

The Good Shepherd

by Norman Meeten

Norman Meeten's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of experiencing God's love through the Good Shepherd, who offers safety and a new identity in Christ.

Duration: 1:16:04

Scripture: Romans 6:6, 2 Corinthians 4:6-7, Ephesians 1:1, Ephesians 2:4, Ephesians 2:8, Revelation 1:12

Topics: "Shepherd"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding and remembering the teachings of God. He acknowledges that humans can be slow to learn and need repetition to grasp important truths. The preacher warns against being gullible and easily led astray by worldly philosophies, particularly those that are a diluted form of Hinduism. He emphasizes the need for the Holy Spirit to illuminate the truths of the Bible and bring them to life in our hearts. The preacher also highlights the invitation to come to Jesus and partake in all that he offers, emphasizing that without receiving him, there is no life. The breaking of bread is mentioned as a reminder of these eternal truths.

Transcript

I don't know about you, but I feel all vulnerable this morning, all melted down inside. It's wonderful to know that you're in a context where you're safe and you're not going to be taken advantage of. You can afford to expose your heart and completely relinquish and let go of all those things that would inhibit and hold you back and lock you up and shut you away on the inside.

It's very wonderful. You don't have to be afraid. So often we're protected because we're uncertain.

Therefore we build walls around ourselves because we're afraid of being hurt. That's invariably because we've been hurt on a former occasion and we've resolved in our hearts that we're not going to be hurt again therefore we lock ourselves up and we shut ourselves away. And it takes the Spirit of God to break through the insuperable barriers that encasulate us and set us free and open us all up to him.

Do you feel vulnerable this morning? Well, let all the barriers go up, all the reservations, marked before the love of God. You're safe, you're in his presence, here amongst us by his Spirit. Glory to his name.

Father, we pray that you will come and fill our hearts and abest us, Lord, of all those things that have formerly been cleansed and speak to us, Lord. Comfort and restore and heal and recreate and make

according to your word in Jesus' name. Amen.

I want you to turn with me this morning into John chapter 10. Familiar passage of scripture for most of us. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

But he that enters in by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice. And he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

And when he put it forth his own sheep, he goeth before them. And the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.

This parable spake Jesus unto them, but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers.

But the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.

The thief cometh not, but for to kill, and steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I am come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. He that is inhaling, and not the shepherd whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth. And the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

The howling fleeth, because he isn't howling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the father knoweth me, even so know I the father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Other sheep have I, which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring. They shall hear my voice, and they shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Therefore does my father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh 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. Amen. Now, Bernard has said to us in the last couple of days, categorically, that God in the Old Testament is exactly the same God in the New.

He doesn't change, and that is absolutely true. It's also true of his word. What God said in the Old Testament is equally true in the New, because God doesn't change.

All that he has ever said has been an expression of his own presence and nature. Glory to his name. But there is a tremendous advantage of having been born into the age and generation in which we find ourselves, because we have the advantage and privilege of knowing and entering into a relationship with him way and beyond what they knew in the Old.

In the Old, it was exceptional people who enjoyed the intimacy of which we have heard of in the last two evenings. It was the privilege of the few. In the New Testament, it's the privilege and possibility for all.

Glory to his name. And that's much better. That's why when you read the Hebrew Epistle contrasting the inferiority of the Old with the superiority of the New, it's not saying God is different, but it's telling us that our ability to enter into and know the reality of that God is much greater than anyone ever really knew under the Old.

In the Old, it was all external. In the New, it all becomes internal. In the Old, it was temporary.

It changed and it went. In the New, it's permanent. He comes to abide.

He can live constantly and continually in the reality of that which Old Testament knew from time to time, some living more in it than others. In the Old Testament, it was distant. It was a way up in heaven, up in the mountains, where the majority were not allowed to come.

It was only the select few who dare come, and others were forbidden even to touch the mountains ere they should be consumed. It was distant. Amen.

Today, beloved, it's now here in our presence, accessible and available to every believing, seeking, searching, longing heart. In the Old Testament, it was partial. Not that God was partial or incomplete, but the revelation was partial.

We've been reminded that God only revealed to them his backward part. That was very wonderful. It doesn't speak of the incompleteness of God, but it does speak of the incompleteness of our ability to appreciate who God really is.

And in the New Testament, we had the privilege of seeing him face to face. Glory to his name. There is a tremendous advantage of having been born on the day of Pentecost.

Did you know that you were born on the day of Pentecost, and that you're not too late? You haven't missed the boat. The next great day referred to in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles is that great and notable day of the Lord, when the trumpet was sounded. Glory to his name.

We're still living in that one magnificent day. It's called the day of grace. It's called the day of the church.

It's called the day of first fruits. It's called the day of the Spirit. A multiplicity of definitions, but it's a wonderful day.

It's the day in which we live, and all that was originally introduced on that day is still available to you and me. Amen. With the promise, beloved, that as we enter further and further into the realities of those original provisions, so we will enjoy more and more of the wonder of it.

The invitation of God to you and me today, beloved, is that we can come and in the Spirit meet him face to face. Now again, we were reminded in the 33rd chapter of the book of Exodus, verse 20, that you cannot see the face of God and live. And that's the truth.

And it's unalterable, because God spoke it. God has never changed his mind. He's never gone back on anything that he has said.

He may have enlarged upon it, and developed it, and given us a greater appreciation and understanding of it. But that which God originally said, he said, beloved, he's yea is he's yea, and he's nay is he's nay. He's unalterable.

And when God said that you cannot see my face and live, he was laying down a divine principle that still holds true. It was true throughout the Old Testament, and it's equally true in the New. We see it in the case of Moses.

Moses essentially had to die in order that he might see. You see it again in the experience of Isaiah. That wonderful sixth chapter, the same principle applies there.

