

# Christ Sheep Farm

by Mack Tomlinson

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*This sermon focuses on the relationship between Christ as the Good Shepherd and His sheep, emphasizing the care, guidance, and protection He provides. It highlights the importance of being part of the flock, following the voice of the Shepherd, and actively participating in the church body. The sermon encourages believers to fully engage in church life, support one another, and be prepared for the challenges and blessings ahead.*

**Scripture:** John 10:1, John 10:27, 1 Peter 5:2, Acts 4:23, Psalm 23:1

**Topics:** "Christ as the Good Shepherd", "Community in the Church"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Father, we thank you that we have a great shepherd, a good shepherd, king, and we look to you, Lord, today to feed us with exactly what we need. Give us your Spirit upon the Word, through the Word, right to our hearts, quicken us, and we do pray what we just sang, speak, O Lord, speak to me, speak to us, feed your flock, in Christ's name, amen. Martin Lloyd-Jones and his wife, Bethan, for probably 40 years, in the middle of the 20th century, every summer, would go from London to Wales, mid-Wales, halfway between Aberystwyth and Bala, on the west side of the country, to vacation, to take a holiday, and they would go to their close friends, John and Mary Jones, to their sheep farm, in the most beautiful valley in all of Wales, just south of Bala.

John was a shepherd of sheep all his life. He owned and managed a lovely sheep farm, and around 2009, Linda and I had the privilege and real joy of Jeffrey Thomas driving us out to the sheep farm, and we saw the sheep, we saw the setting, we saw the beauty, we smelled the stench, and we enjoyed that sheep farm, because, if for no other reason, John and Mary Jones were such a delight, now in their 80s, when we went, and Lloyd-Jones had been there 40 or 50 times, spending a week or two, he would get on horseback, he would help with the sheep. I don't know if he did it in his three-piece suit, which he rarely got out of, but they loved going there.

The Joneses were their really closest, most intimate friends. John Jones was a master shepherd of sheep, and he was a deep Christian statesman, and he lived out our text in John 10, you can turn there, John chapter 10. When we walked into their house and met them the first time, I'll never forget, John Jones was sitting in his chair in the living room, he had a book in his hands, and he held it up, didn't even know me yet, he didn't know us, he held it up and he said, this book is so wonderful, I would like to give it to every Christian.

It was Charles Leiter's book, Justification and Regeneration. He was sitting there, taking it in, loving it, and so it was delightful to be with his shepherd and his wife that day, very, very special. John 10 is about the shepherd, not a human shepherd, but our great shepherd.

So let's read beginning in verse 1 of John chapter 10, this great theme of the shepherd-sheep relationship. Most assuredly I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same as a thief and a robber, but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which he spoke to them.

Then Jesus said to them again, most assuredly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door.

If anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees.

And the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep and am known by my own.

As the father knows me, even so I know the father, and I lay my life down for the sheep. And the other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore my father loves me because I laid down my life, that I may take it up again." Now skip down to verse 25.

To the Jews, the unbelieving Jews, he said, I told you, and you do not believe, the works that I do in my father's name they bear witness of me, but you do not believe because you are not of my sheep. As I said to you, my sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me, and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand. My father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of my father's hand.

I and my father are one. So I want to speak today on Christ's sheep farm. Sheep live on a ranch or a farm, and the farm is about them.

So this great theme of shepherd and sheep in Christ's sheep farm. You know, John uses, as other gospel writers do, other New Testament writers, word pictures, figures of speech. John here used the word, this illustration.

So these are sustained metaphors that picture to us spiritual realities. Here's some of them here. Thieves, robbers, doorkeeper, strangers, pasture, hirelings and hirelings fleeing, wolf and wolves catching and scattering sheep, and the sheepfold.

All these are vivid images meant to bring into our minds these pictures of one great reality. Christ and His sheep. The urgency, the nature, the dangers, the corporate group life of the shepherd and his sheep.

The safety and protection for the sheep. The feeding and shepherding of the sheep in this world, while in the sheepfold of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ and each sheep.

Christ the shepherd and all the flock. Now think about it. Christ has sheep all over this country, all over this continent, all over this world.

Widely, they are His sheep. And you, beloved, are greatly privileged and blessed to have been made a sheep and put by the shepherd into the bigger sheepfold and to be put in a local sheep farm. Christ is the shepherd.

So when you think of the shepherd and the sheep, think of Christ and you. He's your shepherd. Think of Christ and this sheepfold, Providence Chapel.

