

I Am (Part 5) – The Good Shepherd

Matt Chandler – February 28, 2016

Hey, if you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in John, chapter 10. If you don't have a Bible with you, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. If you don't own one, that's our gift to you.

We are in week five of the *I Am* series. Basically what we've done is we're taking the seven "I am" statements in the gospel of John, and we're taking this opportunity just to not so much talk about what Jesus has done but rather look at who Jesus is, because we said in week one, we showed from the Scriptures in week one, the Bible is pretty clear that transformation occurs not because we stare at our own navel and become an expert in where we're weak and where we're strong. Rather by gazing, by beholding, by looking at Jesus, we're transformed from one degree of glory to the next.

That's what we've been doing for the last five weeks. We've been trying to (as the writer of Hebrews said), "...[fix] **our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of [our] faith.**" That's what we've been all about. This is who Jesus is. This is what Jesus is about. This is what Jesus came for. Here's who he is. That's what we've been doing.

Now this week we land in John 10 on, "**I am the good shepherd.**" How many of you have a church background? If you don't, you shouldn't be embarrassed about it. You might even have a leg up. If you have a church background, here's historically how you've heard about Jesus being the Good Shepherd. What people have done... It's not necessarily a bad thing; I don't disagree with it. I'm more comfortable just staying with the text.

Usually when pastors teach on Jesus as the Good Shepherd, they want to talk to you about sheep and honestly how dumb sheep are. Amen, my church folk? If you've heard about Jesus as the Good Shepherd, someone has looked up, they've researched, what sheep are like. Then they've come back and said, "Sheep are dumb." Without a shepherd, sheep get themselves in a world of hurt.

Now I'm not saying I disagree of our dumbness. What I am saying is I'd rather just stay tethered to the text because the emphasis of the text isn't the stupidity of the sheep but the love of the Shepherd. Right? Maybe you've heard this before. Sheep really are dumb animals. I don't own any. I don't know this firsthand, but here's what is true about sheep.

If you put sheep in a pasture and you let them graze, they would eat all the grass, and then they would not leave that area. They would stay there, and then they would begin to eat one another's excrement, and then they would all die when there's good grass just right across the way. They're too dumb to leave. They need someone to lead them.

We also can take note that if a sheep keeps going astray, a good shepherd will break the legs of that sheep, put it on his shoulders, and carry that sheep until its legs heal. Then for the rest of that sheep's life, it will stay right next to the shepherd. Isn't that kind of cool? I mean, I don't want my legs broken, but that's pretty cool.

I saw that this week in some notes. I was like, "Okay, Lord, don't break my legs. I'm going to stay close. I like my legs. Don't break them. I'm going to stay as close as I know how to stay, all right?" That's not a bad way to approach this idea of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. In fact, even the Twenty-third Psalm, right? He leads us to green pastures, lays us down in those green pastures, right? He will break our legs. I mean, people of God, know the Lord loves you enough to just break your leg if you just keep wandering away out into danger.

I think those things are true and right and beautiful, but again, the emphasis when it comes to the Good Shepherd isn't on the stupidity of the sheep but the love of the Shepherd. I've been earnest to come here and really just celebrate with you God's deep and abiding care for us in Jesus Christ, because it's hard for us to believe he feels the way about us that he feels about us. We'll get to that here in a moment.

We're going to be in John 10. We're going to start in verse 10, read through verse 16. If you don't mind, will you stand as I read the Word of God over us? This isn't magical or anything. It's just a way to honor the reality that the God of the universe has spoken to his people in Christ and in his Word. Here's what Jesus is teaching in John 10:10 through 16.

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." Here's the "I am" statement. **"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."

Here it is again. **"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. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."**

May God bless the reading of his Word. Why don't you go ahead and have a seat?

Now if you write in your Bible, highlight in your Bible, on your device, you make notes in your Bible, I would encourage you to highlight, circle, underline this sentence: **"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."** What's going to happen in your journey in this life with Christ is you're going to have these days that you're going to have to wrestle with Jesus, who he is, what he is all about, and reconcile that with what's going on in your life.

A sentence that has served me well the last 20 years is this sentence: **"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."** What is Jesus about? He is about abundant life. Now why is that important? Let's be honest. Look right at me. Sometimes obedience is easy. Amen? Sometimes it's easy. Sometimes being obedient to the God of the Bible is just simple as whatever. You just take the step. "I'm going to be obedient."

