

# The Shepherd and His Sheep

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 29 January 2017

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[ 0 : 00 ] In his book, *Jesus Among Other Gods*, Christian apologist and professor Ravi Zacharias makes the insightful observation that every other religion in the world lays out a way of life for people to follow.

Zoroastrianism says it's people who seek to follow it to pursue good thoughts, good words, good deeds. Hinduism says you should pursue the objectives of human life, which they say are righteousness, wealth, sensual pleasure, and freedom from the birth-rebirth cycle.

Buddhism says to follow the four noble truths and the Eightfold Path, and that will grant you nirvana or enlightenment. And Islam teaches you to follow the five pillars, the declaration of faith, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca.

These are all ways of life that he tells people to follow. If you follow this, then you will be saved, then you will be enlightened. By contrast, Zacharias writes, Jesus did not only teach or expound his message, he was identical with his message.

In him, says the scriptures, dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He did not just proclaim the truth, he said, I am the truth. He did not just show a way, he said, I am the way.

[ 1 : 25 ] He did not just open up vistas, he said, I am the door. I am the good shepherd. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the I am. In him is not just an offer of life's bread, he is the bread.

Right. That fundamentally sets Christianity apart from the other religions, that Jesus doesn't offer simply a way of life, but he offers life itself. He doesn't leave us to strive and to earn our own salvation and may find our way there.

Rather, he takes the initiative and comes to save us and rescue us from our sin. In this sense, Christianity is not like any other religion in the world.

And this pattern of relationship between our Savior Jesus and us is demonstrated in this passage. It teaches that Jesus is the good shepherd set apart and sent by the Father to call, save, and preserve his sheep.

And those are going to be the three main points. It's that the Father calls, the Father sent the good shepherd to call, save, and preserve his sheep. Read verses one to two with me.

[ 2 : 33 ] Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the sheepfold, who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. Given the context and the confrontation that just took place between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, Jesus is implying here that those Jewish leaders are thieves and robbers.

It's the real shepherd of the sheep enters by the sheep pen, the door of the sheep pen, but thieves and robbers enter secretly in order to take advantage of the people. And he's accusing them of being illegitimate shepherds.

And the image of the shepherd and this accusation in particular is stinging and it's significant because in Ezekiel 34, God had prophesied, he had indicted the Jewish leaders at the time of being false shepherds.

It says in Ezekiel 34, Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep.

[ 3 : 40 ] The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd and they became food for all the wild beasts.

Now this was God's indictment, personal indictment of the Jews, the Jewish leaders at the time. But then this skating indictment was followed by a startling promise.

God said himself, Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. I will feed them with good pasture and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost and I will bring back the strayed and I will bind up the injured and I will strengthen the weak.

So God promised this in Ezekiel 34 that he would himself come as the true shepherd to lead Israelites, to lead his people who had not been taken care of and led properly by the Jewish leaders.

[ 4 : 48 ] And this is in fact what Jesus has come to do. Jesus saying he's fulfilling this, he's now the good shepherd that the Father has sent. And now how does the shepherd of Israel relate to his sheep?

In verse 3 it tells us, To him the gatekeeper opens, the sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. Now the scene here is that you shouldn't imagine like a private sheep pen but this seems to be a larger enclosure, a sheep pen that contains several families' flocks and that's why it says that he calls his own sheep by name.

So there's several flocks in that pen and Jesus calls out his sheep, the sheep that belong to him. And so because Jesus is the true shepherd, that tells us who the pastors are supposed to be. So pastors like me, the shepherds, we're really gatekeepers, like the gatekeeper in this parable. He's the shepherd, the true Jesus is the one that truly leads them and we are at best under shepherds, serving under his guidance and we make way for him, for him to come and lead, for him to encounter his sheep.

And that's why we make the person and work of Jesus Christ central to everything that we do in our ministry. It's because it's not about us, it's not about people, it's about encountering and being led by the true shepherd, Jesus Christ.

[ 6 : 07 ] And that's why we let God's word, rather than our personal preferences, opinions, rule and lead our church. So my job or the job of any pastor is not to make you guys loyal to me, to follow me, but to make you loyal to Christ, to follow Christ at all costs.

That's our call. We're just gatekeepers. And when the true shepherd comes to his flock, it says he first calls his flock. Verses three and four.

It says the sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them and the sheep follow him for they know his voice. There's a notable difference between Western shepherds, like shepherds in our parts, and Eastern shepherds, shepherds in Middle East, Asia. And in our parts, in Western parts, the shepherds use sheepdogs, right?