You collectively together are His flock here. So you have a great shepherd, but you also have five shepherds under Him. As Peter says in 1 Peter 5, the elders are to shepherd the flock of God, which is among you.

So as a sheep here on this sheep farm, you have six shepherds, Him and five of us. And in the future, you could have more. God knows that.

Christ, the great shepherd of every sheep, and others here among you. So what does John 10 say about Christ and the sheep? Well, I just want to run through major truths, and I want you to follow them. I'm not going to carry on any of these quickly, but these are the major truths about Christ and His sheep in John 10.

Here are a summary of these major things. Number one, Christ is the door and shepherd of every sheep. Christ is the door and the shepherd for every single sheep.

He said in verse 7, I am the door of the sheep. Verse 11, I'm the good shepherd. If you're a sheep in Christ's flock today, you entered through one door, and that was Him.

You heard the voice, not of a stranger, but of the good shepherd calling you to be His sheep. And you entered through the door, and He now is your personal shepherd. Is that real to us? How precious is that? That you as an individual lamb, you as an individual have the great shepherding care and wisdom and concern and provision and nurturing and medicating and bringing healing of your great shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's your shepherd. So that's the first great truth. He's the door and the shepherd of every sheep.

Major truth number two, every sheep is His. What is this here? Verse 3 says His own sheep, ownership. Verse 4 says when He brings out His own sheep, that's ownership.

And it does tie to Lee's message last week. He's the master. He rules.

He's in charge, not the sheep. The sheep don't tell the shepherd where to lead them and how to lead them and what to do. No, the shepherd does that because he is the master shepherd as the king.

So how is every sheep His? Major truth number three, each sheep is given by the father to the shepherd. Verse 29, my father who has given them to me, Jesus said. So this is the doctrine of eternal, divine, unconditional election election.

That God chooses the sheep that will be given to the shepherd who will be in the flock. It's just clear. God chooses every sheep and gives each one as a precious gift to His son, the good shepherd.

Elect, Peter says, according to the father of God. And Jesus said it this way in John chapter 6. All that the father gives me shall come to me. That's a confident statement, isn't it? Everyone the father gives, everyone the father chooses is going to be given in time, in space, in experience, savingly to the good shepherd as a sheep.

Have you become his sheep? It's because the father chose you to make you a sheep and to rescue you and clean you up and give you to this great shepherd who now is your shepherd. All Jesus said, everyone chosen by the father, each of them is given to Christ and they come to the shepherd. Major truth number four, he knows each sheep and each sheep knows him.

He knows you. He knew you in eternity. He set his love upon you as a sheep in eternity.

He drew you with cords of love. He savingly, experientially, personally brought you as a sheep into the fold. He knows you intimately, perfectly.

And Jesus said, you know him. Isn't that wonderful? What a mutual win-win relationship. Christ knows you as a sheep and you know him and you love him.

Major truth number four, he calls each sheep individually. This isn't a mass deal. This isn't, you know, 40,000 at once.

Oh, he may say 40,000 in one day somewhere. He probably has, but each one is individual. He calls each sheep individually.

Verse three says, he calls each one his own sheep by name. This is individual, experiential, effectual calling of the sheep by him. And each sheep suddenly hears his voice.

I remember the night in 1973, that hot July night when suddenly the voice of the shepherd was shouting to me. It was quieting every other voice. It was loud.

It was personal. It was arresting. It was irresistible.

He was speaking to me and saying, you're mine. Give up. And I said, Lord, all that I have is sin and myself to give you.

I'm all in. You have heard his voice. You have been individually called by him if you're his.

And many of you remember that moment. Some of you don't, and it doesn't matter if you remember the moment. What matters is today you're his and you hear his voice and you know you're his.

Major truth number six, he leads each sheep out. He leads each sheep out. That is, he takes every one of us from where we are and he does something.

It's a change of location. It's a change of identity. It's a change that moves us on out of this world into a new kingdom.

Each sheep is led out into light out of darkness. Into green pastures. You remember the days when you were first saved? The grass was fabulous and you were excited.

You were like a little lamb running around drinking here and eating there and got so excited about the whole thing. Into green pastures, beside still waters, through the valleys, over the mountains, to the best place for you as a sheep. And into, quickly, the sheep farm in the flock where the shepherd calls his sheep to.

That's how you got here. Not because you were great at searching for a church. You got here because he brought you here.

