

The Glory of the Good Shepherd
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John 10:16
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We are going to focus in this week on Verse 16. If you were here last week, you know that we noted that it was something of a parenthesis in Jesus' basic argument. He's making the point in this passage that He is the Good Shepherd, and inviting people to come to Him, inviting His lost sheep to come to Him for all that they need. Because what we need more than anything else is a shepherd. A wayward sheep that are abandoned and alone are in desperate straits, and Jesus is offering this gracious invitation. He basically then adds to that invitation reasons, and we've seen three reasons He's given. He's the Good Shepherd because He lovingly sacrifices for His sheep. He's the Good Shepherd because He, in love, knows His sheep. And He's the Good Shepherd because He exercises loving authority on behalf of the sheep. But in the middle of this argument there's just an aside, Verse 16, it is something of a parenthesis in which Jesus stops addressing the basic thrust of the argument and He makes a statement that really, though it is a parenthesis, we don't want to skip over it. We want to mine the depths, something of the treasure in this verse, because it is a verse in which we see the glory of the Good Shepherd. In fact, the title of the message today is 'The Glory of the Good Shepherd'. I'm going to read Verses 11-21 to set the context, but our focus is on Verse 16 this morning.

John 10:11-21 ~ "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

19 A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. 20 Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?" 21 Others were saying, "These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?"

Let's pray.

Our Father, we ask as we open Your word, as we begin to look at this passage, that You would truly grant us eyes to see, and ears to hear. That Your Spirit, who inspired the word might now enlighten this passage to our hearts, and that we might see the glory of our Savior. We pray this in His name, Amen.

So the title of the message is 'The Glory of the Good Shepherd'. Verse 16, this parenthesis, really shows us the glory of the Good Shepherd, and we're going to see it in three basic points. I chose the title 'The Glory of the Good Shepherd' because what is going on in the passage, Jesus is issuing an invitation, as we've said. That is the bigger picture. He is saying, "I am the Good Shepherd, come to Me." But even as He says that, He is aware of those who are His own, and those who are coming, and He is aware that the majority of His listeners are not coming to Him. So He says what He says in Verse 16 to address the concerns of those who are coming. When they are coming to the Good Shepherd, they are coming as a minority. There are only a few coming and He understands they may feel some sense of trepidation that is heightened because they are a minority. Surely more would be coming if this were right, if this were true, if He really is the Good Shepherd. So to help their faltering faith, He makes this statement.

He also makes the statement to be an indictment on those who are not coming, and to explain to all those who are hearing Him that His mission, and His ministry, are accomplishing exactly what God has intended. This is I think an important thing for us to take a moment and talk about. Jesus and His ministry, over time what has happened, what is happening at this moment, this juncture in His ministry, reading through the Gospel of John, we've seen that since John 6, the crowds have greatly reduced. Remember in John 6, when He gives the discourse on the bread of life, and He says, "Unless you eat My flesh, drink My blood, you have no part in Me," and it says that many of those who followed Him left. Even a number of His own disciples, those who were His disciples that called themselves His disciples, they left. They no longer walked with Him. So that Jesus asked to the twelve, "Are you also going to leave Me?" So there is this great reduction in the popularity of this great teacher. So that in itself is unsettling. Not only have the crowds reduced, the

crowds of supporters have lessened, and numbers are declining. On the other hand, the number of the opponents are increasing. The middle ground is disappearing, so opposition is growing and becoming more intense. We see that as we go through this passage and through the book of John. He's showing us again and again how the crowds, in hearing Jesus talk, want to kill Him. We're going to see this right after He says, "No one takes My life from me." They are going to pick up stones moments after that. He is going to ask them a question, diffuse their initial hostility by asking them a question. "For which of My good works do you kill me? Do you stone Me?" Then He adds in more dialogue and then they are ready to kill Him again. Then they try to seize them, and then supernaturally He alludes their grasp because no one takes His life from Him. His hour was not yet.

