

Life in the Pen #3: The Good Shepherd Part 2

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[0 : 0 0] Well, give us ears to hear. May we truly listen. May we put aside worldly concerns and listen to your voice. May you be glorified. May you, by your Spirit, speak to our souls, our lives, our attitudes, our actions, our dreams, our visions. Lord, you know what we need to hear. I don't know, but you know.

So may your word find us, and may we see Jesus, and may we follow him wherever he leads us. Use your unworthy servant to proclaim your truth in Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen.

John chapter 10, once again, verses 11 through 21.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a higher hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees. And the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a higher hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, the beautiful shepherd, the excellent shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold.

I must bring them also. And they will listen to my voice, so there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again.

[1 : 5 0] No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down. I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.

Father. 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 possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? That is the word of the Lord.

Lord. You may be seated, please. Thank you. Thank you once again, praise team. Beautiful music. Shepherd noticed one day that one of his sheep were missing. And being a faithful shepherd, he scanned the fold for the sheep, looking for them, looking for it. As he scanned the grassy yard, he noticed the sheep just on the other side of the fence. The sheep stood there non-solently, just looking at the shepherd. He wasn't running, moving, struggling, or hurt. Just standing there, by the fence. So the shepherd went over the fence and got him and brought him back in. The next day, he looked in the fold and that same sheep was gone again. Sure enough, he found this standing in the same place on the other side of the fence. It looked at him. He looked at it. It didn't move.

Just stood there. Again, non-solently and unhurt. Now, this is a full-grown sheep. So the shepherd couldn't quite figure out how he was getting over on the other side of the fence. So the next day, he came out a little earlier and noticed the same sheep acting like a snake, slithering. I mean, flattening. That sheep struggled. It went low and really GI crawled under the barbed wire fence to get into this sheep. It was strange because it took more effort to get on the other side of the fence than it took for that sheep to integrate into the flock. Being a part of the flock was easy.

But he went out of his, it went out of his way. She went out of her way to get to the other side.

[5 : 10] It never ran away. It just stood just on the other side of the fence. It loved to crawl under the fence and just stand there always near the sheepfold, but never in the sheepfold. Is that you?

Always near the sheepfold, but not really part of the fold. That's the story of many Christians, I think, in this country since COVID. Always on the other side of the fence.

And certainly that gets to get even more difficult when we start talking about sheep who look different from other sheep. Hard to be part of the fold sometimes. I coined a word. I don't do that often, but I did. We are studying what I call sheep-losophy. The philosophy of the Lord's sheep pen.

It shows how human beings can act like real sheep, which is why we need a good shepherd. That's why God calls his sheep. Now, I'm not calling you sheep. Jesus, the living God, calls you sheep and me.

Sheep. We need a good shepherd. That's why Jesus came. Remember the word good? Excellent. Beautiful. Right. We need help. And so Jesus comes and shows us what it means to live in his sheep pen.

[7 : 12] And that's what we've been studying, right? In John 10, we've been looking at the benefits of having our good shepherd not only live for us. We started last week, but what does it mean that the good shepherd dies for us?

What are the benefits of his dying for us? So we're going to dive back in. And I want to show you something, because this scene, when Jesus shows up and declares himself to be the good shepherd, this is a scene from the Old Testament. I'm not talking Psalm 23, though that's also true.

I'm talking Ezekiel 34. Let me read this to you. Ezekiel 34, 11 to 16. Here's the scene in our Lord's heart.

For thus says the Lord God, behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel by the ravines and all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture.

And on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. They shall lie down in good grazing land. And on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord.

[9 : 03] I will seek the loss and I will bring back the strayed and I will bind up the injured. I will strengthen the weak and the fat and the strong. I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

John 10 is that being fulfilled. Jesus shows up and he's identifying himself as God. I am. And he's seeking out his sheep. But he does this. He does. Ezekiel didn't see it at that point. But we see it.

He does this by laying down his life for the sheep so that they may be his and have an intimate relationship with him for all eternity. But in the meantime, there's more that he's doing as a good shepherd in the pen. Now I want to focus on just one idea today and just actually forgive me.

I hope you understand. Well, allow me this in one verse really. And you'll see why. Here's the big point. The good shepherd's death for his sheep creates a diverse flock.

All sheep are not the same. A diverse flock. And this is what Jesus, our Lord, tells us in verse 16.

[10 : 42] 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. One flock. One shepherd.

Our Lord was physically talking to the sheep of Israel. The other sheep seemed to be those outside of Israel, meaning the Gentiles.