And they drive the sheep from behind them. In Eastern cultures, the shepherds don't use sheepdogs actually. They lead from the front and they use their unique calls to call the sheep to themselves.

[ 7 : 17 ] And so it's remarkable. If there are several flocks and different shepherds, they each have a unique call and when they call, all the sheep that belong to them will follow them. And so that's kind of the picture that is in view here.

Jesus has a specific call for his sheep and they recognize his voice and they follow him. And note the logical priority of the shepherd's call, right?

It's not that the shepherd takes whatever sheep come to him. The shepherd calls the ones that already belong to him, right? And that's why in verses 26 and 27, later Jesus says to the Jewish leaders, you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.

My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me, right? The reason why they don't believe is because they don't belong. It's not that they don't belong because they don't believe, right?

And so if you're a Christian, then we should be assured of the fact that you are one because you have believed in Jesus. Yes, that's true. But even prior to that, you belong to him.

[ 8 : 18 ] You are one of his sheep because he called you. The shepherds called you because you belong to him. You followed because you were already called by Jesus and that should make us, as Christians, immensely grateful for him because it's his grace ultimately that first chose us and called us.

And what that means for those who have not responded to his call then is for you to respond to him because it's in responding to his call, in hearing his call, that you confirm that you belong to his sheep pen, his flock.

So then I want to invite you because I believe there are some here who are hearing his call for the first time then you should not hesitate or delay but come to him because that's where you are confirmed in your identity as one of his sheep.

So the true shepherd calls his own sheep but he goes even further than the traditional Near Eastern shepherd because he calls them each by name.

He calls them individually. He knows each one. And it's such an amazing picture of God's care for us, detailed, intimate, specific care for us.

[ 9 : 23 ] He doesn't just call us out in mass but he chooses and calls us each by name. But once we are called by name though, we are gathered into one flock. We're always gathered or congregated into a flock.

So verse 4 says, When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them and the sheep follow him for they know his voice. The shepherd grazes, guides, and guards the flock together.

He doesn't become a personal shepherd of one sheep. In a sense it is but he always gathers and congregates the sheep together. And that's why in verse 16 also Jesus says, So there will be one flock and one shepherd.

And that's actually what the word church means. The church, in Greek, the word means to be called out, the called out ones. So the church is a group of people congregated to sheep that have been called out by the true shepherd.

That's what a church is. And since today is Membership Sunday, which is a really joyful occasion for us inducting five new members, I want to use this passage just to briefly teach on the importance of church membership before returning to the rest of the passage.

[ 10 : 33 ] Because membership is not explicitly mentioned in the Bible and the reason why it's not mentioned is because for the most part it's assumed in the early church. When you are baptized in the early church, you are assumed to be then from that moment a part of that local church that baptized that person.

And that became now your new family, the family of God and people were wholeheartedly committed to that new community. But since the second great awakening in the U.S., Christianity has become much more about personal piety.

You know, Jesus, just me and my Bible, having my own personal relationship with Him. And that emphasis on community has really fallen by the wayside. But the Bible doesn't know of any such self-centered Christianity.

It speaks of us being born into family. When you're born, physically, biologically, you're born into a family. It could be a broken family. It could be an adoptive family.

It could be a rich family. It could be a poor family. But when you're born, no one can be born in isolation. When you're born, you're born into a family. In the same way as a Christian, when you're born again by the Spirit, you're born into a family.

[ 11 : 42 ] You can't be born again and be a Christian apart from being born again into a family of God. the same way you can't become a part of Christ without being part of the body of Christ.

The community is essential to what it means to be a Christian. And so then the early church understood this and so they took community seriously and cared for one another, asked for their own families.

But because we live in a time and culture where privatized Christianity is the norm and when there's a lot of nominal Christians, church membership is necessary to tell us who exactly is part of the flock, who is actually part of God's people.

And the pastors as undershepherds and gatekeepers need to know who belong to the flock and other members of the church also need to know who belongs to the flock so that they can minister to one another as God calls us to.

So maybe at this point you might be thinking to yourself, well, why can't I just do that without becoming a member? Why is that formal process necessary? Why can't I just be a part of church and come every Sunday and minister to people without being a member?

[ 12 : 51 ] And maybe this illustration would be helpful for you because many of you have dated before, right? And if you have, unfortunately, some of you might have experienced a relationship that Facebook classifies as it's complicated, right?