Imagine yourself as one of those little sheep that are now coming to Him. It could be unsettling. It looks like maybe His ministry, His Messianic ministry, has been a failure. Then remember we don't just study the history of this event, this moment in time when Jesus spoke this, but when God inspired these words to be written down. It is also important to consider the original audience of the text of John 10, and the original audience is late 1st Century Jewish proselytes, Jewish converts actually to Christianity as well, but also Jews and Jewish proselytes who were in the synagogues, who God is still reissuing this invitation. "I am the Good Shepherd," and a small number are trickling in from those Jewish synagogues, a small number. So as a way again of comforting the faithful, He realizes that from outward appearances, "It looks like My ministry is failing. It looks like My Messiah-ship is discredited when you look at the numbers, but in reality it is not failing at all." The farthest thing from the truth is that God could fail. The farthest thing from the truth is that Jesus Christ could come up short in any way. He is a complete success, a complete victor in every battle He fights. When we look at this passage rightly, what we see in this is that there is no lack of effectiveness. In fact, that is why I've chosen the title 'The Glory of the Good Shepherd'. Glory is the idea of the impact of God's attributes or His glory. The impact of Jesus' ministry is glory. So the title of the message, 'The Glory of the Good Shepherd', seen in three distinct aspects in Verse 16. 'The Glory of the Good Shepherd.'

1) The Glory of His Mercy:

We see His glory first of all, the first aspect of His glory is seen in the glory of His mercy. The glory of His mercy. Verse 16, the first two clauses. ***I have other sheep, which are not of this fold;...*** That is the first clause, and the second, ***...I must bring them also,...*** Those two clauses offer us a glimpse of the mercy, the wideness of God's mercy, the vastness of the mercy of the Shepherd. I mean, who

is He talking about? Who are these other sheep? ***I have other sheep, which are not of this fold;***... That relative clause, ***...which are not of this fold;***... modifies the other sheep. It tells us who the other sheep are, they are the sheep that are not of this fold. What is this fold? Where is He when He says this? He's in Jerusalem, in the vicinity of the temple, and He's speaking to the house of Israel. So the fold that He's talking about, this fold, is the house of Israel. ***I have other sheep, which are not of this fold;***... The fold He is talking about is the fold of God, in the Old Covenant, the house of Israel. So He's saying, "I have other sheep, that is I have sheep from many nations. I have Gentile sheep." Jesus is making a direct claim that His ministry, His salvation He is offering, extends beyond the borders of Israel. It reaches to the farthest end of the earth. His compassion is not limited, or not bound by an ethnic group, or religious group. His compassion extends to the farthest reaches of the universe.

In this, we see that God has always intended to save the Gentiles. That is good news because almost everyone in this room is a Gentile, that is, we were not born Jewish. Think about our roots, if you go far enough back in your roots, no matter what your ethnicity is, most of us are hybrids. We've got different things going on in our backgrounds. I mean, I have English, German, American Indian, and who knows what else, but if I trace any of those lines back far enough you know what I find? All along, I find Paganism, Paganism, Paganism. I find black dark spirituality. I find without God, without hope, lost. That's what I find. The English, and the Germans, the American Indians, and wherever your ethnic roots go, unless you are Jewish, they go back to an empty black hole spiritually.

Then, think about not only just that way, but even in our personal lives. Some of us were brought up in Christian homes. That makes us a little more like the Jew in that we were closer to God, weren't we? The Gospel was being preached when we were growing up. Our parents or grandparents shared the word with us, but there are a number of us in this room who had no spiritual heritage, who rarely if ever heard the name of Jesus, and who were clearly in the dark completely. What this passage says is, "Our Great Shepherd, our Good Shepherd, He loves to go after the most unlikely." There is no one beyond the reach of His grace or His mercy. So we need to celebrate that and remember.