Jesus is saying he's going to be the savior shepherd of the world. people from every language every nation every tribe every tongue will be brought into his pen into his kingdom and into his church by his sacrifice well you know this is true this is what we believe so wholeheartedly and this went all to earth and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne god the fathers of the throne the son approaches when he had taken the scroll the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the lamb each holding a harp golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints and then they sang man they sang a new song worthy are you to take the scroll to open its seals for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for god from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priest to our god and they shall reign on the earth

Jesus saw this already we're catching up in time in space he already knew that he would have this multinational multi-tribal multi-tongued people who would he would be he would bring into this flock and there would be one shepherd and one people and and and they would work this how how do they display that how do you work that out in practice right you work that out in practice by joining the local church and pursuing it okay you gotta open your bibles now come on help me out ephesians chapter 2 i need you to i'm gonna put on the screen but you're gonna need to be there with me for a second ephesians chapter 2 we know this passage we love this passage okay paul knowing what jesus had done knowing him to be the good shepherd who lays out his life for a diverse flock he paul knowing the who the other sheep were because he is called the apostle to the gentiles he was practically working out what jesus said his death would accomplish amen so but but there's always issues and so in chapter 2 of ephesians he is helping the church and ethicists work out this reality i'm just gonna cite a few verses i don't seem to have it in front of me okay there we go ephesians chapter 2 verses 14 and 16 here we go for he himself jesus is our peace who has made us both one that's jew and gentile both one has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility no more hostility between by abolishing how do you do it by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself listen one new man in place of the two so making peace and might reconcile us both to god in one body through the cross thereby killing the hostility two people groups now made one people group you see what jesus is doing now verse 19 so then you are no longer strangers he's talking to the gentiles in church now you are no longer strangers and aliens but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of god built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets christ jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the lord in him you are also being built together into a dwelling place for god by the spirit jesus died that two groups might be brought together we call this gospel driven racial reconciliation right we talk about racial reconciliation this is the passage we go to to talk about that what jesus did now here's now here's something that i'm going to spend some time clarifying because i i think we sometimes we overstate the case and go a little bit past what scripture is saying when you look at this passage some have even said racial reconciliation is the gospel i don't think that's the best way of putting that part of the reason they say that they look at this passage and then in chapter three paul refers to bringing jew and gentile together in christ

as the mystery of christ some have said it's the mystery of the gospel or the miss but it says the mystery of christ in chapter three verse six he says this mystery that the gentiles are fellow heirs members of the same body and partakers of the promise in christ jesus through the gospel there was a mystery a mystery in the bible is something that was hidden in ages past and has now been revealed through the gospel by jesus that's what a mystery is in the bible okay it's not like we use the word mystery this is something that has been revealed okay it's been revealed then he tells us what the mystery is that jew and gentile would become one that's much worse and much deeper than black white latino etc asian he's not even talking about that are you do you hear me he's not talking about that he's talking about a deeper division between who is the people of god and who is not the people of god the people of god were those who believe in a living god out of the nation of israel that's the old covenant people they thought they were it they wrongly believe that the gentiles i'm quoting a jewish a good statement the gentiles were created to fuel the fires of hell gentiles were nothing those people those people those people didn't like them hated them and yeah they the jews were actually tolerated in the roman empire they weren't loved and they didn't love them either so what does god do through christ here's the mystery that he would have a people a people for himself and that people would represent every tribe every nation every tongue it wouldn't just be a jewish tribe it would be a tribe from from is from from philadelphia for america it'd be a tribe from israel it'd be a tribe from japan it'd be a tribe from africa it'd be a tribe come on somebody that he would put together and make them all his people jew and gentile distinction boom blown apart i got one people that's why when we talk about the the the people of god we talk about the old covenant people and the new covenant people but they're made one now in christ so abraham is mine david is my boy those are my peeps they're near your peeps too not just paul not just peter no the old covenant saints we are one together in jesus jew and gentile now listen that's the big divide in the bible that's the big issue who is the people of god now watch this if god can solve the greater problem the lesser problem of black folk and white folk and asian folk and latino folk etc in america piece of cake for him racial reconciliation becomes an application of the gospel not the gospel the gospel is what christ has done to make jew and gentile one that is the god that's that's the message that he has died for the sins of the world that's the message an application of that message therefore becomes you and i kid from west philly joining the presbyterian church in america