Here's the pops new in Benton County. Here's Ligia and the children said, you know, let's go to the park today. And over in another house close by, Tommy Price says, hey, let's go to the park today.

Little did they know, here they come. Hi, well, why don't you come to Proverbs Chapel? Visit our church. And this is the result.

He calls his sheep out and leads and places them exactly where they need to be. He leads each sheep out. Even from Washington State, truth number seven, every sheep hears his voice.

Isn't that right, Nick? We hear his voice. He said in verse 27, my sheep hear my voice. You do.

If you're a sheep, you do regularly. You hear him speak in the worship. You hear him speak when you open your Bible and you prayerfully read it.

You hear him speak through the brethren, through sermons, through books. You are all hearing the voice of your shepherd. Do we always recognize it perfectly? No, but truth's coming.

Encouragement's coming. Nurturing is coming. And we're hearing his voice.

And when you hear his voice, you know when you've heard your shepherd's voice. It's real. It's heart changing, mind changing, life changing.

It's a drink of fresh water as a sheep. Every sheep hears his voice. Major truth number eight.

The sheep do not know or follow the voice of hirelings, strangers, or wolves. Jesus said it twice. The sheep do not hear them.

Verse eight. They will by no means follow a stranger. Verse five.

Why aren't you today sitting under some heretic? Why aren't you today in a cult? Because you won't follow the wrong voice. You have a heart for the truth. You have a heart for that which is pure and right and godly

and God-centered and holy and the whole counsel of God.

Sheep, true sheep won't follow the voice of a stranger or a hireling. Jesus said that. Truth number nine.

Every sheep follows. You follow. They follow.

Jesus said, verse 27, my sheep hear my voice and they follow me. And you're following. You're following.

We follow our shepherd onward. Week in and week out. Year after year.

Upward, onward, forward, into different pastures sometimes, into situations sometimes, out of our comfort zone. He leads. The shepherd knows what he's doing and we follow.

We follow blindly, though we're following light and truth. We follow trustingly. We follow his guidance.

You follow his leading. You follow when you know what it is. You follow his purposes and his will.

And is it always easy to do that, James? No, it's not. But we follow. In good seasons and hard seasons, through the tears, we're looking and following.

In sickness and health, we follow Him. In the green pastures, even through the valleys and over the mountains that are hard to climb, we follow the Lamb, Shepherd, withersoever He goes. Some of you moved a long way to be here.

Some of you moved and didn't know you were going to be here. But here you are because you followed your Shepherd into the sheep farm that He wanted you in. Every sheep follows the Shepherd.

So those are 10 major truths. They are the major themes in John 10. So let's unpack this a little bit.

Let's think about the sheep and the sheepfold. You know, no sheep farm has one sheep, five sheep. I mean, someone might own those.

A shepherd might start with that and they're just as precious to him. But when there's a sheep farm and a sheepfold, there's a number of sheep. It might be 200.

It might be 2,000 or 5,000 sheep. But when we talk about the sheep and the sheepfold, talking about life on the farm, Providence Chapel is, it's certainly sheep life, church life, body life, sheep in the fold, bumping into each other, sharing food, sometimes, hopefully not often, butting heads. Goats butt heads.

Sheep stay with each other. Doing life, not on our own, but connected together as a flock where every sheep has this view and this attitude I'm really, truly in. I want to be functionally in in practice with my whole life because a lone, isolated sheep off by itself is not the shepherd's way, is it? It's abnormal.

If a lone sheep not in a flock is off on its own, that's not right. It's not normal. It's not healthy.

And it's dangerous. There's something unhealthy and problematic if a sheep is off the path when a sheep is not really a vital part of the whole flock. The flock with all the shepherd gathering regularly, gathering consistently.

Sheep feed and drink. The shepherd brings food and they come running because they want the food the shepherd has for them. They're led and they follow because they are a true sheep.

A genuine part of the flock partaking of all their shepherd has for them in that flock. And this applies, brethren, in this way. Some of you are brand new on this farm.

Are you ready to partake? Truly partake. Are you partaking fully? Think of this, then, the scope and broadness of the shepherd's plan. The scope and broadness of the shepherd's plan.

Verse 16, look at it with me if you would. Here's the scope and broadness of the shepherd's plan. Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring and they will hear my voice and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

That's the scope and broadness of the shepherd's plan. He says, other sheep I have, they're not in the fold, but I must bring them and they're going to come. They're His but not brought in yet.

