



Good Shepherding-Part 4
God's Ultimate Provision of Love & Leadership
Pastor Mike Fabarez

It is great to have you here this Easter. I'm so thankful that you're spending part of your Easter celebration with us here at Compass and I'm thankful to the local school district for actually giving my daughter, this year, the Easter week off, which hasn't seemed to be synching up lately, have you noticed that? You know, weeks before Easter, weeks after Easter, but here it was this year she got the week off which was great for me and my wife to be able to spend some time with my fantastic daughter this week. On my day off early in the week we shared a good laugh together as we drove up the freeway and here's how it all started. She sneezed quite loudly in the backseat of my car. And then there was a pause and then with one of those declarative, thoughtful, pensive statements she just, she made this declaration. She said, you know, if there were two things in this world that I could change, just two things, I know what they would be. Well that got mom's and dad's attention at that point. My wife turns around looks at me out of the corner of her eye. I kind of leaned up, adjusted in my rearview mirror to look in her eye. What would that be?

She said number one, there'd be no more sneezing.

Number two there'd be no more hiccupping. And once again I had to say to my daughter, baby, you have to aim higher. You get two wishes. Don't blow it on that. World peace, ending hunger, I don't know, the national debt. Something other than hiccupping and sneezing. We had a good laugh. And even my daughter, Stephanie, she started laughing out loud. We realized how easy it is for us to get focused on the small problems and lose sight of the big problems. And that's certainly what we had done in that moment. And it's something that I find we all do, isn't it? It's easy for us to get focused on all the small irritations and frustrations of life and that is our focus. And then Easter comes around and I hope if you go to a church on Easter where there is some serious discussion about what the meaning of this holiday is all about and you have a preacher come up and I hope he says to you, you've got to aim higher. Got to aim higher. Not just about the next problem you've got to solve at work or the next issue you've got to deal with on your house or some kind of financial problem you've got to tackle. Really there are bigger issues and of course they're all bound up in what is going back to the meaning of this holiday some 2,000 years ago. Bound up in the life and the burial, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and really those are the big issues that we need to think about particularly when we pause to think about what Easter is all about.

And that's what I'm excited to open up the word and talk about this morning. It's important for us to see that Jesus came not only to solve our ultimate problem of mortality in a great demonstration of his love but he also, in kindness, as we'll see in a passage I'd like to look at this morning, provided for us something very practical, not just the eternal ramifications but something for daily implications as it relates to the leadership that he came to provide. So turn with me if you would in your Bibles, grab a Bible, call it up on your phone, your iPad, whatever you've got. If you want to go the old fashioned way there's a Bible underneath the seat in front of you. Grab that, turn to the New Testament book of John. If you want to follow along on the worksheet in the worship packet it's always printed there. The text that we'll be looking at. We going to look at John Chapter 10 at something I hope will take you from whatever it is you're concerned about, thinking about, deciding, tackling in your life to get back to the big issues that really matter. Two of them that would be smart for us to think about as it relates to Jesus talking about his own death and resurrection and doing it in the context of an analogy that reminds us that in his kindness he's providing something for us that we all desperately need, namely his leadership, his daily leadership

in our life and look at how he puts it beginning in verse number 14. This is John Chapter 10 verse 14, follow along as I read through verse 21 from the English Standard Version.

Jesus says, "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. I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice and there will be one flock and one shepherd. For this reason" verse 17 says, "the Father loves me because 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. This charge I've receive from my Father." Verse 19. "There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said he has a demon and is insane.

Why listen to him? Others said, 'these are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'" which Jesus had just done. Causing a little controversy here primarily because he's talking about laying his life down which is not all that unique but raising it up again. Although within the context, in verses 14 through 16, of being a shepherd and by implication making us sheep having us see our lives in need of leadership. I'd like to talk to you just honestly from my heart to your's based on this text about the value of following Jesus Christ as we think about the analogy of Jesus Christ coming, living among us, providing a template of humanity, leaving us with an example and a set of principles and teachings that if we follow those we become a follower of Jesus Christ and he says in verse 14 I'm the good shepherd. If you're taking notes and I wish that you would. We have that worksheet there. It's always downloadable on our website, PDF document with some typeable fields there that you can utilize to take some notes to remember the sermon.

