

**Introduction:** Shortly after my sister passed away in a car accident, eventually when life settled into a permanent numbness, we went back to school and I remember some kid harassing me and making fun of me because of it. Normally I would knock his block off, but I was frankly too shell shocked by the whole event to even register emotionally. A few weeks later I mentioned it to my dad, just very incidentally. He became enraged in the car. He screamed at me and gave me my commission. And it was to make sure that my young classmate and antagonist never ever uttered Sheree's name again.

*From then on, I was reticent to say her name in front of him.* Of course He would not have reacted negatively if I just reminisced or spoke of her casually. But he was a hurting father who was jealous for the name of his baby girl—and his anger towards someone who took her name so thoughtlessly was evident to me.

**And in the OT God revealed himself to Moses by the particular name, "I AM that I AM."**

This name was so held with such reference that Jews refused to speak it in Jesus' day. This is a very tangible way they attempted to not break the commandment which states that "You shall not take the name of the YHWH your God in an empty way." But the people profaned God's name, broke that commandment—and brought shame through their sin and disobedience. And so YHWH tells his people, "It is because of your disobedience and unfaithfulness to the covenant that my name is blasphemed among the nations." After the people are restored back to their land, the punishment of Exile in Babylon ends—and to keep from disobeying this command they just refused to say the name at all in any context. They replaced it with the generic name "adonai."

Even when they quoted Scripture: The Shema—they didn't cite this name the replaced "YHWH" with the broad term *adonai*. This name was so special to them that they wouldn't pronounce even in the sacred temple worship festivals.

Yet here is Jesus, John records seven different times he used the Greek term *eimi*—I AM—and in each of these passages he is clearly claiming to be God in one way or another.

**Transition:** This will be especially true for this phrase "I am the good shepherd." Jesus uses this shepherd metaphor and also strongly alludes to a particular couple passages in the OT. Jesus is making a particular claim to fulfill the promise of Ezekiel 34—the incarnational Shepherd passage.

**Scripture: Let's read John 10:1-5; 11**

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers... 11. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

**Let's unpack that today...**

## 1. Jesus is the true Shepherd—The most common metaphor for a leader in ancient Judaism. In contrast to...

- **Inadequate shepherds.**

All the Kings in the line of David—David's lineage is a real mixed bag. **And you can't get an everlasting covenant, ruled by an everlasting King—unless that King is from everlasting to everlasting.** All would-be messianic claimants and deliverers—all are inadequate for the task at hand—which requires God's true and unique and one shepherd over the people. The Messiah—the Savior of the world.

**Ezek. 34:5** “<sup>5</sup>So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd,”

The people in Jesus' day were likewise suffering, though they had lots of leaders and sages, they wandered without an adequate and satisfactory shepherd sent from God...**And that's not all...**

- **False shepherds.**

**John 10:1** “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.”

**John 10:8, 10** “All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them...The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

Sure these passages are ultimately referring to Satan, but more specifically it's talking about the primary agency of the devil—the super-religious and the self-righteous leaders of Israel. Those were Jesus' primary antagonists in the story. Not those pork eating, idol worshipping Roman and Greek pagans. It's the religious messenger who opposes grace and mercy and the message of salvation for the lost—healing for the sick—redemption for the repentant rebels. A false shepherd is a false teacher. And false doctrine robs us of our joy, it steals our opportunity for real deep fellowship—because our lives become controlled by some cultic religion.

**Zechariah 10:2** “For the household gods utter nonsense, and the diviners see lies; they tell false dreams, and give empty consolation. Therefore the people wander like sheep, they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd.” Do you see your neighbors who are trapped in false religion **as your enemies or hostages** to false teachers?

**Illus. My time in the Word of Faith church—this hyper charismatic environment.** I've seen God do astounding, mind-boggling things back then, and over the years. God is faithful, God is good. And sometimes, God does sensational things in our midst. He performs miracles and meets needs and we are amazed as his grace.

But if I'm being honest, the majority of what I say in that church was just hype. False “words from the Lord”—people making up dreams and visions—empty well-wishing prophecies.

***This is what happens when shepherds—the leaders—don't teach God's Word*** but instead utter nonsense; give people diviners lies; relay false dreams and empty prophetic consolation...

***The people of God wander because they're not taught sound teaching*** of God's Word.

**Jesus comes along and says to the Jews “I am the true shepherd.** You've had lots of insufficient shepherds who couldn't get the job done. Lots of false shepherds who lied to you and have taught nonsense—the traditions of men...”

## 2. Jesus is the good Shepherd (Jn. 10:10-11).

In contrast to...

- **Corrupt shepherds.** This unfortunately was a long-standing tradition in Israel.

**Ezekiel 34:2** “Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? <sup>3</sup> You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep.”

*Jesus repeatedly dealt with the corruption in the ranks of Israel's leaders.* The prophets did the same for the Priestly, scribal, and Royal classes of their day. Corruption in leadership is always disheartening. But this is especially so if the people who are the “gatekeepers” and knowledge brokers in religion are shady. Using God for financial gain—shady and unscrupulous leaders aren't good shepherds, they're illegitimate stewards. Bad for your spiritual health. But Jesus is good, benevolent, wise, merciful, caring.

**Mt. 21:12** “he overturned the tables of the money-changers and exclaimed, ‘it is written that this will be a house of prayer for the nations yet you have made it a den of robbers and thieves.’”

**Luke 16:14** “The Pharisees, who were lovers of **money**, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him.” The leaders of Israel were running a religious scam; a financial racket. Outwardly appearing to be pious, devout, and truly concerned for the Law of Moses; but inwardly full of greed, injustice and idolatry. And Jesus exposed them for feeding themselves—living high on the hog—and failing to feed the hearts of his precious lambs. Corrupt shepherds aren't good leaders.