They're His but must be brought in They're out there. They've been purchased, but they're not in the flock Jesus said. Now what do we have here? The context is the issue of Jew and Gentile.

Jesus, when He says, other sheep I have that are not of this fold, He's talking about Gentile's inclusion. That's really what He's fully talking about. Jesus progressively gathered in Gentiles all along the way, didn't He? And at first, He went to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But then He begins to reveal this mystery to His disciples and others. I must needs go through Samaria. Samaria, why? The sheep's there, the well, He's going to bring in.

And through her witness and His words when He stays there in Samaria, many believed on Him. There's the gathering in of the others who aren't Jews. Jesus progressively did this.

And here He states it theologically and evangelistically. I have sheep now that are not in, them I must bring. And He said there will be one flock.

And you know what that one big flock is? It's not based on ethnicity or race or the color of skin or economics or your upbringing. It's based on Him making every one of them a sheep of His. He says I'm getting them and they are going to hear and come.

But brethren, the secondary application of this for us in meaning is this. Think about it. All around our sheep farm, our sheep live in houses here, there, and everywhere.

All around us, Christ has sinners He's going to save and sheep all around us that He purposes to bring in here among us into the Providence Chapel fold. John Jones would purchase new sheep and he'd add them to the flock. He'd bring them and add them.

And his first priority after purchase was to bring them to the farm and add them among the sheep. Look, God has sheep gathering and harvesting from the white fields all around us. Lift up your eyes.

Our growth's going to happen. Our evangelism is essential. And the sheep crying out to the Good Shepherd to reach other sheep and bring them in is going to be used by the Shepherd to gather into the fold those He's bringing here.

Do you see this? Do you long for it? Do you want sheep to be gathered? Think about it, brethren. All around us in Denton and Denton County, you know some of them. There are sheep without a shepherd.

You can think of some right now. You know our believers. They're not in a good church.

They're not being shepherded. They are sheep without a shepherd. And Christ is putting us in their lives for you to begin to shepherd them, care about them, love them, minister to them in order that God per adventure would bring them through you to be sheep here.

So we are facing a growing and changing sheep farm here among us. A lot like the way it was 12 years ago when everybody knew everybody and it was so intimate. Grow up.

It's a new day. It's going to be newer days ahead. We are facing a growing and changing flock.

Other sheep He must bring and He will. He's been bringing new sheep regularly here, hasn't He? Sheep showing up out of the blue from all over. You find out about the church online.

How did you find? Well, a friend told me I was talking to a friend in Los Angeles and he had watched a sermon and he told me to look up variety of ways the shepherd gathers in the flock. That's his business. Our business is to cry to the Lord of the harvest, to speak the gospel of sheep to others who will through you, through us, hear His voice and come running.

Philip and I were talking this week about there's probably 12 new families in the church since COVID started. I don't know exactly. And there's individuals.

Individual sheep. Here as well. And we are gathering more.

You as a flock are gathering more. And every one of us is responsible to do what we can to gather in the harvest, gather in the sheep. We're a changing, growing body.

And we should take courage. We should open ourselves up with faith and encouragement to the new realities happening all around us and what God has for the future. We exercise faith.

We pray to the Lord of the harvest to continue. We pray for laborers. We pray for the Spirit to call and draw individuals.

And He won't lose that battle. He said, other sheep I must bring and they will hear my voice. And we believe what God told Paul in Corinth.

It may be midnight hour. He apparently was fearful. He had come to Corinth from Athens.

And one night God came to him and said, Paul, fear not. I have many people in this city. Y'all realize that? There are believers to be saved through our church and our lives.

There is a harvest together for Providence Chapel. There are needy, bleeding, lonely sheep that need to be loved by other sheep and shepherded in a proper way that are wanting reality. They don't even know how to express their need and desire.

They're bleeding and they're bleeding. They're crying out and they're hurting all around us. Other sheep I have that are not of this fold, them also I must bring.

So how are we changing? More sheep, more opportunities to trust God in where He wants us to pasture, where He wants to feed us. That's coming in June. The farm is growing with more sheep, moving and new changes.

And with that new spiritual life in our midst, new members of the body that have new gifts that you need and that they need from us, right? If you're a sheep here, you're vitally important to this flock no matter how new you are. Your encouragement, your consistent example, loving the brethren, your having the courage to get to know one another is vitally important to a healthy sheep farm. You newer ones, all the sheep who have been here before you are to pursue you.

And you yourself must become proactive in introducing yourself to those you don't know and inviting the sheep into your space and into your spiritual life. Don't be afraid. These aren't wolves.