And if you've been in one of those relationships, you understand the importance of defining the relationship, right? Because there are a few things more relationally frustrating than having a semi-significant other that takes you out on dates, texts you way late at night, and then, you know, and calls you way too frequently, yet refuses to say whether he or she is actually your boyfriend or girlfriend, right?

That leaves you in a state of insecurity and indecision, doesn't it? Right? It's in this kind of relationship that irresponsible, semi-significant other can simply just one day stop talking to you, refuse to acknowledge you and leave you, and there's nothing you can do about it.

Because there was no responsibility taken by that person in the first place, so there can be no accountability. There's nothing you can do. The relationship was never official. This kind of illustrates the importance of that formal process, right?

The church membership lets pastors and other members of the church know whether you're committed or not, whether you're in or not, whether you're saying, yes, we're going to live with this community, care for this community, exhort one another, confess our sins to one another, greet one another, care for one another in each other's needs, yes, I'm committing to do that with this group of people.

[14:22] That's what church membership tells us. It defines that relationship so we can be free to care for one another and obey God's commandments. So then the shepherd calls his own sheep and in so doing, he constitutes the church and those who are called by him follow him.

It says in verse 5, a stranger they will not follow but they will flee from him for they do not know the voice of strangers. Isn't that such a wonderful picture of Christian discipleship, right?

Christ leads us on the head, he calls to us and we follow his voice and we disregard all other voices because he alone is our shepherd. And that's an important truth because if you're a Christian and your ultimate allegiance is not to your parent, it's not to your spouse, it's not to your coach, it's not to your president, it's not even to your pastor.

Your ultimate allegiance is to Christ and Christ alone. And if anyone, any one of those people seek to draw you away from Jesus, then it's not merely your right, it's your duty to flee from that, to not follow that.

And that's in fact what a Christian does. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. And interestingly enough, governments throughout history that have sought absolute power for themselves have always persecuted Christians.

[15:49] And I think because they understood this truth perhaps even better than we do today.

They knew their ultimate allegiance was not to them. The Christian's ultimate allegiance was to Jesus. There's a story that Roman historian Eusebius writes about a time, AD 177, a Christian was being tormented for his faith, persecuted by the authorities.

And he writes this about him. With such determination did he stand up to their onslaughts that he would not tell them his own name, race, and birthplace, or whether he was slave or free.

To every question he replied in Latin, I am a Christian. I am a Christian. I am a Christian. This he proclaimed over and over again instead of name, birthplace, nationality, and everything else.

And not another word did the heathen hear from him. That's where our true allegiance lies. Christ. We're first and foremost before anything else a Christian.

And then, so that's what the shepherd, the shepherd calls his sheep and then constitutes the church. And then the shepherd also saves.

[16:59] This figure of speech, this metaphor of the shepherd changes slightly in verse 7 because they changed to serve the purpose of the author. And it says, truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

So Jesus is not only the shepherd of the sheep, now he says, I am the door of the sheep pen. And so, and he continues, I am the door in verse 9.

If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. In other words, Jesus is saying that he's the sole means by which we can be saved.

He's the only way to God the Father. There's no other way. There's no other door. The only way to come to him is through him. And this metaphor switches back and forth in verse 8 and 10.

It says, All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. In verse 10, the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

[ 17 : 59 ] And I think here, as Jesus talks about all those who came before him who are thieves and robbers, he probably has in mind not only the illegitimate Jewish leaders who are leading the people astray, but also any false pretenders.

There's been a lot of messiahs, so-called messiahs, who pretended to be the promised messiah, and they all failed in their claims.

And if Jesus is the only one, if he's the only true shepherd, then of course, not only all those who came before him, but also all those who came after him who seek to supplement what he taught are also false teachers.

They're also robbers and thieves. They're not coming in through the door. Only Jesus is the true shepherd who can save his sheep, and it's he that has come that we may have life and have it abundantly.

The fulfillment that you seek, the life abundant that we all desire can only come from Jesus, and that includes spiritual eternal life here and now and the resurrection life that is to come in the future.

[ 19 : 05 ] And Jesus continues, and this gets into one of the favorite passages for most people, verses 11 and 15. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd who does not own the sheep sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees. And the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me just as the father knows me and I know the father and I lay down my life for the sheep.

So this difference that we know between a hired hand and a true shepherd, just like a nanny is not going to take care of the child in the same way that a parent does, right?

