

## Idol or Ideal

Sunday AM

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What a challenge to each and every one of us. I've got Jesus, how could I want more?

Let's pray together.

*Lord, as we come to this time in our service, Lord, we confess to you, Lord, that there have been days in our past and even possibly days of the recent past where we've thought that something else or somebody else would satisfy or give us that which we need. Lord, we just confess right now that if we have you, if we have Jesus, that's all we really truly need. Help us to see that. Help us to relish in that fact. Help us today to celebrate that if we have Jesus, we don't need anything more. It's in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the Gospel of John 10. As you're turning to John 10, if you're a guest or visitor with us, we're making our way slowly and steadily through the Gospel of John desiring to ultimately get to chapter 15. In chapter 15, Jesus offers this challenge, he says, "I'm the vine. You are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him shall bear much fruit, for apart from me, you can do nothing." And today we continue in John 10 with the parable or the story and the explanation of Jesus being the Good Shepherd.

Last week, we looked at the first few verses where Jesus compares himself to the stranger, he being the Good Shepherd, and at the end of that parable as oftentimes when Jesus told a parable, his disciples couldn't comprehend it, they didn't understand it, and so Jesus begins to explore and expand a little bit more and today we're going to pick it up in verse 9 and we're going to see Jesus explain even more clearly what does it mean for him to be the Good Shepherd. As you've got John 10 opened, I want to encourage you to do something else that you may have never been asked to do, or at least been asked to do in a long time in church, turn to the book of Zechariah. We print the table of contents for a reason. Don't be embarrassed. Zechariah is found in the midst of what we call the Minor Prophets in the Old Testament and in Zechariah 11, there is a passage that Jesus alludes to here in John 10 and after we read John 10, I want to go back into Zechariah and I want you to see what Jesus was speaking of, what he was alluding to when he describes what we know as this false shepherd, what we're going to see in just a moment, this idol or worthless shepherd. What Jesus does in John 10 is he lays out for us the difference

between the idol shepherd and the ideal shepherd. Here in John 10, beginning in verse 9, Jesus says,

9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. 10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. 11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. 12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep. 13 The hireling flees, because he is an hireling, and cares not for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. 15 As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. 17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18 No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. 19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. 20 And many of them said, He has a devil, and is mad; why do you listen to him? 21 Others said, These are not the words of him that has a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

In this passage of Scripture, Jesus is describing this, what we might call, a false shepherd or he who is called a hireling. He is one who has been hired. But he alludes to the fact that when the wolf comes, he scatters the sheep and he runs away, and this imagery is found back in Zechariah 11.

Now, when you open up Zechariah 11, let me go ahead and address prophetically this passage of Scripture is about what we know as the end times, about eschatology, particularly it's about the antichrist figure, this character who in Revelation 13 is called the beast. And we're not going to deal with Zechariah 11 so much prophetically today as we are going to practically, and here this shepherd is called the idol or the worthless shepherd. Verse 15 of Zechariah 11,

15 And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. 16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. 17 Woe to the idol [or worthless] shepherd that leaves the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

In John 10 when Jesus is explaining and expanding on the parable of the Good Shepherd, he's reaching back into Zechariah 11, this prophetic picture of the one day coming antichrist to give us a visual, give us a picture, what does this false shepherd look like. What does this thief look like.

So today the question is: the idol shepherd or the ideal shepherd. Let's begin, first, with the idol shepherd. Verse 10, what does Jesus say? He comes to steal, kill and destroy. Now when it gives this imagery of him stealing, we talked about last week that we are the crown of creation; that our purpose, our design by God was to give him the ultimate attention and the ultimate honor and the ultimate glory. That's why we exist. Why is this critical for us to understand? Because what we discover in the world today around us is that when someone is a thief, when someone wants to steal something from you, what do they steal? The valuable things; that which has a great amount of worth. Have you noticed that thieves never come in and take your dirty laundry? They don't do that. They don't take your old couch that you've got held together with duct tape. They don't do that. What do they take? They take that which is of value. They take that which is important not just to you but ultimately to them.