You're not going to walk up to a hireling here. It's family. It's true sheep.

So open your heart up to flock life more and more. And it's on all of us, brethren. More and more, we've got to crush the timidity.

Someone said to me the other day, you know, it's kind of just not my personality to go up and introduce myself. And but they were saying they knew they needed to. And we all do.

We can't timidly hold back. Don't stay on the edge of the flock anymore. And some among us over the years have done that very thing, just staying out on the edge, staying on the fringe.

But you know, sheep don't show up to the farm on Sunday morning just for a meal and then bail. That's not the shepherd's way, is it? Don't stay on the edge just looking in and observing. Are you really a sheep? And are you really in the flock? Then be in, all out, completely.

Where are you right now as a sheep? Enjoying family life and adjusting your life to the priority of church life, kingdom life, has to be lived out together. Stephen, where would you and I be if we didn't have our church? We'd both be struggling. We're no different there.

We live life out together, partaking together, worshiping together, praying together, being together, transparent together. That's scary, isn't it? An open life and an open heart increasingly together. You know, the marriage retreat, the first one last week, Lee and Amber had a group.

Linda and I had a group. Our group was better than your group, Lee. I'm jesting because it was just so good.

We didn't get to experience each other's groups till the last hour when we finally met for lunch on our way home. It was so awesome, wasn't it? It was tremendous. Three days in a big house, eating together, talking together, praying together, watching the Paul Tripp videos.

It was awesome. And there's nothing like relationally knowing each other more, being together. Wasn't it great, John? It was awesome.

And those of you who will be next and then after that, get excited about it. It's going to be so tremendous. So the family farm is increasing.

And you know what? That's going to be more serious than the days ahead in our nation, right? What's ahead culturally, nationally? This is Christ's heart and Christ's view. My flock, my church is the single most important thing to me in the universe and in the earth. Nations will perish and pass away.

Nations right now are sinking down. Wars will continue. Abortion will continue.

National wickedness and decay will increase. And the U.S. will wax worse and worse and be given over unless... And you know the unless answer. As the nation gets darker, we will all need our church increasingly more.

Increasingly more. Possibly even for life and survival. Philip said yesterday to Linda and I as we were with them, he said, I told my children that I will go to prison before I take any vaccine.

Me too. And brethren, it could come to that, couldn't it? Don't be naive to think it couldn't. Five years ago, one year ago, who would have thought a church in Canada would have to be underground with three fences locking up their property? In Acts 4, the church was family the more the pressure got on, the more persecution arose.

They were family. When Peter and John were mistreated and threatened, they immediately headed for the sheep farm. They ran to the farm.

They went to their brethren and they found the refuge and the strength that came from the church. The urgency of this will continue and increase around us, brethren. And with it, our church, as our priority, personally, must increase.

Because we all will need the church body more than ever, probably in the days ahead. So let us not think we believe rightly about the church unless we're really all in and fully being a sheep under our Great Shepherd and with one another. If we're not, we don't believe rightly about the church.

Let us not say we believe in being a praying flock if we're not participating in the prayer meeting. Let us not profess we love the brethren unless we are pursuing and being with the brethren. Let us not love in word only, but in deed and in truth.

Our Shepherd, brethren, has amazing things for us ahead. Great food, personal care, real protection, real guidance, great experiences with Him and with each other. He has been in support and preservation and growth on every level, individually and as a flock.

Every sheep, none straying off, none becoming spiritually sick or weak, none unshepherded, unshepherded. You are His dear lambs and you are precious in His sight. And you are precious to your shepherds and you are precious to each other.

So brethren, let's increasingly make it a fabulous farm we're living on. And unlock John Jones' sheep. You won't be sheared and then sent off to market for slaughter.

Your future eternal life. Rejoicing forever in the presence of your great Shepherd with all the sheep throughout all of history. Glory to God.

So brethren, that's what's before us. John 10 is so wonderful about you and the care you have. Enter in.

Be more of a sheep than ever for the glory and honor of your Shepherd. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we say this morning from our hearts, You are my Shepherd.

You are our Shepherd. You are the Good Shepherd. You're a marvelous, awesome, great Shepherd of the sheep.

Make this real to us. Shape us and change us and teach us how to live on the farm and be the flock You want us to be. Seal this word that You have spoken in our hearts to the glory of Your great name and for the purpose of Providence Chapel in the days ahead.

Amen.

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