As we saw earlier from Ephesians 2, where were you when He found you? The fact is, even if you were close, and this is the beauty of the Gospel, which the Lord makes clear, even for the house of Israel, what they had to come to understand was, though they were close, they were so close, but yet so far. They were just as far as the Gentiles from salvation, that they needed Jesus Christ, and through one

man, Jesus Christ, they could be reconciled to God. That is what Ephesians said, through Him He would reconcile the groups to God and to each other, but the only access point to Heaven is Jesus Christ, for Jew and Gentile. You see this is a glorious fulfillment of the entire plan of salvation which unfolds in the Old Testament. In fact, it shows us, this is actually a claim to His Messiah-ship, His concern for the Gentiles, though it was really a hard, bitter pill for the Jews to swallow often in the 1st Century. They didn't like the fact that He was coming to the Gentiles. You had this paradox, there is a sense in which Jesus would sometimes say in settings, like He tells His apostles, "Go to the house of Israel, don't go to the Gentiles," when He sends out the 70.

Remember it is what He says to the Syro-Phoenician woman? Remember the woman from the region of Tyre? He is up there in the region of Tyre which says something itself. Why is He up there? Because He is out there reaching out for lost sheep, this Syro-Phoenician woman among the others that He is up there to search out. But do you know what happens? He is walking along, and she comes up, and she is entreating Him. The disciples are with Him and she is calling after Him. "Please help me. My daughter is demon-possessed. Please help me, Master. Teacher, please help me." Jesus is ignoring her. Ignoring her! Walking on He is ignoring her so much to the fact that the disciples finally say to Him, "Lord, will You please tell her to be quiet. She's not listening to us. She wants Your attention. If You are not going to listen to her, tell her to be quiet. She is embarrassing us." He turns around and He says to the woman, "Woman, what am I to do with you? I've been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. All the people in Israel are lost sheep too." He's testing her faith. How much that is saying. This shows how God's hard words, He has a way of saying things that cut right to the chase of our hearts that at first glance seem cold. Why would Jesus say that? "I've been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. What have I to do with you, woman?" She says, "Yes, You've been sent after the lost sheep of Israel, but even the dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table." He marvels at her faith and says, "Blessed is her faith," and heals her daughter. She was willing to acknowledge, "I'm a dog. I know I was born in the dark, raised in the dark, I'm in the dark, but I believe that You are a merciful Savior," and she was right on the money! I mean, He's in Tyre in sight, He's in that region. Why is He there? He's there looking for sheep. He's just testing her faith and He's showing that there is this order of salvation that God came first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. That is what Romans 1:16, one of my favorite verses says.

Romans 1:16 ~ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

He comes to the Jew first, or as Jesus told on another expedition into Gentile territory, a woman of Samaria. John highlights that in a whole chapter, John 4. Why did He go through Samaria? He was going up there looking for sheep. He told her, remember she is arguing about, “Which mountain should we worship God from?” He says, “Listen, you need to be clear on something, salvation is from the Jews. But I’m here, I’ve got good news. It is from the Jews, it is through the Jews, but it is to the nations. It is to everyone.” It is not just for the Jews, it is for all of us, and it has always been that way. It has always been that way! The fact that this scope is becoming clear, this is actually the mystery that Paul talks about in Ephesians 3, Colossians 1, this mystery, and the idea of a mystery in the New Testament.

The word ‘mystery’ means ‘*that which was hidden in the past or not clear in the past, but has become clear*’. It wasn’t unknown, it was known in kind of a veiled way, a shadowy way, and now it has become clear. The mystery that Paul is talking about in Ephesians 3, right after the passage we read earlier, he says, “Listen, I was called by God to preach the mystery, and the mystery is this: God is taking Jew and Gentile and making them one.” This is the mystery. God has always intended to save Jew and Gentile, and what good news that is. The Jews should have recognized this because the Messiah’s prophecies, and the prophecies of the Messiah which would be the Good Shepherd, always pointed to Him saving the nations, saving not just the Jews.