Here's the first thing I'd like to write down this morning just based on those first three verses we need to start with this. We need to see the value of following Christ. Nothing better for you this morning than to do on Easter morning to sit back and to understand that there is a great value in seeing Jesus Christ as your shepherd, your shepherd, your leader. And I just want to start with that first phrase there in verse number 14 where he says I'm the good shepherd and that's not a statement about his virtue, his resume, his attributes. All that's true, he's good in that regard. But this is an analogy that if you were to follow me that would be a good thing because I'm a good leader, I'm a good shepherd and I'm good for you because you, if you're part of my own, I would know you and you would know me. This knowing, this connection, this knowledge, this description of good, that's a good place for us to start thinking about the reality of a shepherd who knows us and he's a good shepherd, therefore he knows what's good for us. If you're taking some subnotes, just three of them here under the first segment. You might want to put down this, when it comes to the value of knowing Christ, here's the first value: He knows what's good for us. The things that he taught us, the things that he directed us to do, the principles he laid down for us, those are good and they're good for us. And it's good for us to stop and to recognize that in a world full of changing mores where the ethics of our day are all determined by people's popular opinion in the polls and whatever people think, whatever's cool, whatever's in, whatever's right, whatever's judicial, whatever's is smart. I mean those are the things that people say well this is the right thing. They're ever changing but here Christ lays down a pattern and a template in his life along with a whole set of principles in his teaching and he says these are good things. You need this leadership in your life. Just like our children need leadership. Do they not? And sometimes when we see them going with the flow and eventually they do something that is completely something you know they shouldn't do and you say to them you shouldn't do that and they say, but Mom everyone's doing it. And then we don't have to go to school to know exactly what we're supposed to say at that point. If everyone were going to jump off a cliff would you jump off a cliff? That's the standard response. That's not a bad one.



And you tell them that because you know as a kid they need your leadership. Kids need leadership. God provides parents to give them that leadership. And one of the things we do is say whatever's convenient, whatever everyone else is doing, you don't need to do that. What you need is direction, you need leadership so parents provide that and here's a passage that basically takes that analogy and gives it to us as adults and says all of you adults out there, here's a bunch of Jewish guys standing around with beards, wrinkles on their faces, he says, you're sheep, I am a shepherd, Follow me.

You need my leadership and its good leadership.

And that analogy of sheep is very telling because there's one thing about sheep that we may not know living here in modernized Western 21st century America is that those sheep are pretty prone to just following whoever's in front of them. And wherever the person in front of them, the lamb in front of them, goes well they'll go. The reality of this came to a very sharp focus in my mind when I read an article about this flock. There are plenty of them around the world, we don't see them here but you can find shepherds and Bedouins and people that have these big flocks of sheep and there was one in eastern Turkey that made the papers. He had a flock of 1,500 sheep and for some reason he fell asleep on the job or he was absent, he wasn't there. And one of the lambs wandered away on the craggy hillside where there was a big cliff and that lamb walked right off the edge of that cliff. And so did the lamb after him and so did the lamb after him and so did the lamb after him. And there was one thousand five hundred sheep all grazing, went right over the cliff because one lamb decided to plunge over the cliff. Now you can imagine this, right? This is a terrible tragedy but after a while with a lot of those big fluffy sheep not all of them are going to be in trouble, right? Matter of fact as the paper reported they made a big billowy white pile.

That's fine as long as you're like, you know, the 1,300th lamb to go over.

It wasn't good for the first 450. The paper reported that 450 lambs died in that billowy white pile which cost that Bedouin an equivalent of one hundred thousand American dollars in his herd and they died simply because they didn't follow the shepherd. In that case, unlike our case, the shepherd was unavailable.

He wasn't there. He wasn't providing leadership. Of course Jesus says I am the Good Shepherd. I don't let bad things happen to the flock. If it happens to the flock it's because you've wandered away purposefully and willfully. I am here providing leadership, follow me. I'm the Good Shepherd.

You need leadership. And I'll provide that for you. The interesting thing about this Good Shepherd is the greatest thing that he did, the best thing he did is found in verse 15. "Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, I lay down my life for the sheep." If the sheep are imperiled and they are, we have a big problem. Here's the passage that reminds us that Jesus was willing to solve the problem at great personal cost to himself.

He'll reprise this concept here in verse number 18 and verse number 17 as well. But the idea of him here simply reminding us that the goodness of the shepherd is he's so good that the Great Shepherd is willing to imperil himself so that the sheep are saved.

To use our analogy when it comes down to it all it really took to save the imperiled sheep is to have the shepherd become a lamb and instead of everyone dying as they careened off that cliff he went and suffered the peril of that cliff, was willing to die and to suffer that fall, if you will, and



encounter all that grief from the Father. If you were here on Friday night, we talked all about that. He was willing to take the hit for those that deserve the hit. He was willing to drink that cup of God's anger towards sin so that we could be passed the cup of blessing. He lay down his life.

That's the greatest act of love, to lay down your life for the good of other people. That's what Jesus did in the greatest act to prove that. To talk about the benefit of following Christ, it is to solve our ultimate problem with our Creator.

You know in the Old Testament, David said when he spoke of the Lord, he said the Lord is My Shepherd, remember that Psalm? "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want." He's going to provide all that I need. He's going to make me lie down in green pastures, he's going to lead me beside still waters, he's going to restore my soul.

All these pictures of the great provision of God. And then David says in Psalm 51 and if you know his story, he's at the low point of his life when he commits adultery with his neighbor and then he has that neighbor's husband killed and he finds himself, as many of us have in our lives, looking in our conscience at the reflection of our own guilt. He recognizes I've got a problem I can't solve myself. He says, "my sin is ever before me."

And I realize that the ultimate problem is with you and you're a holy God, you're a perfect God, I've sinned against you and you are right and good if you were to judge me.