[20 : 38] matter of fact two of us because my best friends are pastor in sacramento and being welcomed as family you see the jews made it about ethnic identity which led to self-righteousness pride and elitism and so they failed in their mission they failed to see their salvation was only a stepping stone to bringing all peoples to believe in the living god through jesus which was the big issue you see what god is doing he's he's reclaiming his image when when when satan tricked adam and eve the image of god is still present but it got cracked it got marred it got defaced it got beat up good still there but beat up we still bear the image of god that's why we have dignity and identity and self-worth because of the living god but listen because that image was marred we begin to divide among tribes and peoples tongues and god has decided to redeem his image through his son he will not leave us like this he's redeeming his image he wants representation from all parts of creation among his people family this is why we must not settle for our churches to merely express the divisions of our culture our culture and its fallenness has created divisions among us and god has solved the big problem and now he's helping us work on the smaller problem those divisions that we have erected to keep us apart to keep us apart we

Jesus pursue the lost sheep outside of Israel and now he's working in us to pursue all of his sheep wherever they are whatever flavor or race or ethnic identity they may have we are pursuing those sheep in its ethnic and cultural diversity and national diversity it's not wokeness it's life in the pen it's life in the sheep pen to deny that is to deny what Jesus came to do it would have been easier I'm telling you it would have been so much easier if Jesus had just told the Jewish remember all his disciples are Jews if he had just told them look go to the lost sheep of Israel stay with your people it would have been so much easier if he had just said make disciples of Jews and some of those proselytites who became Jews just make disciples of them that would have been so much easier make disciples of people who look like you think like you believe like you just politically like you just go with them that's not what he did but here's the thing some of them still tried to do that it's amazing in Acts chapter 15 what happened was in Acts 15 you can turn it if you want but verses 1 through 29 what happens in that chapter is that

Peter Paul had went on and Barnabas had gone on missionary journeys and they had come back and they were reporting what God had done how God had used them you know and to spread the good news and now they weren't the first one Peter was the first one to reach the Gentiles by the way but they had a trip and they came back and what happened was some of the Jewish Christians had showed up where they had done their work and they were trying to get the Gentiles to convert to Judaism to be acceptable in the church anyways if you want to join the church Gentiles you've got to become like us and so so Paul goes to Jerusalem with the council and they said hold it up no no no that's not right we can't do that and so in Acts chapter 15 20 and 29 they send a letter back and it says this for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you Gentile Christians no greater burden than those than these requirements this is all we want from you guys that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols don't eat idol food y'all they've been sacrificed to demons from blood that's an Old Testament thing too from what has been strangled and from sexual immorality stop sleeping around if you keep yourselves from these you will do well farewell farewell

I love that apostolic brevity farewell that's all we got for you y'all keep on walking with Jesus you keep walking with the good shepherd we're not trying to make you like us you don't have to become a Jew to join the church listen life in Jesus sheep pen does not take away our ethnic and cultural identities stay with me but it does sanctify it come on somebody meaning he brings these expressions under the scalpel of his word correcting them destroying their idols and then those identities take a back seat not going away take a back seat to a new eternal identity what is our new eternal identity we're sheep in the sheep pen of Jesus that's that's that's that's never going to change and into eternity we'll be the

Lord's sheep and eternity we'll be the people of God and eternity we're Christians Christ ones we belong to him thank you thank you thank you Jesus now I'll be honest the PCA I love my I love my church so don't don't talk about my church in my presence don't talk about new PCA don't talk about new city in my presence it's my church and I'm not ashamed to be a part of the PCA these people of God I've met a lot of them not all of them not a lot of them we've been how many presbyteries now five six I keep groups and count we know a lot of folk in this I know some good people good Christian people all up and down this this from the east coast to west coast north and south in the PCA godly people who fear God love his commandments and want to be faithful to the Great Commission love them but I gotta be honest in some of those churches the PCA is largely a white denomination that's not sin necessarily but in so many of our churches you have to you end up becoming culturally white to join it that's a sad thing that's not what the

[28 : 35] God that's not what the word of God shows us God doesn't dislike your ethnicity he just sanctifies it he just wants to reveal to you that in each one of our ethnic identities there is idolatry and by the way being white is an ethnic identity just so you know and I feel bad for you as white people because you're just white I mean you got I was in the UK you got the English and the Irish and the Scottish I love those heritages own your stuff people you're just white own your stuff God loves our ethnic identities got my Dominican sister back there and I love her man she's got spice I got my Jamaican sisters over here I love it my wife Jamaican me I'm I'm just a hood from West Philly I don't know what ethnic identity that is we're still trying to figure it out

Colossians 3 11 reminds us here there is not Greek and Jew circumcised and uncircumcised barbarian Scythian slave free but Christ is all and in all this is life in the pen celebrate this when we were in Manchester a few months ago I was asked to preach briefly on this subject one message dealing with this subject from Ephesians 2 and I talked about the end of it celebrating your ethnic diversity because the image of God is revealed in our ethnicities fallen yes but still the image is there we can celebrate these differences and I never forget the pastors came to me and members came and they said we never thought about celebrating it we never thought about celebrating these our diversity because the image of