But sometimes obedience is hard. Oh, notice there weren't a lot of *amens* on that one. It's a safe place. Sometimes obedience is difficult, and this sentence is, "Hey, abundant life is this way." When the day comes where obedience is more difficult, our confidence is, "The Good Shepherd is leading me into abundant life and not away from it." Obedience is usually difficult because we're fearful, and we think there is some cost there, and we're not quite sure that's best for us. Right?

I mean, you've wrestled in your own mind before. Gosh! We're human. "I know that's what the Lord says, but gosh! I feel like if he knew my situation, he'd tweak that command a little bit. I just feel like there should be an asterisk there with my picture in the back of the Bible saying, "Not you, buddy." You reference this verse and flip to another one. Just lets me do what I think I should do.

We're really quick to forget there's a way that seems right to man, and in the end, it leads to death. We're just really quick to forget that passage, and rightfully so, right? I mean, that's just a terrible passage. The Bible is awesome. I'm not saying it's a terrible passage. I'm saying it grates against us, right?

There's a way that seems right to me. Absolutely there is. In the end, that leads to death. So I need to be in glad submission to the Word of God that the Good Shepherd is leading me into abundant life with. This text we just read is stunningly rich with imagery and realities about Christ's concern for us and care for us that's going to go against more than likely how we understand he views us, right?

If we're really honest, most of us think God is just kind of patient with us. "You know, good me. This guy bothers me, but I made a promise. I'm going to have to keep it. It seemed like such a good idea 2,000 years ago. Now I'm looking at this fool. Sheesh. Spirit, help me." Then, you know, he just kind of puts up with us until heaven. That's not what we're going to read here. In fact, look back at verse 12. How is Jesus going to bring us life and bring it abundantly? Well, he is going to be the Good Shepherd. What does that mean? Look at verse 12.

"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."

There are just some things in here that are almost too marvelous to comprehend. Let me point out a couple of them. You see here Jesus is saying, "I am no hired hand. I'm not a hired hand. It's with a great personal angst that I watch these sheep." Because...why? "Because they're mine. They're my own."

When Christ sees us, those of us who are Christians, he sees something that belongs to him. He is not a hired hand. He is not going to bail in the day of trouble. In fact, he says in this text, as the wolf comes, he will not flee. He will not abandon us, but he will stand in the gap. The wolf here isn't just sort of random difficulties that might befall us. He is talking about the great enemy of all souls, which is sin and death.

What he says here is in the face of snarling, bloody evil, he does not flee. He does not abandon us because he is not a hired hand. We are his. He says it. "My own hear my voice." What does he do? He lays down his life. Let's chat about this. If we think about, "**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly,**" that John 10:10 there, that beautiful text, it's this wolf, the wolf of sin and death, which really is at the core of who we are, our great enemy.

When Jesus is calling himself the Good Shepherd and he is talking about provision and care and guidance, he is saying, "When it comes to the enemy, eternally you are secure in me. I will vanquish, I will break the teeth out of the mouth of the wolf. You are mine, and I will handle this once and for all." This isn't every little ticky-tacky difficulty in our life, although I think Christ cares about those things. This text is not a promise you won't have difficulty but rather, eternally speaking, you're secure in the Good Shepherd. This is a text about the gospel.

He is saying, "I'm going to lay down my life to kill the wolf once and for all." How does this work? What we see happening is Jesus is going to die on the cross. Again, I always just want to make space for you to not be a Christian and be among us. I love that. I went to church for over a year as an unbeliever before Christ opened up my heart to believe. Let me once again just simply explain the cross.

Jesus lives in perfect obedience to God's will, blameless, spotless, tempted in every way we have been tempted and yet without sin. That's what the Bible says about Jesus. Then Jesus lives that perfect life and then dies on the cross. When he dies on the cross, what the cross is all about is he is absorbing all of God's wrath toward those who would become Christian. All of their sin...past, present, and future...is fully absorbed by Christ so that the Christian now is seen by God through the lenses of the blood of Christ. He sees us as spotless and blameless in his sight.