Isaiah 42:6 ~ “I am the Lord, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations,

That word could be translated ‘Gentiles’. “As a light to the Gentiles,…” And then Chapter 49, Verse 6. Isaiah talking again about the Savior to come, the servant. The Lord is speaking, the Father is speaking:

Isaiah 49:6 ~ He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant...

This is the Father talking to the Son, 700 years before He comes, in His ministry, through Isaiah, the Father is talking to the Son.

Isaiah 49:6 ~ ...“It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations...”

Is He saying, “This is too small a thing for You just to save Israel.”? No, “You are too marvelous a servant. You are going to save the nations. You are going to be a light to the nations.” So the glory of Jesus, the glory of His shepherd-ship is saying in that He is the Savior to all people. He is the Savior of those who are near, and those who are far away. God has compassion on the most unlikely.

It is also saying throughout the Old Testament in other ways. We noted when we were going through the books of the Old Testament, chronologically this last couple of years we have been doing that on Wednesday evenings. We came to the first writing prophet. You know the prophets in the Old Testament, Isaiah to Malachi, right? The first prophet that God called in that group, Isaiah to Malachi, was the prophet Jonah. It is pretty amazing, the first prophet God called is the man He sent to Nineveh, the Assyrians.

Then later, we studied Daniel a few years ago, remember in Daniel when Daniel is in Babylon, remember I made a lot out of this. Patti said at one point, “You’ve done too much on the chiasm.” Some of you guys who were here several years back, remember the chiasm. A ‘key-asm’, if you want to say it that way. Actually that would be more correct from the standpoint of Greek, ‘key-asm’. But anyway, a ‘key-asm’, a chiasm, is ABBA, grammatically. Remember? We saw that in the book of Daniel, 12 chapters, the prophecy of Daniel. Daniel is living in Babylon, the capital city, the evil empire of the world at that time. When Daniel is called to prophesy by God, he writes a book that we divided into 12 chapters, and the centerpiece of that book is Chapters 2-7. There is a chiasm there. Chapter 2 matches Chapter 7. Chapter 3 matches Chapter 6. Chapter 4 matches Chapter 5. It is a picture basically saying this: “The Most High reigns over all the realm of mankind, submit to Him while there is still time.” That sixth chapter, the heart of the book of Daniel, is not in Hebrew. It is in Aramaic. God wrote the heart of His book to His people in the language of the heathens. That is something that is extraordinary. Our God is a God who saves and who loves the least likely. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, comes in the Spirit of Yahweh, He is Himself Yahweh, and He is looking for sheep beyond the borders of Israel. So we see it in the glory of His mercy, the glory of our Shepherd.

2) The Glory of His Gospel:

Secondly, we see it in the glory of His Gospel. The glory of His Gospel. Now this is seen in the next clause back there in John 10 when He says:

John 10:16 ~ I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice;...

...they will hear My voice;... Now He said earlier, the previous clause before that too, ***...I must bring them also,...*** I'll say a word about that too. What we see in this is that God is a God of mercy and mercy, biblically, that attribute of mercy, the quality of mercy, is to see someone suffering, to take note of their misery, to be moved in the heart, to care, but not just to care, but to act to remove the suffering. That is mercy. Mercy is a heart and a hand together. It is the heart that feels the misery and it is the hand that reaches out, okay? What we see here is the mercy of God leads to the Gospel. He says ***...I must bring them also,...*** In fact, I wish that the translators did this differently. Every major translation says ***...I must bring them also,...*** The verb translated 'bring' really would be better translated 'lead'. "I must lead them also,..." I think that is a little better. It is not like He is going to bring them to the fold of Israel. No, He is leading out sheep from the fold of Israel. He came to the fold of Israel, He entered by the door, back to John 10:1-5. He showed Himself to be the true Shepherd. He leads out His sheep from Israel, and then He goes to the world and He leads out His sheep, and He makes one flock under one Shepherd. That's the picture of what's happening in the gospel.