Your judgments are just and in Psalm 51 he says if offerings could help I'd give them. If I thought you'd take pleasure in that and that would solve the problem I'd give you whatever it took. You know, put money in the plate, giving something to God, going on a mission trip. That's not going to solve the problem. All he could do in looking to the Good Shepherd of the Lord in the Old Testament is simply cry out as we all should saying God please, in your mercy, blot out my iniquity. The thing about the Old Testament is they didn't know how God was going to accomplish that. And in the New Testament it came into crisp, sharp focus when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming who was the Good Shepherd, he is the Good Shepherd and as he approached John the Baptist said, "look there's the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."

Here's someone, the shepherd, who becomes like us in fallen form as sinners, as people who are in peril of the justice of God and he says he'll take on that form in the appearance of sinful man and I'm willing to take the penalty that you guys deserve. Now there's nothing you can do to solve your problem but I'll come and solve your problem for you. I'll lay down my life for the sheep. Now that's just a simple sentence but that's a mouthful theologically in the New Testament. That you and I really should have the recompense, the response, the retribution from God for the things that we've done wrong but Jesus says I'll suffer all of that in your place. If you want to talk about the advantage of following Christ, well sure he lays down a great example for us. He teaches us what's right. He has our good in mind. He knows us. He knows what we should and shouldn't do. But ultimately when we've done what we shouldn't do he comes and solves our problem by taking the penalty for us. Verse 16, look at the next verse. Here's another added benefit as long as we're looking at the menu of things that we have when we become followers of Christ as we start to see this from a lateral perspective. "I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock and one shepherd." This concept of a fold or a flock. Whenever you become a follower of Jesus Christ contrary to what our popular, independent, autonomous, 21st century American culture likes to think, we're supposed to join in community with one another following Christ together. I know we like to talk about our personal relationship with God.



But when it comes down to it we are to have a personal relationship with God that is lived out in a community environment. And I'll tell you what in our day that should become more and more attractive as I speak to a bunch of people in the 21st century because we're not good at it. In the last 70 years we've become increasingly independent and isolated today more than ever in our culture. We have people that say, sadly, no one really knows me. And when it comes to my friends I'm not sure I really know them. They live in isolation to one another when it comes down to it the Bible says if you join my flock, if you become a part of my fold, you now have a connection to one another. And then Jesus constantly says, you need to pull together, you see the advantage that you should have. If I lay down my life for you then you ought to be laying down your lives for one another, not in the way that Jesus did because there's no way for me to pay for someone else's penalty before a Holy God. But when it comes to whatever trial you're going through, whatever problem you might have, I'm suppose to bear your burden. And when I have one you ought to bear my burden and I'm telling you, don't you see that your coworkers, your neighbors, people that have no relationship to the Good Shepherd have that gaping absence of that community experience. We're made for friendship and most people in our culture don't really have very many and some have none at all.

One of the great advantages of being a part of this thing called the fold of the flock of Christ is I not only have him directing me in a path of righteousness for his name's sake as it was put in Psalm 23, not only providing the answer to my ultimate problem of sin but now he joins me together with other people. I have in this room as a pastor of this church, and I wouldn't have to be the pastor, you can say anybody who's committed to this local body, I've got people that I know at any time I could pick up the phone and call them and they would be there. Non-Christian counterparts in this world just don't have that. I recognize there are plenty of people that could call me at any time, day or night, we would drop what we were doing to go and assist them. There's a kind of commitment and loyalty to one another because we're loyal and committed to following the Good Shepherd. That's something I got to tell you if you're not a follower of Jesus Christ, man, you don't know what you're missing when it comes to that. I don't know how non-Christians work through the things they have to work through without the team support, the family connections, the community bonding that we have as followers. Imperfect, I understand that, that's great and everyone likes to put a magnifying glass on our imperfections. I understand that. We're imperfect just like everyone else in the world. But I'll tell you what, as we follow Christ we become more and more like Christ and our community becomes better, it becomes sweeter, it becomes more fulfilling, our relationships become more and more what they should be.

I'm telling you can't find that in the Rotary Club, you're not going to get that in your work relationships and frankly, in a lot of biological families, you don't have all that God designed us to experience but God's says join this flock, and I'll make you one flock, one shepherd. It's a great value in following Christ. I know we could talk all throughout the New Testament but in three verses, let me just give you those three things: he knows what's good for us, he solves our ultimate problem, he makes peace with God and he provides us with a family with connections. As was put in Psalm 133, "it is so good and pleasant for the brothers to dwell together in unity." He was not talking about siblings biologically. It's talking about people that share that commitment that David had to make. The Lord is Shepherd and for us, more specifically, the incarnate Christ, our Good Shepherd, and to say it's so good, those connections. Matter fact I should say there were two things he compared it to. He said it's like oil coming down on the head and the beard of Aaron, which if you don't know your Bible, you're going what's that, who's Aaron and why are they pouring stuff on his head? It's the oil that's specifically given in the book of Leviticus to be done with a compound of some very fragrant spices, basically it's perfume. Aaron was to be a priest and be set apart for his

job. He was to have this perfume in the form and transportation of the oil to be poured on his head.

