

Life Following Jesus

John 10:1-10

Beginner's Church Dismissal – If you are 3 or 4 years old, and your parents would like you to go to Beginner's Church, you are welcome to head out of the auditorium near the Entrance 2 doors, where you will have a teaching time for the rest of the service.

I want to welcome our Facebook friends that are watching online. Don't be opening any tabs on that browser while I am preaching! 😊 And since I only getting to preach once instead twice this morning, I am doubling the length of my sermon.

We began, a while ago, a very inconsistent series on the 7 I AM statements found in the book of John. In fact, I told you that this series would be so off and on again, we would grow old together by the time I finished it. I've got bad news – it's been six months since the last time we were in this together – we are all a half year older now. Some of you have had birthdays since then – there have been kids born – my gray hair count is rapidly increasing. I mean, I am pretty sure Tim has had like six grandkids since I preached last. Before I depress you too much, let's jump into our time together in the word.

The "I AM" statements in John are passages of Scripture where Jesus describes himself – and there we find much truth about how we can know him and follow him. We discussed how Jesus was the bread of life, the One who ultimately satisfies. The second statement was that Jesus was the light of the world, the One who illuminates the darkened, sinful condition of every man and woman and gives hope to the believer. A few chapters later, Jesus reveals His third "I AM" statement.

Background: In the previous chapter, John 9, Jesus has just performed a miracle – a spectacular one. He has restored the sight of a man that had been blind since His birth. And the story of the miracle spreads like wildfire, because if you read this chapter, you find that this once-blind man was very excited to tell the story of how he got to see for the first time in his life. Word of mouth was how news spread back in Jesus' time, and the people were talking. Jesus' popularity is increasing. And if you were here last week, you will remember Brian preaching on the story of Mary and Martha and Lazarus – Brian read us the account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead – which was the peak of his popularity during his ministry on earth. We are in John 10 – right in between

two big stories – a man's sight being restored and Lazarus being raised from the dead.

So turn with me to John 10. As I read chapter 10, there's a closeness, a personal feeling about these words from Jesus. I don't know about you but when someone says close, personal words, it causes me to listen. It causes me to focus. My mind works and processes their words quickly and intentionally.

I. Jesus shepherds His people personally. (vs. 1-5)

Explanation: *Let's read vs. 1-5.* You notice anything in these verses? We see a story or analogy. We see a few things here. First of all, we see the shepherd/sheep analogy. In fact, we are talking a lot about sheep. This was one of the greatest pictures that could have been used back in the Middle East during Jesus' time, and the Bible used stories about sheep frequently. Looking back through the Bible, we see that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David— all those Bible people – they were all shepherds. This was a great, current illustration for Jesus to use. The people that are listening to Jesus should immediately understand what He is trying to explain.

Here in verse 1, Jesus is describing the shepherd scene, and he is using sheep as a picture of his followers. So when you see the word sheep in this passage, know what Jesus is talking about – his followers/believers. Now in Jesus' story, he describes a sheepfold. I have picture of a sheepfold for you on the screen. A sheepfold was a walled enclosure, usually near a house or several houses. And, in the sheepfold, often several people or families kept their sheep all together in this enclosure overnight. And, during the night, those families would hire a gatekeeper to watch over all of their sheep because sometimes during the night, as was mentioned in verse 1, you got people trying to steal the sheep. And, sometimes, as in this picture, there isn't a physical door. The gatekeeper was the literal door. He would be on watch. As mentioned in the verse, if you have people climbing over the walls, or looking for a weakness in this sheepfold to get in, they aren't there for any good purpose. They are thieves and robbers. Just like today, right? If you see someone at night that you don't recognize climbing over your backyard fence, you probably are thinking they aren't up to any good. If you see someone at night trying to pry open one of the windows in your house, you usually assume this probably isn't a great scenario.

But then Jesus talks about who belongs in the sheepfold—it is the Shepherd. In verse 2 and the beginning of verse 3, the Shepherd can walk right up to the

door and the gatekeeper opens it right up. He belongs there. As verse 3 continues, it gets to my favorite part. The shepherd will call out his sheep to follow Him out to the pasture. Not all the sheep in the fold will follow. Since there are sheep from several families there, they don't all come to any voice. The shepherd calls out only His sheep and only His sheep follow. And when the sheep hear that voice that they are accustomed to, they know that's who they supposed to follow. They won't follow anyone else, in fact, they will flee from a stranger. The Shepherd personally leads his flock, and his sheep follow Him.

There's truth for us here. I hope you see this in these verses. Time and time again, we see this in the Bible – if you follow Jesus, you listen to and obey his words. In fact, flip back in your Bibles just a couple pages and find John 8:47. *"Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."* I'm concerned that there are many that identify with Jesus through their words, but not with living it out – not with actions. These words are meant to be a caution to us. Do we speak of God, but not act upon it? The opposite is also true of followers of Jesus – they flee from things that aren't good. Do you see that in verse 5? A sheep won't follow a stranger, but rather flee from him. We aren't told exactly who or what that stranger is, but we get a fairly clear idea that this a negative thing – they are fleeing from something that is not *helpful* to following their Shepherd. I don't want to spend all my time here, but there is great wisdom in intentionally examining your life to see if there are things there that don't help you follow Jesus.