- **Unsteady Shepherds.**

**Jn. 10:11-14** “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. <sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me”

Jesus calls them “hired hands” who flee at the first sign of pressure or trouble. But Jesus doesn't just shepherd people when the hillsides are full of well-wishers and miracle seekers—in high times and high crowds and large offerings. He is whipped, beaten, bruised—contusions from head to toe—*wearing the brambles, taking the nails, defying the boulder.* Unsteady shepherds lack a sense of self-sacrifice. They're not good leaders.

- **Harsh Shepherds.**

**Ezek. 34: 4** “...and with force and harshness you have ruled them.”

**Mt. 9:36** “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were *harassed* and *helpless*, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Jesus is compassionate and merciful for those who are struggling in their most intimate relationships. Those who are carrying pain and sorrow over loss. Those who've tried, failed, flopped at life. He is a compassionate and merciful shepherd for those who feel weak and heavy burdened. The transaction he offers is astonishing—a yoke that is easy because his strength is greater than ours. A burden that is light because he has carried our sorrows and our infirmities and gives us miracles to heal our brokenness, and the miracle of patient endurance when we are faced with the impossible.

**Jesus is the true—Jesus is the Good—and Jesus is...**

**3. Jesus is the seeking Shepherd (Jn. 10:16)** “And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”

**In contrast to...**

- **Guardians of tradition**—The religious elites upheld their traditions at the expense of God’s written Word. **They had institutionalized their man-made customs** as a kind of hedge, or a protective barrier around God’s Word. Always seeking expansive legal clauses and loopholes to get them out of some of the most difficult and demanding laws in the Torah. And they became the *self-appointed guardians of sacred man-made tradition*. Yet Jesus had come to give them the true word—which would feed the flock; lead them to the Green pastures of God’s truth in Scripture; open their blind eyes to see the truth about himself. *But the religious elites? They sequestered the light of Torah in a monument they built to it—and in the process they denied God’s Word. The curators and custodians of a dead way of doing religion—no life in it.* Very active, very devout, very biblically literate—no life. But Jesus is the Shepherd of God’s truth. He is the source of life in the Scriptures. And he is concerned, not only to safeguard our orthodoxy—but to **broadcast** the light of his truth to the nations. To **penetrate** every heart and every community...**Leaders who are mere guardians of orthodoxy** often turn into heretic hunters. We do watch our life and doctrine closely. We do take care to offer a defense of the hope we have in Christ—but our mission is pierce the darkness of a lost and dying world. **Whenever we separate Apologetics from Evangelism, or pastoring—we’re doing it wrong.**
- **Architects of division**—They had splintered off into all kinds of factions; Judaic parties constantly engaged in a verbal war over the finer points of doctrine. Over the proper interpretation of non-essential matters of the law.  
**Ezek. 34:5** “So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered;”  
**Strenuously working to create converts to their way of thinking, and in so doing they made that convert twice a son of hell.** Jesus has a staff, according to Zechariah—a staff called Grace in one hand, a staff called “Unity” in the other. **He gives grace to the proud, mercy to the broken and fallen, and brings unity back to relationships that are strained.** When it comes to the mere Gospel, I will be the first to die on that hill. But we will not be the purveyors of a divisive religion that splinters and becomes factious over every little point of non-essential doctrine.  
**Ezekiel 34:4c** “the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought,”  
Jesus is a seeking shepherd. He isn’t content to safeguard tradition. He isn’t the author of pettiness and divisions. He doesn’t have time to divide over the small stuff, the incidental stuff, the fringe ideas in Christianity. The main things are the main things for him and all shepherds who follow him. He’s not content with a few being saved and sequestered in a Christian biosphere. Jesus wants to reach more. **Jesus wants to find all those wandering sheep who have left the fold, who have given up on God, who have thrown a relationship away because they tried religion and it left them empty or let them down.**

If you've given up on religion—you don't have to give up on Jesus. If you've left the fold Jesus is seeking you. Looking for you. In the midst of your darkness and sin. In the midst of your flaws and failures. Come to the Son—come share in his life—come experience his power and forgiveness.

## 4. Jesus is God the Shepherd.

### Ezek. 34:15

I myself will be the **shepherd** of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God.

**Ezek 34:23-24** “And I will set up over them **one shepherd, my servant David**, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. “My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes.”

### Jn. 10:25-30

Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,<sup>26</sup> but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.<sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.<sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.<sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one.”

- One in purpose. An undivided mission.
- One in person. An undivided essence.
- One in power. An undivided source of strength and authority.

### Today's Takeaways

- **You can trust Jesus' words—they are true and they are life.** His life is the thing we need the most. There's nothing we need more than that. Jesus is the true shepherd who doesn't take or manipulate or steal our life. He gives us life. **If you're under water, there is nothing you need more than air.** And if you're trapped in deception, darkness, sin—there's nothing you need more than the life of God in Christ.
- **You can trust his care—his grace, his goodness, his glory.** He will work every thing out for your good because he is a good, good shepherd.
- You can be found, no matter how far you've wandered—Jesus is a seeking shepherd. And you may feel like your marriage, your mind, your situation is just too far gone—but Jesus is a seeking shepherd and he has not given up on you.
- **You can know that he is God**—he and the Father are one in purpose—and undivided mission to seek and save the lost. An undivided essential nature—God of very God—an undivided authority and power—the miracles he does are because the Father does them. Not just because he wills them. But because he does them. *And that's the greatest thing you can know.* God the Messiah, the one true Shepherd of God's people. You can know him today...