But the other aspect of a thief is not just the value of that which they want to obtain by themselves, it's the attitude by which they go about what they're doing. I want you to notice what verse 13 says in this passage, it says that this idol shepherd, he "cares not for the sheep." That's a critical piece for us to understand today, that when someone here on earth, when they break into your house, when they break into your car, when they steal your identity, they do so because they don't care about you. They don't care what happens to you. They only care about how they are benefited. They only care about how they can "get a leg up," whatever imagery you want to use. And here in this passage, this is what Jesus is saying: the enemy, Satan himself, he presents himself as he cares for you, he acts as if you're important, but what does he do? He cares not for you.

Notice what Jesus calls him: the hireling. The hired man. You have to ask yourself a question: well, who hired him? Who gave him the job? Who gave him employment? I'll tell you who did: we did. We hired him. You say, "Well, how did we hire the hireling?" Go back to Genesis 3. You know the story of the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were walking in the garden of Eden, everything is going well, they're eating freely of the tree of life, life is good until that old serpent shows up. When the devil himself shows up as an angel of light, what does he say? He says, "Well, surely this looks good, right? Surely this will be pleasant not just to the eyes but it will taste good. You'll be like the gods. You'll have all kinds of knowledge and information and wisdom." And what did we do? We hired him on the spot. We said, "That's right. We like your rules of engagement rather than God's. We like how you're presenting things rather than God's."

I've got news for you: do you think the devil cared about us back in the garden of Eden? If he cared so much about us, then why is it that when Adam and Eve are hiding behind the fig leaves, he's nowhere to be found? What does he do? Just what Jesus says, "When the wolf comes, he flees. He takes off. He cares not for the sheep." The hireling, the idol shepherd, he's a thief. He steals. He kills.

You know, 1 Peter 5:8 gives us an incredible imagery of this. It's the picture of a roaring lion. It says that our enemy, the hireling, the idol shepherd, as a roaring lion he seeks whom he may devour. I've never had the opportunity to be on the Serengeti, in fact I'll be honest with you, as far as seeing a lion and it's true, I guess, the environment, I've only seen them in captivity but I've had friends that have been over there, I've had individuals who recounted stories and to be honest with you, I've watched a lot of the Discovery Channel so I kind of know one of the tactics that lions utilize to hunt. One of the tactics they use, and you can't get offended by this, is they'll take what I want to call the old grandpa lion, the lion who doesn't quite move as fast as he used to move, his teeth aren't quite as sharp as they used to be, his growl isn't as tough, arthritis has sunk into his bones, and they allow this lion to be put in a field. He appears to be bait. He appears to be good for the kill and do you know what happens? The hyenas, the gazelles, all the animals who have been subject to his killing sprees finally think, "Aha, we're going to get this guy. I mean, after all he can't run like he used to run. He can't roar like he used to roar. He can't chew like he used to chew. We're finally going to get to eat the King of the Jungle."

I want you to think about this. You've got a little set of gazelles or hyenas and they're coming up on the Serengeti and here's that lion. "That's right, this is the guy that ate my uncle. He's right there. This is the guy that took out my first cousin and I'm gonna get him." What happens? They began to approach, they began to get close, and they are so entrapped by the idea of getting that which they think will satisfy, that which they think will give them fulfillment, that which will allow them to experience something they never thought they could experience. Right when they get close to him, what do they look up and find? That all the young lions have surrounded them and they are dead on the spot.

You see, he not only steals our joy, he not only steals our peace, he not only steals our purpose, but what does he do? He entraps us. He talks us into, "Hey, why don't you come and be a part of this?" This sounds like a good idea. You've always wanted this and you wake up and what are you surrounded by? Consequences. Results and all the residual of falling to his temptation and all the things he promised that never came to fruition. Why? He cares not for the sheep. We hired somebody back in the garden who doesn't care about us, who over and over and over again tempts us to that which is never truly realized, and we fall for it every time.