- Teens, there is great wisdom in going to sleep on Saturday night at an hour that will allow you to be refreshed and ready to worship Jesus on Sunday morning. YouTube and Netflix and hanging with friends until 2 am might seem tempting, but it may not be helpful for you to follow your God. Decide now how you will prepare to know and worship God.
- Kids, it's really good when you are in Sunday school or in Awana that you listen and memorize those Bible verses your teachers help you with. You could goof off and not pay attention, but it will really help you if you exercised all of that brain power you have and hide God's word in your heart. (And, kids, guess what? It's really good for us adults to do same thing).
- And us adults, we ought to examine our lives often to see where our place our priorities and use our resources. What's most important to you? It is to know God and serve him? Sheep stray from their Shepherd – so we need to be listening to the words of Jesus and examining our thoughts and motives to see if they line up.

But it's not just warnings from Jesus – there is also encouragement all throughout this passage. I especially love verse 3. It says that he calls His sheep by name. Studying that phrase this week was so very humbling. My God calls me by name. He knows me, George Myers, and He calls me by name to follow Him. I don't deserve that kind of care and treatment. That's God's grace. That's His care and provision. Sometimes, there are times in life where we can think we are all alone, but God says we are closely watched, protected, provided, guided, and loved by God. We remember that the Shepherd called all of his sheep by name. But you know, there were many sheep in the fold that didn't follow Him because they didn't know His voice, and He didn't know them.

So Jesus offers a beautiful invitation. (vs. 6-10)

Explanation: Let's read vs. 6-10. After Jesus gets done speaking about the shepherd and his sheep, the people listening to Jesus didn't understand. So Jesus explains it to them again. And here we find the "I AM" description. Jesus says that He is the door of the sheep. In verse 8, he talks to about thieves and robbers – which is probably referring to those who tell others to follow their own ways or to worship other gods. But we see a difference here - Jesus says He is the only one. And, as we come to verse 9, Jesus says it again - He is the door. The only way to salvation is through Him. Jesus knows that in just a short time He will die on the cross to save the people from their sins. And this is because we are in need of saving, and Jesus is the one who rescues. He is the One, the only One that can save. And life following Jesus means that our salvation is only the beginning of seeing how good God is.

There is something special about Jesus as the door. Maybe I can illustrate this way.

- **Illustration:** One of my closest friends that I had after college was previously employed by the Secret Service. Now how we became good friends is sort of a mystery to me because our backgrounds didn't really match up. And he had waaaaay better stories than I did. He told me stories from his old job about protecting the President of the United States, and I told him stories from my old job about how cool it was to be a cashier at a grocery store. I couldn't compete with that. While you picture Secret Service guys hanging off the sides of the presidential limousine with fourteen machine guns clipped to their belt, however, a lot of the work they do is very monotonous. But it amazed me to hear how much time and effort goes into protecting the POTUS. I thought I knew, but I really didn't understand the scope of the efforts. Weeks before the President goes anywhere, teams are

already scouting locations and preparing for the visit. Around the clock efforts before, during, and after a visit are routine. The President receives the greatest protection of any individual on the planet. No one can get close to him without many checks and reviews. They are the gateway to reach the most powerful person in the world. *There are many checks and doorways you have to walk through to reach the president, but the door to reach Jesus, well, it's open.*

I hope you notice the open invitation to come to Jesus. Do you see that in verse 9? You (“if anyone”) can freely enter through the door. The entrance is not closed. You are not denied entrance. You can come to Jesus.

Application: Jesus is offering salvation to anyone who enters through him. He is the door. He is the only way to salvation. What does it mean to follow Jesus? It's believing that Jesus is enough. That means putting your faith in God to find you clean and innocent of all your sins because of what Jesus has done for you on the cross. It's believing it's not your righteousness that earns you favor with God. It's Jesus' righteousness that allows us into the family of God. Be believing and be repenting (turning from your sins). It's hating your sin and leaving it behind. That's what it means to enter into the door that Jesus holds open for you.

Why do we hesitate? What causes us to refuse the invitation?

- **We might think we aren't good enough to accept an invitation from Jesus.** I don't deserve it. I can't walk through that door to God because he could never accept me for what I have done. You're right. You don't deserve it. It is part of the beauty of the gospel – none of us deserve to come to Jesus. But God is so good he chases sinners and invites them to follow him. Be rightfully overwhelmed that God is that good to me.
- **We might mistakenly find other invitations more appealing than what Jesus offers.** You know what I mean? Our lifestyles are largely entertainment-driven, pleasure-filled, and my happiness-exalting. A lifestyle like that tells us something very false. It tells us an invitation to follow Jesus is mediocre. It tells us that Jesus is not as good as what we can create. It tells us that what is on my computer screen is better than reading the Bible. It tells us that my enjoyable activities are routinely better than meeting together on Sunday morning to worship. Our busy lifestyle tells us that prayer is simply something I'll get around to if I have nothing else to do. It tells us that walking with Jesus can't compete with acting on what my feelings tell me to do. FBC, be careful that you are not following the invitations of things that will not satisfy

you. What many pursue with their life is woefully inferior to the invitation Jesus offers you to follow him.