Now I don't know this may reveal too much about me but when I see some of these Old Testament depictions and watch the Ten Commandments or whatever, I sometimes wonder what those people must have smelt like. Do you ever think that? They look like they smell really bad. Well I know this. I know that's terrible that I said that but you've thought that so... I'll tell you what, I know this about what the Bible says.

No one else was ever authorized to make the kind of fragrant perfume in the way that it was made and God directed it in the Old Testament to be made in a certain way that, it was the most fragrant and beautiful smelling thing that could be. Then when that man who may have been in a great need of a bath had that oil poured on his head, he said how good it is. And mean talk about a stinky life versus a fragrant life. The difference here according to Psalm 133 is how good it is to have those relations. Unity, connection, harmony. Just to give you one more, that passage is full of good ones but here's the next one: it's like dew on Mount Hermon. Mount Hermon is one of those places in a very arid place. Lot of desert in Israel. But if you go up in the higher elevations, particularly to Mount Hermon, it's beautiful. It's like a forest and he says like the dew on the leaves of the trees. And I know a lot of people in this room probably that aren't followers of the Good Shepherd, they are living pretty much in a relational, arid, wasteland, a desert.

The difference between being a follower of Christ even though we're imperfect people and being one who is trying to do life on your own, connect with your coworkers and connect with your family, there's something much deeper God has for you to experience in your life by having that great, lush, forest experience as opposed to not having it. I'm telling you, I have to focus on that a little bit this morning because I think we are more hungry for that in our age than our grandparents or great grandparents were. See the value of following Christ and that just touches on it, guidance, forgiveness, family. These things are important. But the reason we should seek this is not just for those benefits, although those are great benefits to go after, but I do it because of verses 17 and 18. Take a look at this passage printed there for you on your worksheet. Jesus says, "For this reason the Father loves me because I lay down my life and I may take it up again." That sets this statement up now, verse 18, "No one takes it from me. I lay it down on my own accord."

It's not because I'm weak, too weak to fight off the, you know, the envy of the Pharisees and Sadducees, not because I am not able to craftily get out of the pursuant nature of these Roman soldiers. It's because I am willing to do it. "I have authority to lay my life down." There's a word to highlight.

He repeats it, "I have authority to take it up again."

"This charge I've received from my Father." I've gotten this assignment. This consignment of authority. I get it from the Father and it's been given to me, I have authority. The authority of Christ is why, I should make clear, we should logically be compelled to be followers of Christ. It's great to hold out the benefits and that's a good thing and I would encourage you, look at the benefits of following Christ, then you should become a Christ follower, he's a good shepherd. But you know we really are compelled to do it ultimately because of his credentials and his authority. In other words I don't want you to choose Christianity just because it looks like the best option and you like the teaching and the principles the best. It's really because you've got someone here who's presenting himself with a very act that we're celebrating today, the act of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, because he's showing his ultimate credentials.



Number two on your outline if you're taking notes, I'd put it this way, put your trust in his authority. Not just in the hope that I hope this will be a better life if I follow Christ.

Realize he's proven his credentials and his authority by coming, laying down his life and taking it back up again. One thing to lay down your life. I suppose you could say anybody who commits suicide they're kind of exercising autonomous control to lay down their life. But I'm telling you no one has authority to take it up again.

He's proving something very unique about who he is. And I'm just saying this before you submit your life to follow Jesus Christ, you want to know what his credentials are and you ought to be compelled by those credentials and I wouldn't want you to submit your life to any organization or any leader or any religious figure or guru just because you like what they say. You ought to devote your life to a leader because you understand the credentials are impeccable. They're unrivaled, they're unmatched and when it comes to Christ, that's why I'm a follower of Christ. I'm a follower of Christ because he's proven himself to be the Lord, the leader, the king, the boss.

An article that I read in the paper that made me think of that movie I watched a long time ago, perhaps you've seen it, Catch Me If You Can, with DiCaprio and Tom Hanks, remember that movie? And it was based on a true story of Frank Abagnale who was this ultimate con man. Do you remember this movie? Remember the story? You can look them up on our free Wi-Fi here on Wikipedia if you want to.

He's working now for the authorities trying to rout out the con men as the movie ends. I mean that's what he's doing and apparently still doing that, last I checked. And he's doing it because it was so good at conning other people and, if you remember in the movie and this is true if you read his biography, he is someone who conned people into thinking that he was a certified and licensed pilot, commercial airline pilot, and then he went on to convince people that he was an authorized, educated and trained physician. And then he went on to con people that he was actually a credentialed lawyer. Right? He had his license to practice law. Now, I tell you before I get on a plane I like to think that the pilot knows what he's doing in the cockpit.

I would like to think if I'm going to submit myself to the scalpel of the doctor that he's well credentialed and qualified to do it. I certainly, if I'm in legal trouble, I want my lawyer to know what he's doing to be educated and have been tested. Here's a bunch of people that submitted foolishly to people that didn't have the credentials. They fooled them in that regard.