Well, the glory of His gospel, though, is seen in the fact that He goes to the sheep personally, and He speaks to the sheep personally. Now, think about that for a moment. ***...they will hear My voice;...*** Jesus is six months away from His crucifixion, resurrection, and shortly after that His ascension. He's not going to make any trips personally across the Mediterranean. He's not going to go in His physical body and get on a boat and travel to Rome. He's going to send Paul to Rome or Peter to Rome. He's going to send the apostles out, but when the apostles go out and preach His gospel, what He is saying is when the people He sends to preach Christ, preach Him, that in the truest sense, when people hear, when people are brought to faith, it's because they literally heard the voice of Jesus. We're not talking just about Jesus in the preaching of the word. No, the preaching of the word is something much greater than that. In the preaching about Christ, Christ preaches. Christ the Shepherd calls. This is why we're not to despise the preaching of the word.

I mean, Paul understands our tendency to want to despise it, and today it's certainly no different. It's something very en vogue nowadays to talk about the fact that, "Come to our church," or they don't even like to use the word *church* now. "Come to our gathering. We don't preach at you. We don't think we need to hear a sermon. We have a discussion." Well, there are places for discussions. That's all good and well, but the Lord has ordained preaching. He says through the foolishness of preaching, He chose to save, and it does appear to be foolish in a sense that we would gather together and listen to a man who excels us in no way, preach for 45 minutes to an hour, or sometimes longer. Why would we do that? It's because God has ordained this means.

To take it to another level, isn't it amazing that God saves through such an apparently weak method? And isn't it amazing that God saves through—which is also preaching—when you or I share the gospel one-on-one with someone? Why is it that God uses our mouths, our weak words, our frail flesh? Why does He use that? Why don't people just have spiritual experiences with Christ directly coming to them? Why is it that God has ordained that somebody in human flesh, in weak human body, has to go and use their vocal cords to utter His word, and that's when Jesus shows up? Why is it? It's because God glories in taking the weak things of the world to confound the wise.

So the glory of His gospel is that when we in our failing, halting, faltering efforts to share Christ with someone, when we think, "I can't believe I got turned around and I don't know what I'm saying. I wasn't prepared for this question. Why didn't they have the other question that I was prepared for? But they didn't have that." And as I falter through that and I talk about Jesus, and how He died on the cross for sins, it doesn't seem like they're getting it. It doesn't seem like they're interested, and then suddenly the light comes on and they come to faith. What happened? Jesus was there. As I shared, Jesus called them, and that's really what evangelism and preaching is. Basically, I want to introduce you to the Good Shepherd. You're a sheep just like me. You're lost and you may be really mired in the mud right now, but you have the same problem I have. You need a Shepherd. I've got the best news in the world. There is a glorious Good Shepherd who will love you, who will come to where you are, pick you up, and bring you to Himself, and when we preach the gospel, when we share Christ, remember never to despise the method, and don't ever take glory in it when you think you've done it well, because it really doesn't matter. It's Jesus showing up that makes all the difference. He's the only one that has power to call the dead to life.

The glory of His gospel is that Jesus Himself is speaking. In the foolishness of preaching, His powerful voice when He wills it is heard and will be heard, and people will be saved. So we see the glory of the Good Shepherd. The glorious effectiveness of our Good Shepherd is seen in the glory of His mercy, the glory of His gospel, and finally:

3) The Glory of His People:

There's really something of a climax here in Verse 16. Though it's a parenthesis, it's a powerful parenthesis.