This is a marvelous truth, too marvelous really to get our minds around that when God sees us, he sees us as blameless. I can have a long list of things you could blame me for *today*, yo. *Today!* I don't need to go this *week*. I'm saying *today* so far. Fallen short. Fallen short. Probably didn't handle that well. Probably could have done that differently. Definitely sinned against the family there. Definitely sinned against that dude who shouldn't have been in that lane driving that speed. Definitely. Right? I mean, I have a long list of ways I have not been blameless today.

But do you know how God has seen me all day long? Blameless. The word he used is *spotless*. Are you kidding me? How marvelous is that? Spotless? I feel like I need a spiritual bath. God is going, "No, no, no. Spotless." Christ's perfect obedience is imputed to me, granted to me, so that when God sees me, sees you (fill in the blank, your name), he sees you as blameless in his sight.

That's stunning. That's crazy. That's a type of exchange that makes no sense, and it should stir up our hearts to worship that we are his own, and he has laid down his life to break the teeth out of the wolf's mouth so that eternally speaking the wolf of sin and death, it might growl and snarl. It might bristle the hair on its back, but at worse, it can just gum us a little bit.

I was in India in 1998, and they would do that thing where they would play the flute, and the cobra would come up. That stuff is freaky, man. I don't know. I don't like messing with snakes, man. Did you not read Genesis 3? Leave that snake alone, man. There's a curse between us. Then here's what I learned. They super glue the snake's mouth shut. They're like playing the music. The snake is out there.

I'm like, "Dang, dude. You're a better man than I am. Wait a minute. He can't do anything. His mouth is super glued shut. He isn't going to do anything. He is all bowed up, but he can't do anything." That's the wolf. That's what Christ has done to sin and death. You're looking at now this agent of destruction, this agent that has wreaked havoc in the universe and yet there are no longer teeth for those who are in Christ or for those who would put themselves under the care of the Good Shepherd.

Then as though it couldn't get any more marvelous than that, look at verse 16. "**And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.**" Jesus is speaking to what are definitely 100 percent ethnic Jews. All right? That's who he is talking to here.

The Jews in the first century had forgotten for whatever reason that what God has always been about (the promise in Genesis 3, Genesis 12, throughout the Law and the Prophets, in the Psalms of David) is Christ is going to accomplish something globally among all peoples, and God is not ethnocentric. His kingdom and his flock would be comprised of men and women from every tribe, tongue, and nation on earth. It will be a colorful, beautiful melting pot of humanity, and that's what God is about.

Now the Jews in the first century had forgotten that. They were looking for a more Davidic Messiah. If you don't have a church background, King David was kind of alpha male in Jewish history, right? He had led Israel to its military dominance of the area, had been blessed by God with stunning wealth. They were thinking the Messiah was going to come, alpha male Rome, and establish them as kind of a military power again.

Jesus is talking to these men and women, saying, "No, no, no. I have sheep who aren't of this flock, and I'm going to go find them. They're going to hear my voice, and they're going to respond." I'll just lay before you for consideration that you and I are in his mind when he says this (unless you're an ethnic Jew from Jerusalem, and then praise God you're still part of the flock). "**...one flock, one shepherd.**"

You and I are in his mind. More than this, Christ is even to this day doing exactly this: seeking and saving the lost all over the world. Next weekend when we have our member meeting here in Flower Mound, I'm going to ask for about 10 minutes to spend with our members, because one of the things I want to tell you about that I can't do in this venue is some of the work God is doing globally through some of our partners, particularly in the Middle East.

I'm just telling you, the Lord would laugh at any idea of difficult places in closed countries. What does he know of that? He is God. I'm telling you, decades ago, the Cultural Revolution in China kicked out every Christian missionary who was there, shut down Christian orphanages, shut down Christian schools, and expelled all Christian missionaries. No longer were there seminaries to train pastors. No longer were there institutions to support Christian ministry, and the church in China has exploded.

Percentage-wise, they're far more of a Christian nation maybe even than the United States and are sending out tens of thousands of missionaries all over the world in closed Communist China where it's illegal to preach the gospel. It's just the Lord smiles on that, right? He is just like, "Oh, you're going to persecute my people? That's awesome, because they flourish when you do that."