That's why Christianity is worth the research. I say I thought of that movie because I read a headline, the headline was this: in South Florida there was an 18 year old who was just arrested, not long ago, last year, arrested because he passed himself off as a physician. He was seeing patients. 18 years old. You know the Doogie Howser of South Florida. And they caught him and you can go look that one up and he's in his cuffs and he's being hauled away to jail. Now think about all the people that submitted their bodies, their life. Can you imagine him saying, "Why. I think we should cut into you, have some surgery here next week." Here was a guy doing what people were willing to submit their lives to and he had absolutely no authorization to do that. It would be awful for you to follow Jesus Christ in this life and find out at the end of this life, I mean, he had no credentials to be your leader. You're trusting in him and he has no reason for you to trust him. He's not trustworthy. The cornerstone of the trust of Christ that you should have is found in what he's saying right here. He uses the word authority and the charge is received from his Father in reference to this issue of him dying and rising again. See, I recognize this about Christ, he's authorized because of what he did at the resurrection.



Number one, to pay the penalty for my sin problem. I said the second benefit of following the good shepherd is that he has solved my problem with my Maker, The only reason I know that, that my conscience is clean before God as a sinner that stands before you is because I know the credentials of Christ are that his life had the full infinite worth of God himself, that he was God. Now think this through. If I were to say I need someone to take care of my sin problem, I need someone to pay for my sin, I need a life in human righteousness to be paid with human penalty because Mike Fabaraz has done the wrong things and needs judgment. I could see one life being exchanged for one life, but we don't have that with Jesus. He comes and says, "I got a flock, a lot." He's going to lay down his life for many. How does he do that?

Well, let's just say that sin is breaking the parking laws of our state, which I guess it is, but we'll not talk about that, your last parking ticket.

But let's say your life and my life have racked up so many sins that we are to be impounded to the eternal impound lot and we're going to lose our freedom and be sequestered to some outer limits and we lost our freedom and we're going to be impounded.

Tow truck hasn't shown up yet but we're going to be behind all that barbed wire. And so your impounded car and my impounded car, our lives. You're a Kia. I'm a Hyundai. I know, you're a Chevy Volt. I don't know, you are whatever. I'm sorry to insult you. What do you want to be? Corolla? Accord? OK. Pick your favorite car. To get our cars out of that impound lot we need some kind of exchange.

Now if you rolled in a Kia for a Kia that would make perfect sense. If you rolled out of an Accord to take the place of an Accord, that would make perfect sense. The credentials of Christ to have a charge from the Father that proves something about his ability to even be lord over life itself, as he says elsewhere and even in this passage that he is God incarnate, gives us a sense that he's rolling in as some vehicle of ultimate worth.

Think about this. I mean, I looked it up just to look it up, what are the most expensive cars available today. That was a really depressing research assignment.

Inflamed a lot of desires for vehicles that I can't afford. And I thought I'd find some, you know, 100, 200, 300, 400, 500 thousand dollars.

I found several cars over a million dollars. Ferraris, Aston Martins. I mean cars I couldn't pronounce and had never heard of before. I found a car for 4.6 million dollars for sale, a brand new car and it wasn't encrusted with diamonds.

It had like rubber tires and everything, four million dollars. I found one that had sold a few years back, it's not in production any more, for sale for 10 million dollars. That was a fancy looking car. But I'm saying if your Toyota Corolla life and my Sonata life or whatever, if we're all impounded and in rolls this 10 million dollar vehicle to say I'm going to exchange this life for those lives, now that starts to work, right?

The authorization that Christ has that shows that he is infinitely above the norm, the standard, that he's not just one righteous man dying for one righteous man, but he has the infinite worth of deity. That's the whole point of him continually reminding us that he and the Father are one, that he has the infinite worth of eternity and that he can lay down his life for you and me and we can walk



away with a clear conscience saying that one life paid for my life, your life and the person we don't even know yet to join our flock.

He also, because he's raising his life, reminds us that he has the authority to raise our lives. I mean the whole point of this is that he is someone who has been resurrected from the dead by his own authority. Think about that. I would hate for you to trust someone about the next life who has no knowledge of the next life.

I'm not talking about someone who claims to have, you know, been resuscitated. There's a difference to being resuscitated and resurrected even though a lot of people that were resuscitated, there's about eight of them in the Bible from beginning to end, that were resuscitated, they're called resurrections because they were really literally dead. But they really weren't, you know, resurrected the way Christ was. You could say resurrection with a small "r" but not a capital "R".

I mean it's one thing to be Lazarus. And as some have rightly said, an Oxford professor said, I feel bad for poor Lazarus, he had to do his dying twice. Think that through, right? He died once and then, hey, you're back. And now you die again. That's a bummer.

All these other seven in the scripture who died and were resuscitated had to die again. Jesus had a different kind of resurrection. His resurrection was the kind where now he takes mortality and puts on immortality in the flesh and says this is the provision for you with my authority to pay for sin, the wages of sin is death. I've solved the sin problem. Now I've solved the death problem. And if you trust in me, my life for your life, your exchange of your sinful life from my perfect life, now I'm going to solve the sin problem for you. You trust in him, I trust, if you do, I pray, because you recognize he has the authority because he's been to death and he's come through it and he's come back.