You might ask, how is this invitation so good? What does Jesus offer that's better than anything else?

Following Jesus brings abundant life. (vs. 10)

Explanation: *Look at verse 10.* Jesus' invitation to walk through the door to come to him means something. There's a big contrast going on here – we are comparing those thieves and robbers that are living to satisfy their own needs through stealing and destroying, and Jesus who is looking to satisfy his own followers. Because here Jesus says, if you live for me, you not only will live life, but you will live it *abundantly*. That seems to be the key word in this verse, doesn't it? *Abundantly*. This word has the idea of being superior or excessive. It isn't just what you need, but it is beyond what you need.

There is abundant life in coming to Jesus and following the Shepherd.

- **What does that look like? What does mean?** I thought, oh, I'll just study all the other passages that talk about abundant life or living life abundantly. It's a classic Bible study tool – study how the word is used in other places to get a better idea of what it means. Guess what? This is the only verse that has this phrase! That's always a fun moment in a pastor's office when he realizes that. But don't worry – I think we have some answers to this. (Mark 6:51 & Ephesians 3:20)
- **Abundant life is certainly connected with the salvation that Jesus offers.** It would be foolish for us to think that abundant life is only speaking of this life we have here. Abundant life means life far beyond what we have here right now – think eternal life. Think John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* And when you start thinking that one day I will see Jesus face to face, how you live each day takes significant meaning. One of my professors in seminary said it this way:
 - *“When a man knows he may breakfast on earth and take supper in heaven, temptations must lose much of their power.”*
– Edward Panosian

This helps me because that kind of thinking means I see Jesus as beautiful and worthy – that kind of thinking keeps reminding me to look up and not around. It gives me an aim on how I plan to live my day following the Shepherd.

- **Abundant life means living life doing things that matter.** The book of Philippians describes followers of Jesus – as citizens of heaven. And since we are not in heaven yet but on earth, that means we have work to do for Jesus on earth – we are on assignment for Jesus. FBC, that’s a high calling. Realize that what you do matters. Know that in whatever job you have, or what school you attend, or wherever you might live, you matter for Jesus and his kingdom. You can influence others well for God’s glory. Can we take a moment and think through this?
 - Teens, don’t underestimate for a moment the good you can do for God as you go to school. You interact and impact scores of people every day – so let me encourage you to enter each day thinking “I’m on assignment for Jesus today, so God help me live well for you as I speak with my friends, my teachers, and those I don’t know well.”
 - Moms and dads – Parent your little ones (or your not-so-little ones) with the idea of training your children in the ways of God. When I think of living life abundantly by doing things that matter, I can’t think of too many things greater and more precious than guiding and pointing my children to Jesus. So let me encourage you - refuse to neglect spending time with children in God’s word and fight the temptation to allow the busyness of your schedule override conversations you can have with children about God.
 - Church – We have an opportunity to help each other in living the abundant life. Hebrews 3:13 says this to the people of God, *“But exhort (that means “encourage” or “strongly urge”) one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”* You know what that looks like if we are not hardened and trapped by sin? It looks like we would be loving and embracing Jesus. FBC, we can help each other love and embrace Jesus. We often view the church as a place to be helped, and that’s true; but as I read the New Testament, I see the church as the help. We are called to help and point others to find life in Jesus. What if each time our church met together, you looked to find one person to encourage, or to pray with, or help? When I faced some very trying times this year, my church flooded me with encouragement. You were God’s goodness in action. FBC, those things matter. That’s living an abundant life.
- And as I have talked about abundant life, maybe you have been thinking, you know abundant life may not always be easy. You’re right - it might be difficult. Even so, **abundant life means there’s joy – even**

joy that’s found in when life is really, really difficult. I have gotten to know many of you during my three and half years of living in Medford. I know many of your stories now, and I have been struck by how often many of you have commented on how good God has been in the midst of trying times. You didn’t say it was easy. But you tried to look for God’s goodness and grace that was shown to you, and you found it. That brings joy. You have shared with me and with others stories of God’s grace working in you and through you. I don’t think that’s a coincidence – I think that’s abundant life living.

I trust you have been encouraged by seeing Jesus as the door, open and inviting to all those that enter in to find abundant life. May God’s word do a good work in our hearts today.

That’s God’s Word for us today. In a few moments, we will have communion together. But first we will pray, and while I pray, those that are preparing communion can make their way down front to prepare for communion.