He steals. He kills and notice the last thing: he destroys. 2 Thessalonians 1:9 says those who reject Jesus Christ experience everlasting destruction. In fact, twice as much as he talked about heaven, Jesus spoke of the bottomless pit, the lake of fire, places the Bible calls hell. Hear me clearly, this is what the hireling desires, this is what the idol shepherd wants, this is what the enemy desires in your life: nothing more, nothing less than for you to spend an eternity in a place the Bible calls hell. This is his goal. This is his desire. He wants to destroy you.

You know, one of the most intriguing characters of literary past to me is a man by the name of Dr. Faustus. You may or may not be familiar with his story that was written some years ago but Dr. Faustus was a university professor, great in wisdom and

knowledge, but he wanted a little more. He wanted to be known as the smartest. He wanted to be known as the wisest. So one day about mid-career, he makes a deal with the devil. He exchanges his soul for all the knowledge and wisdom in the world. As he gets closer to the end of his life, he realizes that it wasn't all that he hoped it would be. It didn't fulfill him the way that he desired it to but nonetheless, the deal was made. Toward the end of the story, we find Dr. Faustus regretting his decision, wishing he had not done so, but he falls for the trap. He falls for the trap of believing that the contract cannot be undone. His soul has been sold. It's too bad. It's the lake of fire for all of eternity. As the story of his life ends but yet continues on the pages, we discover that he fell for the trap, that the devil didn't have the ability to make that contract with his soul to begin with. He fell for the lie, the false promise.

You see, when the hireling shows up, when that old serpent shows up whether it's in the garden of Eden or whether it's in your life this week, I've got news for you: he wants to destroy you. He is a lion. He is not into nibbling on your ears. He is into devouring your very soul.

Ah, but then there's the ideal shepherd, the picture that Jesus gives of himself. He says, "Hey, but I'm the good shepherd. I'm not like him. I'm completely different." In fact, beginning in verse 9, we discover that he is a giving shepherd. It says this statement, "I am the door. By me if any man enter in." Go forward to verse 16, "other sheep I have that are not of this fold." We get the idea, we get the picture that Jesus says, "I'm not into restricting, I'm not into keeping away, I'm into giving. I want to give life. I want to give eternity. I want to give an everlasting abundant life to any and all." That is why we love John 3:16, "For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believe in him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

What does he say in verse 16? "I have sheep of another fold." Now there have been some over the last 100-150 years that have taken that verse and somewhat twisted it but let me share with you what it means. To a primarily Jewish audience, Jesus is telling them, "I've got news for you. You kept the Gentiles out of the temple, they're about to be of one fold with you. You kept the women over there, they're about to be joined with you." The veil is going to be torn, the temple is going to be rocked and guess what's about to happen? That's right. It doesn't matter and, by the way this is verified in Galatians 3, it doesn't matter your gender, it doesn't matter your background, it doesn't matter your color, it doesn't matter the size of your bank account, if you'll call on the name of the Lord, you will be saved.

What does the hireling do? He takes from us. What does the good shepherd do, the ideal shepherd? He gives us that which we all desire. And it's not just giving, in fact, he's very what I want to call selfless today. In fact, he gives to the point, look at verse 18, where he lays down his life. Now verse 18 is a very intriguing verse of Scripture to me. Jesus makes this statement, "no man takes it from me but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again." Now I'm going to ask you a very rhetorical theological question today. Hopefully you'll kind of let this percolate in the days and maybe even weeks ahead. Here's the question: can you kill a sinless man? Now

think about that for just a moment because you and I have been exposed to nothing in this world but death, right? The death of physical life. The death of our spiritual life. The death of dreams. The death of relationships. We're surrounded by death but what brought death into the human realm? Sin did. According to Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin is death." But Jesus Christ knew no sin. He was sinless.