I'm telling you, in the decades to come, you'll see a very similar thing has been happening in the Middle East. We know, we're partnering with, people who are doing it. They're on the ground. They're seeing people get saved all the time. Churches are being planted. Governments are being locked down. Are you dialed into the fact that like every other month now a new pastor has been arrested in Iran? Are you dialing in that that's happening?

Christians are being persecuted in Iraq. ISIS has killed 400 Christians in this place. Most of us are going, "There are Christians there?" Yes, by the tens of thousands. I love this, because God has kind of invited us to go to work with him. He has invited us to go to the ends of the earth and herald the good news of the gospel to the nations, and people will be saved.

Jesus did not die for those who *might* be saved. He died for those who *will*. We get to go. We don't even have to be experts. We just get to go and herald the good news, and the Spirit who is able and mighty to save saves. We'll talk more about that in member meeting.

Now there are three ways this news of Jesus being the Good Shepherd can hit you. Two of them are not good; one of them is right. The first way this news can hit you, you hear about... All I've done is just laid before you the gospel message. This is what Christians believe their salvation comes from: Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, no act of their own. Christians hadn't pulled themselves up by our bootstraps. We've been radically saved by grace through faith alone.

There are three ways this news can hit you. The first way it can hit you is, "No way, not me." You can hear what I just said, and you can go, "No way, not me. I hear what you're saying about the Good Shepherd, but no way. Not me." Usually when people respond that way, they're responding that way because morally they feel like they've out-sinned the grace of God. They think there's something they've done, some sin they've committed, or some struggle they have that now has excluded them from Christ's delight, his affection, and his love.

They have this kind of barrier where they're hearing what I'm saying. You might *want* this to be true, and in the middle of wanting this to be true, there it is: this remembrance of former things. Or, heck, this remembrance of this thing right now in your life that you wrestle with. You're like, "If this is true, it is not true for me. If this is true, it cannot be true of me. I know God does not love people like me. He does not tolerate people who sin the way I sin, who struggle the way I struggle, who have given themselves to the things I have given myself to."

Heck, even Christians have a hard time sometimes just melting into the grace of God, because they have this thing in their background they wish they would have played differently. Anyone? There's this kind of haunting, nagging reality back there that makes it almost impossible for them to melt into the grace of God. God wants to argue with you today. I don't want to argue with you. I love you. But the Lord would like to argue with you, so I'm going to let him.

Isaiah 1:18 says, **"Come now, let us reason together,' says the LORD."** Not Isaiah. Says the *Lord*. **"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."** I love this text. It's an absurd exchange. Here's how the Lord wants to reason with you today.

He is acknowledging your sinfulness. **"Though your sins are like scarlet..."** You're not white. You are filthy. You have broken covenant. You have done deplorable things. **"Though your sins are like scarlet..."** "I'm going to take that scarlet from you, and I'm going to grant to you whiteness like snow. I'm going to grant you purity where you have not been pure."

Now you can fight the Lord about this, but it's an absurd argument to go, "No, thank you." Let me try to put it in a way that maybe is more helpful than the sheep analogy. Let's say I wanted to give you a billion dollars, so I brought you in. I was like, "Look, man. I want to give you a billion dollars." Would you go, "I am not set up for that. That's crazy generous. That's absurd. I can't even handle my \$50k a year. I don't even know what I would do with a billion"?

Look, bro. Take the billion and figure it out. "I don't even know how to manage such thing." Well, listen. You don't have to take the forgiveness and figure it out. Take the grace, and learn to walk in it. Why would you go, "Oh, he can't forgive me"? Now on Friday night, Lauren and I went on a quasi-date. I'll call it a quasi-date. She is in The Village Church Institute, which is our theological training program. Lauren is way smarter than I am, and so she is in that.

We brought in Dr. Tom Schreiner from Southern Seminary to give a series of lectures on the book of Romans. He is a New Testament scholar. That dude made me question whether or not I should be doing this. He just put the book of Romans up behind him and then just walked through it, lectured, quoted commentaries. He quoted commentaries! Who quotes commentaries? "Like Doug Moo said in his commentary on the epistle to the church at Rome..." What?

I literally was like, "I should not preach anymore. I should do something else." Lauren and I went, and we just sat in there. You know, Friday night, lecture on Romans. How sexy is that? "Come on, boo. Let's go!" Now see, here's one of the things he said. He said the root of all sin is the de-Godding of God. I love that line. The root of all sin is the de-Godding of God.