God is in my Scottish people the image of God is in my African brothers the image of God is in come on somebody the image of God I can celebrate the image of God and even more the image of Christ as you are walking with Jesus we get to celebrate who we are together my Japanese sisters and family we get to celebrate man konichiwa baby I'm all in your family is my family in Christ I'm excited you know when I get excited I get loud that's the black that's the black Pentecostal Baptist person in me now let's let's get down and dirty I got a few minutes left let's get down and dirty because of the sins of racism and nationalism culturalism whatever you want living out this life in the pen of reconciliation will mean some spirit driven hard work and tough conversations don't run it will mean humbling ourselves and admitting our ignorance our mistakes and our sins it will mean coming to grip sometimes with family legacies it will mean bringing the healing hope of the gospel to bear on our relationships how do

I know this because the early church had these conversations before us Jesus our Lord told them in the great commission in Matthew 28 beginning at verse 17 now I'm backing up because it really begins in verse 18 where he tells them all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me now go make disciples well verse 17 is they worshipped him you see the great commission was given in the context of worship as they worshipped the living Christ beholding who he is hearing the voice of the good shepherd recognizing that his mission was global at least they seemed to recognize it that it was global Jesus was giving them marching orders then in Acts chapter 1 verse 8 he says okay those are your orders but don't go just yet I need to empower you I need to give you someone who can help you get the job done because left to yourself you can't do it so in

Acts chapter 1 verse 8 he says y'all you have him he's in you now you don't have to go get him he got you all right now here's the thing I'm almost done it's fashion Freeman okay I'm All right.

[33 : 56] He gave me an app. All right. God blessed the work. Acts chapter 2, the Spirit comes.

Folk, thousands of people get saved. They are rolling. They are just loving it, enjoying life together. Listen, all those folk were Jews though. Day of Pentecost, Jews or people who became Jews.

And so they hang out. So for the seven chapters in the book of Acts, they're hanging out in Jerusalem, living large, loving each other. What about Samaria?

What about the uttermost parts of the earth? The church did move. Application, here we go. We get comfortable in our churches loving one another who are just like us.

And we think and we don't move. Outreach, especially to those who are not like us, can get put on the back burner. Acts 1 through 7.

[35 : 08] So in chapter 8, the living God allowed persecution to come. Stephen is killed.

The first deacon. One of the first deacons. He's killed. Put to death. By the apostle Paul, who was named Saul at that time, by the way. Put to death. And when that happened, when that happened, the Bible said the church was scattered.

Everybody who had stayed in Jerusalem from other places now started going back home. And they scattered. Some Philip ends up in Samaria.

Ooh, Samaria. How'd that happen? Was that a oops? No. That's where Jesus told them to go. He was just going. He and Samaria. He preached the gospel.

Folks start getting saved there. Then, but the saints are scattered. They're going everywhere. They're going back to the uttermost parts of the Roman world. And they're spreading the gospel.

[36 : 05] They're preaching. They're gospeling. As they, not gossiping. Gospeling. As they go. Telling people about Jesus. And the church became cross-cultural.

It became multilingual, multinational. Because the Lord, the Lord had to allow them to get, the enemy tried to destroy them.

And the Lord was using it for their good. Family, they had to have some conversations though.

Acts chapter 11. Peter had to explain why he preached to Gentiles. He went to, went to the Italians, went to an Italian home. Told them about Jesus. God's name is Cornelius. Do you read for yourself?

Acts 10. Acts 11. He got explained. The Jews, his Jewish, the Jewish apostles, the Jewish leaders of the church said, Peter, we heard that you were hanging out with those folk. Hard conversation.

[37 : 08] Acts chapter 11. Galatians chapter 2. Paul confronts Peter to his face. Because Peter had been hanging out with the Gentiles. Eating pork chops. Talking about Jesus.

Loving on them. And then when James, apostle, sends people to the church to check out what's going on. They were all Jewish. When they got there, Peter starts going, oh.

Shalom, brothers, shalom. Shalom. And he left the Gentiles. He wouldn't hang out with them anymore.

And Paul says, whoa, brother. Nah, we ain't doing that here. We ain't going to have. He gets right in Peter's. I think it was public. I'm not sure. He got right in his face.

And here's what he said. He said their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel. Putting back. Hard conversations.