John 10:16 ~ and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

You see the italics there. If you've got an NAS, or an ESV, or a King James, probably it's italicized, and that means that that word 'with' is not there in the Greek. They've added it just to make it more readable. But literally in the Greek it says: ***...they will become one flock one shepherd.*** I actually like it better that way. I think it's that kind of decisive period on it. ***...they will become one flock one shepherd.*** There's this sense in which God is doing something so extraordinary. The Good Shepherd Himself, in going after the lost sheep beyond the borders of Israel, is going to bring them and He's leading them out, gently leading them in the same way He led them out of Israel, speaking His truth. They follow Him and there's one flock, one shepherd. And in this, we see the surpassing glory of the Good Shepherd. The glory of His people testifies to the glory of the Good Shepherd. Now, let's take those two phrases together. ***...one flock one shepherd.*** The glory of His people is seen first of all in:

- The Unity of the Flock:

I mean, this is something that is glorious in itself. This is something that confounds the wisdom of this world, that God would take people that were as different as Jew and Gentile and make them one, that God would take people that are as different as you and me, and make us one, that God would take people that come from all different types of backgrounds, all different types of religion, all different types of sin, and immorality, and dirtiness—God would take all of that with all of the baggage that we have, and He would make us one. This is the glory of the Good Shepherd. He does something that the world cannot do. The world cannot accomplish this. We see it again and again played out in history, the desires of man to overcome the barriers that divide us.

In culture, after culture, after culture, history is full of this. We see it in our American history. We see it in the history of the world. I mean, look at the problems that happen, that overflow because of ethnic violence. Anywhere on the globe you can go and find it. We have one of our missionaries in Croatia. I remember Croatia was formerly—I always get it mixed up—Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia used to be one country, and it was made up of three different ethnicities, basically—the Bosnians, the Serbs, and the Croats. The difference between these people is ethnic and religious, and they hate each other. They hate each other with deep-seated hatred. That's why they were so glad when the Communism of Yugoslavia failed. They could separate. It goes back generations. The roots of that even have implications for the First World War. All of these things, these hatreds, boil up from time to time.

In America we have racial strife and hope that we might be doing better, but it doesn't seem like things are getting better out in the world, does it? Why is that? It's because only Jesus Christ unites. There is no other unity outside of Jesus Christ. He is the one who makes the two one by abolishing in the flesh the dividing law of hostility. He makes our differences become less and less of an issue as we get closer to Him. That's the glory of the gospel. This is something that He is doing. I mentioned earlier Paul in Ephesians, and I encourage you to read that chapter, just Chapter 2 again this week, and read right on into Chapter 3. What Paul is basically doing there in Ephesians is He's explaining to these mostly Gentile believers, "Hey listen. I've got such great news for you. The gospel that you have heard that has transformed you, it means you're not second class Christians. You're not second class citizens. You are truly children of God in the same way that your Jewish brothers and sisters are, and it's always been God's plan."

Beyond that, he goes into Chapter 3 and says, "The mystery that I've been called to preach is basically that we can both be one, and God did this." I think it's Verse 10. "God did this so that He might show the surpassing riches of His grace and His glory to the principalities and powers. God makes Jew and Gentile one. God makes black and white one. God makes Japanese and Korean one so that He can preach to the demons in hell, 'Your days are numbered. I'm bringing all things together under one head—Jesus Christ—and I'm going to put an end to the enmity. I'm going to destroy the one who brought the enmity, Satan himself.'" His head has been at Jesus' foot, but Jesus' foot is stopping his head. The days are coming, and it's this that's happening. That's the glory of the church. The church is a testimony of that.

We looked at this awhile back. We jumped ahead to do some sermons on unity, and we hit, among other places, John 17 where Jesus' prayer, His heartbeat the night before He dies is, "Father, make them one. That's what I pray for, that they may be one even as we are one." Earlier that night before He prays, He told His disciples, "Listen, they will know you're My disciples... (How?) ...by your love for one another, the fact that you can love each other." And we don't have to be ethnically different to need God's grace to love each other, do we? I mean, let's just be real. It's hard to love each other.

Think about how hard it is to in a Godly way love those in your family. You love them because they're yours, right? There's that sense of love, but I'm talking about agape love. Lay down your life for those in your family. Put them above yourself. How can you put their needs above your own? It's only through the blood of Christ. It's only through walking in His love. And if that's that hard with our family, certainly it's hard with anybody else. It's going to be hard with anybody you get to know, because the more you get to know them, the more you're going to see their sin, and the more you're going to see how unlovely they are, because we're all unlovely. Even though we're saved and we're being sanctified, there's still a lot of 'unloveliness' in every one of us, and we keep finding it out every day, don't we? But the wonder of it is Jesus loves us, Jesus is purifying us, and He is going to make us one.