My oldest son is a student in Louisville, Kentucky. We went out there to visit him with my family and, you know, there's no Disneyland or Knott's Berry Farm out there, so you've got to figure out what to do and they have this thing called the Mega Cavern.

I'm not trying to knock Louisville by the way. But all they got is the Mega Cavern.

But anyway, so I go take my family to the Mega Cavern and it is impressive. It's a 17-mile tunnel, natural cave that's underneath the city. 17 miles of, you know, all these twisty caverns and all this. It's interesting. One thing I wanted when I took my family there, we put on our headlamps and all that, I want to make sure that the tour guide had been in there and successfully come out of there. Right? I don't want to follow someone who hadn't been there and come back. And when it comes to me trusting in someone to say I've solved your death problem, follow me, I want to make sure you've been there and you've come back. I don't talk about the people that circle around the drain and pop back up. There are a lot of those selling the books at Costco. I'm talking about people that have... I'm sorry, is that disrespectful? I'm talking about people that have literally gone there, conquered the problem of death, come back and said I'm no longer subject to death. Because everybody writing their books, everybody talking about these near-death experiences, seeing the light, walking through the tunnel and high fiveing Aunt Myrtle or whatever, those people are still subject to death. Every one of them will die. Christ is the only one who has the same finger nails, hair follicles, cornea on his eyeballs who is living and alive, that's the doctrine of the bodily resurrection, who says you follow me, I've come to death, I've conquered it, I've come back out, now I can walk you through this portal called death and we're all headed there.



And we just need to make sure that we're trusting in the fact that he has the right authority and credentials to lead you as the tour guide through this problem that we all face called death. Put your trust in his authority. He certainly has authority to pay our penalty and he has authority to grant us eternal life. And I think that would logically lead us to say that if he wants you to do something different with your life next week, if the principles in his word and his teaching and the example of his life would lead you to do something different than you would otherwise do next month, that you would willingly do it because he's earned the right to lead your life daily.

I hope that would be something that would make perfect sense to you. To lead your life daily.

It's not always easy. Because when it comes to hearing the shepherd's voice and following him there are a lot of people who are not interested in that.

And in our day, we know it's not always going to be easy and in our day I think we're starting to look a lot more like other countries where, when people have decided to follow Christ, it was very difficult and hard for them.

It was something that they were doing all alone, at least it felt like they were all alone.

One such man lived 100 years ago.

He was a Sikh, do you know what the Sikhs are? The Sikhs are kind of a conflation, to oversimplify it, of Hinduism and Islam. And his religion is more of a pantheistic religion, God is abstract and there's no real personal God and the creator... It just didn't work the same way to think about a person, a God who loves us with intellect, emotion, will. When it comes to sin, you know, like Islam there's no payment for sin, there's no redemption for sin. And in Hinduism the only problem that we have to deal with is this karma problem, which is basically you dealing with your own sin through successive reincarnations and all that. Well, he gets exposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, becomes one of the few followers of Christ up in North Eastern India. He becomes a follower of Christ and he stands alone in his family and in his community and ends up becoming a very influential Christian and does lead others to Christ.

But he had to pay a price that starting to feel a lot more like people in America who are standing up to follow Jesus Christ uncompromisingly. And about a hundred years ago he wrote a little song, very simple and even the melody was a reflection of an old Indian folk tune. And many of us learned it at camp, if you went to a Christian camp as a kid and very simple, not very difficult. But here was the first verse that says, "I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus." Very redundant, the first verse here, right? And here comes the chorus which is not much more difficult. "No turning back, no turning back." You know the song? Second verse: "Though none go with me, still I will follow." Though none go with me, still I will follow. Why? Because he knows the credentials of Christ. He earns my followership, he has the credentials. No turning back, no turning back.

The last verse. "The world behind me." If no one else is going to follow, I'm going to go. "The cross before me." The world behind me, the cross before me. The world behind me, the cross before me. No turning back, no turning back. One of the simplest songs you could possibly sing.

But in our day when we think about following Christ in the world that doesn't have an interest in following Christ and increasingly so, it's good for us to go back to the reason we do it. Not just the benefits, though that's important, it's the credentials and the authority. Here's someone saying you're



headed toward the mouth of the cavern. I've been there. I've conquered it. Follow me. And now as you follow him, as you reach that portal, he says, "follow me, follow me." Our response needs to be what that Indian's response was 100 years ago. He said I'll do it.

Though none go with me, I'll do it. If the world's behind me, fine, the cross is before me, there will be no turning back. Jesus addresses that, at least the story addresses that as Jesus' critics respond to in verse 19. Let's just wrap this up. There it is again a division among the Jews because of his words and there often was. Many of them said, this guy has a demon, he's talking about laying down his life, that's one thing. Taking it back up, that's ridiculous. He's insane. Why listen to him? Others, verse 21, said these are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Why? Not because it makes logical sense at this point in history. But because of what he had proved. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? They just watch this happen. There's something here that defies explanation. He must be authorized to do something beyond the natural and he's claiming he's going to rise from the dead. Maybe there's some truth in this. Which, by the way, if this is all just fairy tale, fantasy, myth land to you. If this is the Gilgamesh epic or whatever you've learned from sociology class or history or anthropology, then please do some research on the historic nature of the resurrection of Christ. Now, this sermon is not focused on that but every week I try to provide some reading for you on the back. I mean, I just highlighted three. If you're new to all this, maybe Craig, Greene, and Habermas; number three, four and five on the list. Just do a little reading.