What you're doing when you're saying, "The grace of God cannot forgive me; I've out-sinned the cross of Christ," is you are elevating yourself to the throne of God, and you're saying, "I am a better god than God. I will decide what God can do and what God cannot do." Despite the fact that there are thousands of years of Christian history and the Word of God that are saying to you that you cannot out-sin the cross of Christ, you in your pride and trying to out-sin the grace of God has decided *you* will be god. I love you. You're a terrible god. You're terrible! You know that!

People push back on stuff I say all the time. No one has ever, ever emailed me after I said that and gone, "Actually, I'm doing pretty well." You're a terrible god, man. You don't need to fight to not be a terrible god. You need to know you're a terrible god and stop trying to be one. **"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD: 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.'** Take the billion dollars, and then figure it out. That's not the only way people respond to the gospel. "No way, not me."

Another way they respond to the gospel is, "Well, of course. Well, of course, he loves me. Of course he is for me. Of course he forgives me." There are two reasons you would just in a nonchalant, indifferent way go, "Well, yeah. I mean, what you're saying makes sense to me. God has to love. Yeah, of course he loves me." There are two reasons we're not moved by God's affection for us. Here's what they are.

The first is you think, "Of course he loves me" because you're comparing yourself to others as though you being a good man by that comparison somehow is cool with God. Let me try to unpack that a little bit. If you think you're a good man because your friend Tom is an idiot, that doesn't mean you're a good man. Are you tracking with me?

If you think you're a good woman because your friend Shelly is a two-faced, fork-tongued liar... If your name is Shelly, this is not passive aggressive. I don't know you. Maybe it's prophetic from the Lord. I had to pick two names. These were two names I picked. All right? I use a name, and then I'll be preaching. I'll see a guy named Tom. I'm like, "Oh, I'm not being passive aggressive. I would tell you to your face. These are just names I needed to use the illustration."

Here's what happens. If you're just like, "Of course God loves me," here's more than likely what's happened. You think, "I am a good person. I am a good husband. I am a good father. I am a good man. I'm basing that off of the bad I see around me. I see a man who is not a good husband so I know I am a good husband because I don't do that with my wife. I don't treat *my* wife that way."

Or you're a woman going, "I'm a good woman because I don't parent that way. I haven't done that." Your self-righteousness becomes nothing based on the righteousness of Christ but rather you're comparing yourself with more than likely the herd of morons you have chosen to run with to build yourself up, and it's a faux type of righteousness the Bible says God thinks is filthy.

When you come to God and you're like, "Here's my righteousness. I'm not Tom. Here, God. See. Look. I'm not Shelly," the Bible is clear in Isaiah that God considers that filthy rags. Here's how the book of Romans would describe that process. Romans 10, verse 3: **"For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness."**

Very briefly, all that text is describing is that moment we're ignorant of the righteousness of God. You're trying to present an offering to God that you're not as bad as somebody else, as though that was the standard. I'm not calling you ignorant; the *Bible* is calling you ignorant. It would be better if I did as opposed to the Bible, right?

I'm going to die and go away, but this will always be here. Long after I'm gone no longer to call you ignorant, the Bible would be like, "You're still ignorant. He ain't here, but you're still ignorant." If this is the game you are playing, if your righteousness is built on you being better than someone else and you comparing your goodness to someone else's shortcomings, the Bible calls that self-righteousness. It is not a sacrifice that is pleasing to the Lord at all.

That's not the only way people say, "Of course he does." There's comparing ourselves to others, but then there is what can be called *theologizing*. People who are indifferent toward the Lord and, "Of course he loves me" oftentimes will theologize. What I mean by that is they'll take something that's said that's true, and rather than letting it bear its weight on their own heart, they file it in their minds so they can regurgitate it later in a Home Group or over coffee so they appear godlier than they are.

We've all been guilty of this. Amen? Here's how it would work. Here I am. I'm preaching this sermon to you. Earlier I said, "Here's what's happening in John 10:16." You heard that. Rather than just kind of sitting in it for a while and letting it kind of bear its weight on you and create in you worship and gladness and thankfulness that moves you toward worship and obedience, instead you've filed it in your head.