Now, the glory of His people is seen in two ways: The unity of His flock, and listen, this second point is very important. What is it that makes the flock one? The unity of the flock was the first sub-point under one flock one shepherd, and the second sub-point is:

- The Unity of their Focus:

This is the key, in that what makes us one is not focusing on oneness. That's a very important thing. It's so easy to miss the main thing, isn't it? There's a lot of talk about oneness and unity, and those are good things, but they're secondary. They're very important, but they're secondary to something else that's primary. There's only one thing that's primary, and that's Jesus. This is telling us here in John 10: **...one flock one shepherd.** The way we become one more, and more, and more is that you and I focus more, and more, and more on Jesus Christ. The more you focus on Jesus, the more you love Jesus, the more every dividing wall falls away. That's the key, and if we talk about oneness, and we desire oneness, and we put in methods for oneness and small groups, and all of that, but the focus is not on Jesus, then we will not be one.

It's wonderful to have that—there are great ideas we need to probably implement and think about in our lives. How connected am I with other people? I need to make some adjustments in my life for that. But when you do, make sure that Jesus is the central focus 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 ¼ days a year. He is the focus, because what is it that makes a flock one? Now, think about it. The image is beautiful. ...**one flock one shepherd**. It does not say *one fold*. The King James mistranslates this, because it follows the Latin Vulgate in mistranslating a Greek word, here. The word is flock, not fold, and it's important.

In fact, my translation of the NAS says *one flock*, but in Greek, it's wonderful because the words are related. Listen to this. In English, the word *flock* and *shepherd*, think about etymologies with me for a moment. Related words sound alike, right? Father and fatherhood. That's not a very good one, but those words are very related. I didn't plan this, so that's why it's such a bad illustration. But *shepherd* and *flock* are very different in their etymology from an English standpoint. In Greek, the words are these: *one poimnē* (ποιμνη) *one poimēn* (ποιμήν). That's what it says. The word *flock* really means, if you were to try to give it the flavor, it would say this: One shepherd's (possessive). One thing belonging to the shepherd, and one shepherd.

What is it that makes us a flock? It's that we have the same Shepherd. What is it that makes us one is that we're following the same Shepherd. As we follow Him, we become like Him, and as we listen to His voice, then we follow Him, and we love Him, and we treasure Him, and we marvel at the fact that He found us where we were, and He's bringing us to His glory, and we remember how ugly and nasty we are, and we think even today we're still so nasty, still so ugly, and He's still calling me home. The more that we follow Him, the more we find that there are no divisions between us, because we're just going after the same Shepherd.

In fact, the unity of the church is important. It's so important. It's so much more important than we think it is, but it's always a secondary thing. The unity of the church is rooted and grounded, the sap that flows, is the passionate love for Jesus. Celebration of Jesus is what unifies. We get together saying, "Isn't He wonderful?" The more I take the focus off of myself, think back to our illustration of just family life, conflicts in the home. What is it that divides us? Our sin divides us. Our passions divide us. Our lusts divide us. I can see yours a lot better than I can see mine, and I think you need to be fixed more than I need to be fixed, but when I get my focus on Jesus, I see that my biggest issue is me.

My biggest problem is my heart and how far I am from being like Him, and yet how amazed I am that He loves me as I am and has transformed me. Justification, remember, is being declared righteous by faith in Christ because of what He has done. Justification, declared righteous forever, means that God sees us just as if I had never sinned, just as if I had always obeyed. Meditate on that. That's how God sees you if you have repented and believed in Jesus Christ. So you see your ugliness, and each day we see our ugliness, and yet we see His glory, His provision, and that He's treated me as if I'd never sinned, as if I'd always obeyed. That's how He loves me right now. Then suddenly as I'm filled up with the wonder of that, it overflows on to my looking at you and seeing your sin. How can I not love you with a love that's overflowing? I'm overflowing with the fact that He loves me. I see how awful I am. How can I not look past yours?