We might still have some copies of that in our bookstore. Get them online. Just do some research on whether or not this is the case and if it is then you need to look at all the hostility that may come your way and say with our Indian friend, no turning back, though none go with me.

And not only that, as it says here, even if people start calling you insane, it's not just that people don't go along with us it is that they are really vehemently oppose us in our day. But don't stray. Follow the shepherd. Stay with the flock.

Number three on your outline, I just put it that way, you and I, we need never stray under pressure and there will be pressure, more so now than there was for our grandparents and more so for our grandchildren than there is for us. It's getting worse. You do understand that, right? It's getting worse.

Putnam County of Tennessee county library refused to let a Christian author hold a book discussion. All kinds of authors of all kinds of book hold book discussions there all the time. Why do you think that the author was banned from having a book discussion? Because his book was about Christ.

New Jersey substitute teacher, this is right out of the headlines, fired for giving a student a Bible. Substitute teacher. There was a class. There was a discussion. The curriculum involved a quotation from the Bible. The teacher talked about the quotation from the Bible. A student came up asking about the context and where that came from or what it's like. Can I have a Bible? The teacher went and got a Bible and gave it to the student. Fired. Terminated.

A veterans guardsman. These guys who go to these veterans funerals, like out here in Riverside, and they give the flag to the family. Fired for saying to the family as he gave the flag folded up in great respect for that widow, "God bless you." Fired.

University of Wisconsin. RA. Resident Assistant. He was banned from leading a voluntary Bible study in the basement of his dorm. University of Wisconsin. Couldn't have that there. Voluntary,



not making anyone go, don't have to go, but we're going to talk about the Bible in the basement. Nope.

There was a man in Virginia, private landowner. He owned this farm, he owned his barn. He was having some people over to sing worship songs and to study the Bible together in his barn. The county prohibited it and said you cannot do that. It is not zoned for church use.

This was unheard of 50 years ago. Is it getting better or getting worse? It's getting worse. You want to be a follower of Christ? You want to do it in this day? It's going to get hard. I mean come in for a landing with this passage. Go to John 15. We're in John 10, go five chapters later when Jesus is getting ready to say goodbye to his disciples. He says listen, as it heats up in this world you guys are going to have to hold together, you're gonna have to be devoted to one another.

You're going to have to be a flock that protects one another, that has a synergistic kind of energy that comes from one another.

You are to be devoted and loving and sacrificial and you need each other now more than ever.

Look at verse 12, let's start there. John 15:12. My commandment, this is it, my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Well that little Greek word there "az" translates "as", just in the same manner, to the same extent, the same way that I have. And how much did he love? Verse 13. Greater love has no one than this, I quoted this passage earlier, that someone lay down his life for his friends. Now he did that because he could exchange his Aston Martin life for our Kia life. I can understand that. I can't do that for anyone else but I understand that for the benefit of us he did something greatly sacrificial. He says, for the benefit of others, do something greatly sacrificial.

That's why I have a great life being surrounded by Christians in a church. It has nothing to do with me being the pastor. They're committed to me and I'm committed to them.

We have community. Love one another. To what extent? To the extent that Jesus did. Be willing to sacrifice for one another, to lay down your lives for one another. And by the way the flock is defined this way, verse 14, "You are my friends," you're in this flock, "if you do what I command you." A lot of people are Christian in name only, you know that right? A lot of people say I'm a follower of Christ, quote unquote, air quotes there, but I don't really follow Christ. I only do the things I like. I only do things that are convenient. If it's going to be something that is going to get me in trouble, I just don't do those things that are going to make me seem like a weirdo or insane. No, you're my friends if you do what I command you. I revealed the truth you, "No longer do I call you servants," verse 15, "for the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I've called you friends, for all that I have from the Father I have made known to you." When it really comes down to it, look at how I've called you out. I chose you. "You did not choose me, I chose you and I appointed you to go." Mixed metaphor, now we go to the agricultural metaphor, "to bear fruit." Like a farmer's invested in this piece of real estate to bear fruit to the glory of the owner, you're supposed to go bear fruit. A fruit that remains, "a fruit that abides, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name." What are we talking about? Glorifying the Father by the way I live, doing things that bring him honor. Not talking about the yacht in the harbor or the, you know, the cabin in the mountains. It's not a prosperity gospel verse, but if you ask for those things you want to glorify me, man, he's going to give it to you.

"These things I command you." Why? "So that you will love one another." We need to pull



together. Why is it so important in this context? Because he is about to leave them in a world that's not going to like them. Verse 18. "If the world hates you, you've got to know that it hated me before it hated you." Now that's true.

"If you were of the world," you want to live like everybody else, you want to do whatever's cool, whatever's hip, whatever is acceptable, whatever is, you know, polling well in society, the ethos of the day, well great.