So the true shepherd takes care of his sheep in a way that a hired hand can't come close to. A hired hand, I mean no matter how responsible or conscientious they are, you can guarantee if a wolf's coming at them, they're going to run to save their own skin, right?

[ 20 : 11 ] The sheep doesn't belong to them. He doesn't own them, right? But shepherd, the true shepherd, the one who owns the sheep, Jesus says he will lay down his own life for them.

And I think we need to kind of tweak our image of the shepherd a little bit because for us, we've seen so many pictures and when we think of the good shepherd, we have this image of this kind of congenial face with this cuddly lamb in his arms.

That's what we think of a good shepherd, this kind of a softy kind of a person, right? The good shepherd. But that's not at all the picture of a shepherd that the original readers and hearers of this word would have had because in the Near Eastern context of John, a shepherd is one of the most grueling professions there is because remember that it's a desert, that they're in a desert climate, so you have to walk a long way of scattered patches here and there to get adequate food for all your flock.

So this involves a lot of walking and not only that, there are wild animals seeking to claim your sheep and you have to be willing to fend them up whether it be wolves or marauding bears or whatever they may be.

And so it's no wonder that this man, he was a Scottish theologian named George Adam Smith and he traveled to Palestine and came back and wrote an atlas about the region and that's still used as standard textbook in some places and in it he writes about the shepherd.

[ 21 : 34 ] On some high moor across which at night the hyenas howl when you meet him sleepless, farsighted, weather beaten, leaning on his staff and looking out over his scattered sheep, every one of them on his heart, you understand why the shepherd of Judea sprang to the front in his people's history, why they gave his name to their king and made him the symbol of providence, why Christ took him as a type of self-sacrifice.

The shepherd, the rugged, strong, courageous, and noble shepherd, that's the good shepherd and that's what the word good can mean.

It means noble, worthy, as well as good as we typically understand it. And that reminds me of the, you guys, many of you have read the Chronicles of Narnia series, right?

Lion, the witch, and the wardrobe. There's a great conversation that Lucy has with Mr. Beaver about the prospect of meeting Aslan the lion and Mr. Beaver says, Aslan is a lion, the lion, the great lion.

Oh, Susan actually, oh, says Susan, I thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.

[ 22 : 56 ] And then Mr. Beaver says, Safe? Who said anything about safe? Of course he isn't safe, but he's good. He's the king, I tell you.

That's our good shepherd. He's not safe. He's not tame. He's not a softie, but he's the courageous, the noble king, the shepherd, the good shepherd.

And he not only calls us, he saves us by laying down his life for the sheep. And this sacrifice is not accidental, or it's not something that he can't help but do, but rather it's something that Jesus willingly does.

He sacrifices himself. Verse 17, 18, I lay down my life that I may 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 I have authority to take it up again. So imagine this shepherd maybe looking at this disease that's taking over his flock or staring at this wolf that is coming at his flock.

[ 23 : 59 ] He stares him down in the face and decides he's going to lay down his life for his flock. That's what Jesus does. He sees sin plaguing us and leading us to eternal death and separation from God.

He stares death in the face and he says, I lay down my life for my sheep. That's what Jesus does. He saves us. And he does that because he loves his father and that's the charge he has received from him.

And this truth that Jesus saves the sheep that belong to him, that he has already called, has great implications for our evangelism as well.

Because sometimes people say, well, if you already know the sheep, if God already knows the sheep that belong to him, then there would be no reason for us to evangelize. Well, that's actually quite the opposite.

Because if you recall the parable that Jesus tells in Luke 15, he tells the parable of a good shepherd and the shepherd leaves the 99 sheep in his flock behind to go find that one missing sheep.

[ 25 : 10 ] And about this, he says, what man of you having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the 99 in the open country and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

Did you catch that question in the beginning? He says, what man of you wouldn't do this? He assumes that that's exactly what we'd do. This is not remarkable for him. And do you know why that's not remarkable?

Because he says they're his sheep. We would go to great lengths to find the stuff that belongs to us that we're missing. Like, think for a moment about the person maybe that's dearest to you.

Maybe your son or daughter or a loved one, a spouse or a sibling, a parent, and imagine they go missing. Oh, there's a few things I wouldn't do to go find that person.

It's because they're ours. They belong to us. And so that's what Jesus says. You see, the reason why we often don't love and seek sinners and unbelievers, it's not because we don't think that they're lost.