Notice what he says here in verse 18, "no man takes my life lest I give it." Have you thought about the selflessness that Jesus demonstrated with what we know as the cross event? In fact, you go back to Isaiah 52 and it makes this statement, that on the cross Jesus' appearance, his visage was worse than any other man. His appearance. In fact, the Bible says he hardly looked human at all.

As you begin to go through the Gospels and see all that Jesus Christ endured for you and for me, yes, he was mocked; yes, he was made fun of; yes, he was ridiculed; yes, he was lied to and lied about. But have you ever thought about what they did to him physically? We know about the beatings. We know about the slappings. But then there is that famous event where they took him and they flogged him, where they whipped him consistently and brutally.

I've heard people says, "Well, it would have been bad but at least it was only 39." Well, that's because it was Jewish law to only have 39 lashes. Who was it that put those lashes on him? It was the Romans. It might have only been 39 but can we all agree that would have a lot too many? It might have been a lot more. In fact, his body was so ravaged that Simon of Cyrene had to be compelled to bear his cross.

When he gets on that cross, there he is pierced in his hands and his feet. He raises himself seven times to make critical statements. The last statement Jesus makes, listen to this, he says, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Do you remember what the Bible says next? "And immediately he was deceased. And immediately he gave up the ghost." Jesus made this statement, "Nobody takes my life lest I give it."

I want you to think about how he has pictured himself, one who gives and one who is completely selfless but powerful. Notice what he says at the end of verse 18, "and I have the ability, I have the power to take it up again." Now, I know we've heard this before and so bear with me. If Jesus is able to raise from the dead, then he's able to take care of whatever problem you've got. That's what he's saying, he says, "Not only do I lay down my life but I have the power to raise up."

In the very next chapter, there's going to be a guy by the name of Lazarus who truly experiences this. Four days in the grave and the next thing you know, he's walking around planet earth again. The widow's son. There are relationships that are raised. There are people that are healed all throughout his ministry. What does he do? He has the power to raise up. He has the power to raise us out of our sins. He has the power to heal us. He has the power to restore us.

Do you see the difference between the two shepherds? One steals, kills and destroys, and the other one, he gives selflessly and powerfully which leads us to a very important decision. In fact, at the end of this passage in verse 19, we see this decision. These people are needing to respond but they're confused, they're bothered and some of them say, "Well, he has a devil. He must be possessed." And others say, "Oh, but how could he be, a man that has done what he's done?"

About 70 years ago, a very famed Christian apologist by the name of C. S. Lewis made a statement very well-known on BBC radio. He was talking about the validity of Jesus Christ and he actually took a phrase out of 1844 that was written in a book in a novel back then and he made it very well known to our culture today. He said when we look at the person of Jesus, when we look at the claims of Jesus, he's either a liar, he's a lunatic, or he's the Lord himself.

Now, these people didn't question whether he was a liar or not because they had heard what he had said, they had seen what he had done. They did question whether or not he was a lunatic. They questioned, "Does he have a devil or not?" But notice at the very end, they say, "No, how could he have a devil? He raised people from the dead. He's healed people of their sickness."

You know, today that's the same important decision we have. When we look at the person of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, is he a liar, is he a lunatic, or is he Lord? Let's be honest today. The very fact that you're sitting here, you're listening to my voice, there may be a few of you but very few of you believe Jesus is a liar. Some of you may be skeptical. Some of you may be questioning but as a whole can we all agree most of us don't see Jesus as a liar? The same goes for a lunatic. There may be some of you that are skeptical. There may be some of you wondering about this event or that event, but as a whole if you're listening to my voice right now, you don't question Jesus' sanity or the source of his strength and his power. In fact, I would be willing to say that most of us in this place, not all but most, at some point and in some place in our life have admitted that we've sinned, believed that Jesus is the only answer and called and asked him to forgive us and to save us and that is wonderful.