That's what Matthew 18:21-35 is talking about, the unmerciful servant. Remember the guy that owes millions of dollars to his master? His master calls him in. He's somehow squandered millions of dollars, and he says, "I want to settle accounts and I don't have the money. Give me more time and I'll repay you." The master says, "There's no way you can repay me. I'm going to put you into debtor's prison until you've paid the last debt in your suffering in the prison." He pleads for mercy, and the master is moved with compassion and says, "Not only will I give you more time, I forgive the debt. You owe me nothing." That man goes out and he meets another servant who owes him basically \$50, relatively speaking. It's millions versus \$50. He says, "Hey, you know you owe me \$50." He says, "Listen, I need more time and I'll pay you." That's a reasonable request. "I can give you \$50 if you'll give me a few days. I get paid on Friday." But he says, "No, I'm not going to give you any time," and he has him thrown into the debtor's prison. So the other servants observe that, and they go back and tell the master, "Do you know what this wicked servant did?" He calls him in and he says, "Your debt is reinstated. I could forgive it freely and I now reinstate it freely, because you really owe it to me anyway. You're not going to be released until you pay it off."

Basically what he's saying is if you haven't received the forgiveness of God, if you're not walking in that, if you're not walking in the light of His grace, you cannot extend it. But if you are overwhelmed with the riches of His grace and you're breathing in the wonder of His acceptance in Jesus Christ, then it's natural to extend that. It's normal and right. You see it as this offense that seems so large to me, so big, is really \$50 versus millions that I've offended God with. He's forgiven me all that offense. I release that to you.

The more that we keep our eyes on Jesus, the more we become one. He is the key. The unity of the church, the unity of the flock, is to be so transformed that the world marvels at it, but it only happens as we stay preoccupied with Jesus Christ. And when that happens, the glory of the Good Shepherd shines out like the noonday sun. People see the glory of His mercy, and we need to be like Him, going out to the most unlikely. The most unlikely people in my life need to be the people I'm thinking about as well, because I don't have any idea what God's going to do. He's always saving the most unlikely. He always has been, so speak the word wherever you can. And then in the glory of His gospel, know that when we preach His message, when we talk about Jesus, He is there speaking His voice and they're hearing Him, and that's all that matters.

So if they're saved, it's to His glory, and if they reject, He's the one that's been offended, and our hearts can break not just for the lost person, but for the fact that they have dishonored our glorious Shepherd. Then finally, as we walk closer to Him, the glory of our oneness which is rooted in the glory of our Savior will shine brighter and brighter. May God help us be people like that, sheep like that, who know the contentment of walking close to the Shepherd.

Let's go to Him in prayer...

Our Father, we come to You praising You. We thank You that it is Your heart, it is the nature of Your character—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—to be filled with compassion, that when You revealed Yourself to Moses, when You showed Your glory to Him, He heard You say, He heard Your word, “Yahweh, Yahweh, compassionate and gracious, abounding in lovingkindness and truth, who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin, but who will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.”

Father, we thank You that You are a God who is so filled with compassion that Your compassion is always leading the way. Just as Jesus came saying, “I am the Good Shepherd,” You are a God who invites people to follow You. You are a Shepherd, God. We pray, Lord, that You would work in the hearts of everyone in this room to want to follow You more truly, more faithfully, more joyfully. We pray for those in this room that are lost sheep today that have not yet come home. I pray that even today they have heard Your voice, or they're hearing Your voice, Lord Jesus, during this time, and that they will respond to Your voice by your grace, by Your power. Save them, Lord. Call them, and may they know the joy of walking with You. Father, we pray that You would be glorified in Your people as we walk with our blessed Savior. We pray in His Name, Amen.

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