[38 : 04] Leadership conversations. Sometimes we got to do what we do in the name of Jesus. Just some kind of private, hard conversations. Sometimes maybe even group conversations.

But we mustn't allow ethnicity or tribalism or nationalism, which includes politics, to separate us from other members of the pen. We are not living in step with the truth of the gospel if we do.

Is it worth it? Some will say no. Too many, I think. Because we prefer our own self-imposed ghettos of saneness.

We prefer that to live in the abundant life in the pen. As Jesus' multi-ethnic, multinational sheep pen. Yes, it's worth it.

Thank you for saying that. Because Jesus died to make us family. Are you listening? Jesus died to make us one pen.

- [39 : 12] First Jew and Gentile. Then the lesser. People from all languages, tongues, and nations. One sheep pen in Jesus. And in America, they're all in our neighborhoods.
- They're right here. The nations have come to us, as we say. Family, we got to stop the foolishness.
- Maybe not you. But the good shepherd's death makes us one pen. Under one shepherd. As one people.
- And we're diverse. I'm glad you don't vote the way I vote. It's okay. I'm glad you don't look the way I look.
- Shame on you, by the way. But that's, you know. I'm glad for the differences among us. I'm glad.
- [40 : 09] I'm glad I speak Ebonics and you don't know what I'm talking about. Or I speak West Philly and then we all get confused. I'm glad we're different. Don't you understand that?
- Don't let anyone. Why'd you go to that church? Because it's the sheep pen. Why do you go to that church? It's the Lord's pen.
- It's the place where he dwells. The question is, are we going to live out in obedience to him? Or are we going to make worldly excuses following our own preferences?
- That's what the church does across this country. Using critical race theory accusations or racial fatigue as an excuse for not doing the hard work of life in the pen in the name of Jesus.
- You're going to make some cross-cultural relationships, aren't you? I hope so. Because you're brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. You're on the same level. But, gee, they made more money.
- [41 : 21] They got a nicer house. You're on the same level. You're going to have some interesting and sometimes hard conversations. You're going to ask, somebody's going to ask you some awkward questions at times.
- Give each other the freedom and the benefit of the doubt, please. Stop being so easily offended. Stop wearing your ethnic identity on your sleeve, as it were.
- It's on your body. We can see it. But on your sleeve. You know what I mean by on your sleeve, right? And we have to be willing to gently and firmly confront obvious sin.
- All this happens in a sheep pen. And what happens? You know what happens? The sheep get content. You say, what? Having those? Yeah, the sheep get content. And they can lay down in green pastures.
- Remember? Because sheep don't lay down unless they're content. Unless they're happy. Unless they're free from friction. And listen, friction is internal. If you've hurt me and I don't say anything and talk to you about it internally, I can't rest.
- [42 : 34] So when you shun the hard conversation, all you are doing is continuing friction in the pen. Having the tough conversation leads to contentment and peace in Jesus.
- If you have the conversation in the spirit of Christ and not your own flesh. Oh, I got to stop here. I'm going to cut this thing out. Y'all, I think y'all got it now.
- The issue is bigger. It's bigger than, it's bigger than what we sometimes want to believe. You know, affirmative action has gone the way of the dodo bird, it seems.
- Because our country, our country, our country is living in a fantasy. We live it in denial.
- Sin is still present in America. And that means racism is still a problem in America. It's sin.
- [43 : 45] Our country wants to believe we've moved on, we've grown. We've denied Jesus more than ever before in this country. We have not grown.

We're not growing. Something's gone. We in trouble, y'all. But where will they see hope? Where will America see hope? In churches that believe that we're all sheep together in Jesus.

The playing field is leveled because we're all sheep. And it doesn't matter what color sheep you are. You're just a sheep. I'm just a sheep.

And what makes us special is we're loved by the good shepherd. And if his love is in me and his love is in you, then there's no reason why we can't have reconciliation, which will mean conversations.

But conversations with our arms around each other. Not this. Like this.

[44 : 51] But you're just a sheep like me. And we're family. Forever. And I love you. So let's get on with it, all right?

Father, in the name of Jesus, Lord, I thank you for your word. And thank you for Jesus who came to make us one big sheep pen.

Wow. No one saw it coming. The Jews didn't see it coming. And even in this country, we didn't see it coming. But here you are doing it. You did it.

And you're doing it. Help us to follow you through the heart conversations. But help us to do it in love. Help us, Lord, to recognize that our identity is that we are sheep.

It's more important than being African American or Latino American or white American. It's more important. We're sheep. Lord, help us to get it. That our identity is in Christ first.

[45 : 55] And then the other things come. Heal us. Heal us.

Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.