But in this parable, Jesus doesn't just speak of forgiveness, he doesn't just speak of our salvation which is critical, he asks this question at the end of the parable, "Whose voice do you listen to?" And I'm going to ask you a very difficult question today. In fact, I'm going to have you ask yourself this question. You may be saved, you may be born again, you may be a new creature in Jesus, but whose voice do you listen to? Do you listen to the idol shepherd or do you listen to the ideal shepherd?

Allow me to give you a litmus test, so to speak. What does the idol shepherd do? He steals. What does the ideal shepherd? He gives. You say, "How could I be a thief?" Let me ask you a question: is your ambition, is the way that you live life, is it all about what you can do, what you can attain or what you can grasp and you'll go at any cost or at any measure to get what you want and you don't care what anybody else thinks? Congratulations, you've listened to the voice of the hireling. Or are you one that says,

"Do you know what? It's really not about me, it's about everybody else and all I want to do is give and all I want to do is allow others an opportunity."

Back to the idol shepherd. He kills. You see, sometimes you want something so bad or you desire something for yourself so bad and you can't attain it by yourself so here's what you do: you get other people to surround you who act like you, think like you and speak like you, and what do you do? You ambush those who are in your way and that's exactly what he does.

Is that not the picture that we have? What does Jesus do, does he ambush? No. Does he circle the wagons and say, "It doesn't matter y'all think. I'm gonna do what I want to do"? What does he do? He lays down his life, even giving his life as Mark 10 says, as a ransom for many.

And then last but not least, the idol shepherd, the hireling, destruction and death follows them everywhere. What follows the Lord Jesus? Life. In fact, he said abundant life.

So a difficult question that you have to ask yourself even as a believer in Jesus Christ is which one better pictures your life? Is it a life of self-consumption and selfishness and do whatever I can to attain whatever I want? Or is it a life that is giving and selfless and lays one's life down to say, "It's not about me. I just want the Lord to be demonstrated in my life"? It's a tough pill to swallow but one that today Jesus challenges us to answer.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, today maybe you're that person that the proverbial light bulb has come on and you realize, "Do you know what? I've been listening to the wrong voices. I've been paying attention to the wrong words." I've got great news for you. Remember what it said in verse 9, it says any man who enters in. Maybe you're that man, maybe you're that woman, maybe you're that boy, maybe you're that girl, maybe you're that person today who said, "It's time. It's time I quite doing this on my own. It's time I turned it over to Jesus." I have some great news for you today. You don't have to sign up for a class, you don't have to jump through a bunch of hoops, in fact honestly you just need to have a very serious conversation with God. You don't have to have it out loud, you don't have to even say the same words I would say but maybe that conversation would go a little something like this. "God, today I just want to admit what you already know about me. I've been walking down the wrong path, listening to the wrong voices. God, today I realize I need the voice of Jesus in my life. I believe, God, I believe that Jesus is the answer to my sin problem. I believe that he was born for my behalf. I believe he lived a sinless life on my behalf. I believe he went to the cross and he rose from the dead on my behalf so I could be forgiven and I could be saved. In the best way I know how, right now I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me and I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today. Maybe you had that conversation with God. Maybe you had it days ago, weeks ago, months ago. We'd love to celebrate with you. Or maybe you're that person today that it's already taken place but like a young lady in the second service, you need to follow in

believer's baptism. Or maybe you're that person today who said, "Do you know what? It's time for me to join this incredible church." Or maybe it's something else. Whatever it is that the Holy Spirit is compelling you today, we want to celebrate it.

*Lord, as we come to this time of decision, Lord, we're faced with the fact of acknowledging you as a liar, a lunatic or a Lord. It is my very simple prayer that whatever it is that you've compelled us with this morning, we would declare you Lord and we will follow you in whatever it is you've called. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

I'm going to ask you to stand with me as Brian leads us. Whatever decision, I'll be here at the front.