[ 26 : 21 ] It's because we don't see them as belonging to our God, as belonging to our family. We're God's people in here. They're God's enemies out there.

They're strangers, non-relations. Others. But the truth is that there are people who belong to God, the sheep for whom our good shepherd laid down his life out there.

There are brothers and sisters in our family and the family of God who are currently missing and they're out there. There's compatriots in the kingdom of God who are in a foreign land without citizenship, without rights out there.

there are comrades in the army of God held prisoner out there. That's why we go to reclaim people that belong rightly to our God and to our Father.

We don't go to minister to people, evangelize people that God has no claim on. Oh, you're on this neutral ground and we're going to bring you and convince you ourselves. No, they belong to him. They're his sheep.

[ 27 : 29 ] That's why we, with passion and zeal, with love, we go after those sheep. This should give us great faith and hope in our evangelism. So the good shepherd calls and saves his sheep and once he has saved them, the final thing he does is he preserves them.

Now, verse 24, Jews ask him after all this dialogue, how long will you keep us in suspense?

If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. And Jesus makes it plain to them, I did tell you, you just didn't believe. I mean, if you've been with us for even just one week, you know Jesus makes this abundantly clear throughout the Gospel of John that he is the Son of God, the Son of Man. He is the bread of life, the living water, the new temple of God, the true Son. He said all these things and not only that, not only has he said these things, not only his words testify to this, but his works. He says in verse 25, the works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me. He's told them and he has shown it to them and they don't believe. So he rebukes them. You do not believe because you are not among my sheep.

[ 28 : 38 ] In contrast, verses 27 to 30, my sheep hear my voice and I know them. and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

My Father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one. No one can snatch the sheep out of the good shepherd's hand, not wolves, not thieves, not robbers, not anyone and the reason for that, the reason why the security of his sheep is guaranteed is because Jesus and by relation to God the Father himself stand behind that promise and guarantees it and because the Father who has given them to Jesus is greater than all so no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

if the Father were not strong enough, if the Father were not smart enough, if the Father was not capable enough, then we would have cause to worry but the Father is greater than all and no one can snatch them out of his hand.

It would be infinitely more futile than a toddler trying to steal a soccer ball from Lionel Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo, right, trying to run after them and you can't snatch them out of the Father's hand. A pastor, a friend of mine, actually made me, I just wanted to ask actually first, do you feel secure in your salvation?

[ 30 : 16 ] Do you feel assured in that? Because a lot of people live in insecurity and anxiety about their own salvation.

Maybe you're one of those people who have these doubts that persistently creep up. Is that really true? Do I really believe that?

And you wonder whether you're a real Christian at all. Maybe you're one of those people who have been dealing with a rather pernicious sin, a besetting sin that you just can't seem to shake off.

And then you wonder, if I do that, am I really a Christian? Or maybe you've done something that you think is so heinous that you don't think God can forgive you and you wonder, can I really be saved?

Can God really save me? And to you, God would say, your preservation is not up to you. It's up to the Father.

[ 31 : 19 ] It's up to the Good Shepherd. And no one can snatch you out of His hand. Pastor, a friend of mine sent me a video which was totally random because he's the kind of guy who never watches YouTube.

And it was entitled Brave Bear Cub Against Cougar. And it seems quite realistic as you watch it. And there's a cub, a bear cub, who is being attacked by a cougar.

And it's just a cub, so the cub is not strong enough to get away from the cougar. He flees, he runs, and in one desperate measure he jumps into a river and climbs onto a floating, you know, a piece of wood.

And the cougar is way smarter than him, so he runs right downstream to the end and just waits for him to come to him. And he's there and you're watching this and you're starting to freak out and like, oh no, it's going to happen.

And so the bear gets there and the cougar starts slashing him. And the bear tries to roll, I mean, just to roar against him, but he, I mean, the cougar's not scared of this little bear cub, so he keeps going.

[ 32 : 30 ] And then in a weird turn of events, you hear this really kind of loud, unusual roar from this cub. And then this cougar just kind of whimpers and scampers off, runs away.

And then the camera pans away and then it shows what's actually going on is that that wasn't the bear cub at all. The mother bear had arrived and she's standing on her hind leg behind the cub and roaring at the wolf so the wolf flees.

Right? No one dares to rob a mother bear of its cub. Our good shepherd, our father in heaven, guards you.