"The world would love you as its own. But because you're not of the world but I chose you out of the world," that's a flock, it's different, going in a different direction, "therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'a servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me they will persecute you." And I'll tell you we kind of got lulled into a little bit of a fantasy world in the past few generations here in America.

We're getting back to what normal Christianity has been in the Roman Empire. What it's been in, you know, most of western civilization until now, we've seen it reversing, we've had a nice comfortable experience. "If they've kept my word then they'll keep yours" and some will, that's good. "But all these things they will do to you on account of my name because they do not know him who sent me." They're not in my flock. The pressure's going to be on and I just encourage you that you need to put your trust in an authorized Savior who has come to say I want to solve your ultimate problem, I love you that much and I'm kind enough and care enough about you to lead you. Study my life, study my teachings, study my principles, live according to what I've laid down for you. And if you do there's going to be a lot of pressure for you to stray. Don't. You need one another. Hebrews Chapter 10 says we need it all the more as we see the day approaching.

And how do we know the day is approaching? Because the forecast is it's going to get real dark before Christ comes back. It's going to get harder and harder to be a Christian till Christ comes back. Well, the forecast is right on schedule. It's time for us to need one another more and more and more. I know this is all about shepherds and sheep and in our day we don't know a lot about that because we don't live in that culture. When it speaks of knowing the voice of the shepherd and following him, it says that in verse 16 and later in Chapter 10 verse 27, hearing his voice and following. That's something that all of those people in that agrarian first century society would know exactly what he's talking about. Matter of fact, today you can go and research some of these habits of these sheep. They're pretty dumb animals, that's true, but they sure have an intuitive sense of who their shepherd is. Because out there in the fields, in the pastures, at the watering holes you'll often have several of these flocks come together.

They'll have four or five, six, seven different shepherds that will convene on a watering hole for instance. And you have six, seven flocks there that will all intersperse, intermingle, they'll be all mixed up.

You'd think that would cause the shepherds a lot of consternation. Oh man, I'm not going to get my sheep back. They're all mixed up with your sheep and then you showed up and then Jim showed up and man we got a big convention of sheep here. How am I going to get my sheep back?

We'll do the homework on this. Those sheep have been so familiar with their shepherd. They know each other so well, they're so connected to that shepherd and a commitment to follow that shepherd in great simplicity. They haven't thought it through a lot but they know who their shepherd is and they know their flock. If any one of those shepherds, if they want to leave, you could have seven flocks stay at the water and if one shepherd stands up and says, all right guys let's go, move it out,



those sheep will know that shepherd's voice, they will turn and they will follow their shepherd. That's a fact. That's how it works.

And all I'm telling you is if you sit here today and you think about the appeal again to look past your next project at the office or at the house, your next, you know, issue going on in your job or whatever and you say, you know what are the big important issues in my life?

It's about who you're following and really what's going to happen when your life is over. The Bible would say if you're in a sermon where you hear the voice of God through the teaching of His word, here's how it's put in Hebrews, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. Respond as the sheep do to their shepherd. If he says it's time to go then you turn and you follow him.

That word "turn" in Scripture sometimes translated "repent." We turn from our life of leading our lives the way we want, doing whatever we want. The shepherd calls and we turn and we follow him. Oh and by the way, if you're willing to have the world behind you, the cross before you, if you're willing to say, though none follow, right, I'll still follow, though none go with me. Then realize we need each other now more than ever. Mark my words, ten years from now if the world last that long, it's going to be harder and harder to be a Christian in this society. So you and I need each other all the more as we see the day approaching. We need to recommit yourself to being a part of Bible teaching church. It doesn't have to be this one. Find one with a better pastor. That's great. Go find one but be in a place where they're teaching the Word of God uncompromisingly. And then I know those people are imperfect, I get that, just like you, you can join an imperfect team but be committed to that flock. Get involved. Let their lives intertwine with your lives. Make sure they really know you and make sure you know them and love them just like Christ loved you. That's the urgent call of Easter this year and I hope you respond well to that.

Let's pray. God help us as Christians in a day where it's heating up and I don't mean to be negative and I don't want to say the sky is falling. But God if there is ever a time for us to look at the resurrection of Christ 2,000 years ago to see its great benefit for the next life, its implications for the current life and its urgent call for right now, I suppose this year is the best time for us to think that way. How urgent it is that we hear the shepherd's voice and we follow.

And that we're willing, even when people call us crazy, insane or the guys filled with demons, to say, though none go with me I'm going to follow. Even if they throw insults my way, even if it gets hard, even if we get jailed one day for holding to the clear and explicit teaching of Jesus Christ, we're going to do it because there there's no other hope in any other leader, every guru, every religious book, every prophet has got no credential on Christ. Christ is the one who's conquered death for us. Proven it by the historic resurrection of Christ. For those in this room that sounds like a fairy tale, I pray they do some homework on this. And for those of us that are convinced intellectually, I pray it becomes something so evident in our lives it's seen, it's obvious, it's there and it's lived out in a way we loved one another and the way we're devoted to following Christ without wavering. No matter what the pressure is. Make that a reality for us this Easter. In Jesus name. Amen.