousness God's grace stands sufficient and efficient for all the Father gave him. At and by the cross God forgave, redeemed, reconciled and justified his chosen people to himself. By faith they look back upon this full and complete accomplishment of their salvation. In this single message believers find rest for their souls.

May I remind you again that Providence Church is located at 104 Foust Carney Road in Powell, Tennessee? You will find us on Clinton Highway just up from the Claxton Elementary School. And when writing please address mail to PO Box 1467, Powell, Tennessee, that is simply TN 37849. Our website is www.ProvidenceUnderGrace.com. Many of our sermons are available both on SermonAudio.com and type in pastor David Simpson. You can also find Providence Church on Facebook and your interest in attendance with us and worship, of course, is always welcomed. We meet on Sundays at both 10 o'clock and 11 o'clock.

²² John 10:20.

²³ John 10:21.

And the Lord willing we will continue our study of Jesus' encounter as we will be looking at the oneness of Christ with the Father.

I am pastor David Simpson saying, until the next time, "May the light of providence direct all your paths and may the head of providence supply all your needs."