At some point later this week, somebody will be saying something. You're like, "Do you know what? That reminds me of John, chapter 10, I think it's verse 16 where it says Iranians are going to come to know Jesus. Yeah, I think. No, that's in the Bible. Yeah, I read that." See, what's happened now is you've missed out on all Christ has for you. You've theologized. You've rolled true information in to your head. You have what's called *intellectual assent*, but the Word of God has not read you, has not shaped you, has not compelled you toward obedience, has not fueled thankfulness in you.

What a dry, dreary, dumb way to live out your faith. Gosh! I don't want to just know and hear. I want it in *here*. I want it to drive me. I don't want to know it. I want to feel also. I'm well aware that there will be long stretches that I don't feel much at all except what I know in my head, but I'm going to tell you this.

I want to meditate on what I know. I want to consider. I don't want to be too quick to move away. I don't want to be distracted by new apps and games. I want to create space for me to think and dwell and have my soul feast on what is true about God and what he says about me. I want it to lead to obedience, and I want it to lead to thankfulness. I want it to lead to worship.

You can hear the good news of the gospel and you can go, "No way, not me," or you can go, "Of course for me." The way we *should* respond every time the gospel is preached is with worship and obedience. Colossians, chapter 3, starting in verse 16, the Bible says, **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."**

If you think about what this text is unpacking is it says, "Hey, let the words of Christ dwell among you richly." If we just stop there, we just spent a couple of minutes on just that idea that the word of Christ would dwell among us, dwelling is kind of a lost art these days. We're all about speed and efficiency. There's nothing efficient about dwelling. If we would allow the words of Christ to dwell among us richly and we would teach and admonish one another concerning them, the Bible says that leads to worship, singing hymns, psalms, spiritual songs, and it leads to a thankful heart.

Never underestimate the joy of living life with a thankful heart. When we hear the gospel, when the gospel is proclaimed, the right response for the believer in Christ is worship and Spirit-fueled obedience that springs out of that worship. If you're not a believer, listen. My appeal to you today is to take the billion dollars. If you're the, "No way, not me," hear me. You have not out-sinned the

grace of God. I don't care what it is. I don't care what you want to lay before me. The Bible is just jam-packed with people who are there to show you God is longsuffering and patient and gracious.

They are murderers and prostitutes and tax collectors. I could just go on and on and on. There's no one perfect in the Scriptures but Jesus. In fact, we are perfectly imperfect. You shouldn't feel the weight of trying to be perfect. You should melt into the perfection of Christ and live gladly in his perfection imputed to you as he broke the teeth out of the wolf of sin and death.

As I was studying this week and preparing to be with you and just being encouraged in my own walk with the Lord out of this text, my mind kept drifting to the Twenty-third Psalm. I mean, you don't even have to be a Christian. By nature of where you live, there's something in your house with the Twenty-third Psalm on it. You have a bookmark or a coffee cup or something with the Twenty-third Psalm on it, right?

I thought as we talked about the Lord being the Good Shepherd, a good way to end our time together today is before we take Communion... Don't jet out. We want to celebrate. All we just said is enjoyed in that cracker, in that cup, as we rejoice in the fact we've been bought by the blood of Christ. I thought one of the ways we could end is just by reading the Twenty-third Psalm together out loud but feeling phrase by phrase what's being promised to us about who Jesus is and how we are seen by the Lord.

Regardless of the campus, will you stand with me now? I'm going to put the Twenty-third Psalm behind us. We're just going to read this text together as a family of faith. Don't do that thing where you try to run through this text. We're going to read it slowly, loudly, and deliberately. I want you to feel what's being said about you and about the Lord's care for you. Let's do this.

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Father, we thank you and praise you for Jesus, the Good Shepherd. We thank you that we are his, and he is ours. We thank you that he is not a hired hand. He will not abandon us to sin and death, but he lays down his life to grant to us perfection, to grant to us holiness, to grant to us a righteousness that is not filthy rags but the righteousness of God.

Where we have felt we are morally beyond your reach, I pray for surrender today maybe for the first time. For those who are clothed in self-righteousness who, Father, think they're good because they compare themselves with others around them or, instead, they hear what's true about you and theologize, they put it in their mind without any experience of the truth of it in their hearts, God, we seek your forgiveness today and you would right our paths today. Thank you for guiding us, leading us, providing for us, and caring for us eternally, Jesus. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.