And he neither sleeps nor slumbers. So be assured of your salvation. Amen. And the reason why we can be assured of this, that Jesus, the true shepherd, calls us, saves us, and preserves us is because he's the consecrated one, the sent one.

note that this happens at the Feast of Dedication. That's not a feast that's commanded in the Old Testament but it's what we know as Hanukkah.

[ 33 : 57 ] Right? So this is, they're celebrating Hanukkah, the Jews here. And the Hanukkah celebrates a time when, so there was a Syrian ruler who took over the temple, overran Jerusalem, took over the temple and set aside, set a pagan altar inside the temple and in doing so he desecrated the temple.

And the Jews fought a successful guerrilla warfare led by a man named Judas Maccabeus and he, and they took it over again and then re-consecrated the temple and Hanukkah celebrates the re-consecration of this temple.

That's what's called Feast of Dedication. And in Jesus, in this, in this context, during the Feast of Dedication, the consecration, he says, whom the, he is the one whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world.

So Jesus is making a deliberate connection to the feast that they're celebrating. And so when these Jewish leaders accuse Jesus of, of claiming to be God even though he's a mere man, he gives this answer which might be a little bit enigmatic at first but I'll explain.

It's a quotation from Psalm 82, 6-7. I said, you are God's sons of the Most High, all of you. And, and if that's what the Word of God says, if you call them gods to whom the Word of God came and Scripture cannot be broken, do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, you are blaspheming because I said, I am the Son of God.

[ 35 : 34 ] God, this is probably as good a passage as any to teach on angels. I mean, you guys have, there's a lot of fascination with angels and messengers nowadays. But this Psalm 82, if you go back and look at it, it paints a scene of God assembling these sons of God who are angelic beings and he rebukes them for their miscarriage of justice.

God had given them to rule and judge parts of nations throughout the world and they have failed in their task. So God says to them, I said, you are God, sons of the Most High, all of you.

Nevertheless, like men, you shall die and fall like any prince.

So this is God's punishment for their miscarriage of justice. And then the Psalm ends with the prayer that God would rise up and judge the earth and inherit all the nations.

And that's what Jesus has in fact come to do. And so in biblical cosmology, there's God, the Supreme Being at the top and then there's archangels, right? And we don't know of very many of them.

The only ones we know from the Bible are Michael and Gabriel. And at that level seems to be another evil being who opposes God named Lucifer. It's actually not a name. The name's not mentioned in the Bible.

[ 36 : 43 ] But 2 Corinthians 11, 14 says that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. And Lucifer means shining one or light bearer, so it's fitting for him. So that God at the top and these angelic beings who are leaders of angels and below them is what the Bible calls sons of God whom God has given dominion over certain nations throughout the world.

And then he promises in Psalm 82 to disinherit them and to come himself to rule and gather all the nations to himself and to be the judge over all the earth.

And that's why the promise in Matthew 24, 14 is, and this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come, right?

That's why the mission we go to all the nations and that's part of God's promise already given in Psalm 82 of gathering all the nations to himself. And Jesus, in effect, is saying, if these lower angelic beings can be, in a sense, called gods, how much more the Son, the consecrated one whom the Father himself sent, so he justifies.

And that's the guarantee. It's because he's that special envoy, the unique Son whom the Father sent as the ultimate revelation representation of God, we can be assured that he can call us, save us, and preserve us.

[ 38 : 13 ] And Jesus, being a good shepherd, does many good works, but the greatest one, the one that is most good that he does, is what he does on the cross.

And we already see a glimpse of that here in verse 40. It says that he went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained.

If you recall, Jesus began his ministry where John was baptizing, his public ministry, and now that public ministry is coming to a close. And after this, at the end of this chapter, now we're in earnest going directly to and swiftly going to the cross.

Jesus is on his way to the cross now. And that's the ultimate good work. And the Jews accuse Jesus of being a man, but making himself out to be God. But actually, quite the opposite is true, because Jesus is God, yet he takes on human mortality.

Jesus is the holy one, the consecrated one, yet he bears our sin on the cross. Jesus is the eternal one, the God of all creation, yet he dies a human's death.

[ 39 : 23 ] And it's his humiliation that opens the door to our glory. It's his death that opens the door to our eternal life.

I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. my prayer for you this morning is that you will hear his call, be saved by him.

Let's pray together. God, we thank you that you did not leave us to our own devices, but you took the initiative to come and save us.

We thank you for the good shepherd, the good shepherd who calls, saves, and preserves us. And we pray that you would enable us to entrust ourselves to him and to grow deeper in our relationship with him each day.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.