You move over into the New Testament. You see it in the case of Peter. Before he got anywhere with God, beloved, he had to come to face to face with Jesus Christ.

And he did that in the foyer of the judgment hall, when Jesus turned and looked on Peter, and Peter saw and understood, and there began to happen within him something that far exceeded and excelled anything that he had ever known before. It was the beginning of the great breakup of all that he'd been, and all that he'd assumed, and all that he had he believed that he was in. It all suddenly was shattered within him.

He went outward and he wept bitterly. That was the prelude, beloved, via Calvary and resurrection to the day of Pentecost, when his eyes would be fully opened and he would see and understand and comprehend things, beloved, that as I said the other day, he so often got wrong as he approached them from the natural perspective and then entered into the Spirit and saw them through the eyes of Jesus and understood and know and was able to write with authority and conviction things that he'd never analysed or worked out that had come to him by the revelation of the Spirit. That's how he stood up on the day of Pentecost and simply opened his mouth, beloved.

Some people say preached, other people say prophesied. Basically, beloved, he just became a channel for all that God was wanting to say on that occasion. It all come alive on the inside of him.

He knew, he'd come face to face. The same great principle operated in the Apostle Paul, the stall of Tarsus on the Damascus Road. Suddenly the great light, he saw.

It was the end of the stall of Tarsus. Many of you have heard me say before, beloved, that was his Calvary, that was his death place, that was when the stall of Tarsus ceased to be. He never was again.

He was on the third day, the day of resurrection and when Ananias came and ministered the Spirit of God to him and he rose up a man, a new creation. That wasn't a theological statement, beloved, that he made when he wrote to Corinthians, if any man be in Christ he is a new creation. Old things have passed away, behold everything has become new.

That was a biographical statement, a testimony to the reality of the result of his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road. He saw him face to face and bowed. He was no longer stall of Tarsus, never was stall of Tarsus.

Ever again he was a new creation, he was another man. They identified him from that time onwards as the Apostle Paul, but he was another man. It's a wonderful thing, beloved, to know that you can be a totally new man, a new woman.

Law, the terrible tragedy and legacy both inherited and imbibed and compounded by our wilfulness, stubbornness and folly, beloved, can be utterly taken away and we can really begin all over again and become a new creation in Christ. It happens when you see him face to face and he devastates you with

his nature, with his person, with his holiness and everything that he is. It's inexplicable, it's described as light, beloved.

In the fourth chapter of the second epistle to Corinthians, also he seeks to enlarge upon that tremendous thing that had happened to him in the context of talking about the ministry, where he says here we've been birthed by and for we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your slaves for Jesus' sake. No longer the arrogant heresy, no longer the person who presumed to know it all, but the slave. Oh I love that, beloved, every time the Apostle Paul talks about his apostleship he always links it with the concept of slavery.

Amen. The slave of Jesus Christ, for God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earth and vessels, oh the paradox, beloved, the wonder of it.

It's death and resurrection, death and resurrection all the time. We have this treasure in earth and vessels, that is old clay pots, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. We are distressed on every side, yet not, we are troubled on every side but not distressed.

We are perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, forsaken, cast down but not destroyed, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the light also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which are delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the light also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. Oh I love that, beloved.

The reality of that encounter with Jesus Christ having permeated and penetrated and infiltrated into every part of his being, beloved, until it came out of his person, manifest in his body, manifest in his mortal flesh. It was tangible, it was visible. He died.

Death worketh in us like in you. What happened to Peter? What happened to Paul? What happened to Stephen, beloved? He asked the apostles, the first great martyr, and he saw God. Hallelujah.

Literally it happened to him. He died. Amen.

The very words that came forth from his lips, beloved, were the declaration of the penetration of the nature of God into the depths of his being. He said, Father, lay not this sin to their charge. You would have thought it was Jesus speaking from Calvary, wouldn't you? Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Virtually the same word came out of the man, this man, beloved, as the rock pounded down upon him. For all the adversity and difficulty and extremity of human experience that could only bring out of him, that was God revealed in him by the Holy Ghost. What he was in his heart came out of his mouth.

There was no malice, there was no vindictiveness, there was no spitefulness, there was no fight left in him. No aggression, no retaliation. That's what temptation's for, beloved, that's what pressure's all about, to see what's really on the inside of us.

It's an opportunity for the exposure of what's shone into us, coming out of us. Glory to his name. And then we had that lovely first chapter of the book of the Revelation, John.

Revelation chapter 1, verse 14, verse 12. And I turned to see the voice that spake. That's an amazing thing, isn't it? You usually turn to hear the voice, but he turned to see the voice that spake.

And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven candlesticks, God. Your Bible says one. You'll have a good version of the Bible up in Italics.

There is no word for what he saw. In the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, light under the sun of man. He couldn't find a word, there was no word in human vocabulary, to define or clarify what it was that he saw as he turned to see the voice.

He saw the seven candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven candlesticks, no word. Speechless. When you turn to see blood, you're blind, you're speechless.

Didn't the prophet say, who is more blind than my servant, or more dumb than me? Yes. Hallelujah. He said, once I was blind, now I can see, once I can hear, now I speak.

Amen. It's just the opposite way around here. Face to face with God, as he was revealed in Jesus.

No words. Light under the sun of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the pants with a golden girdle, and his head and hair like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto pine branches, as if they'd burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance as the sun, shineth in his strength.

And I saw him, and fell at his feet as dead. He lay his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.

Amen. And have the keys of hell and of death. I saw him, for his face as the sun shining in its strength, and fell down dead.

You can't see the face of God and live. God is unchangeable. God is unalterable.

What he originally said, beloved, he goes on saying, they are principles that are the expression of the outworking of his own being. Amen. It was literal, beloved, in the Old Testament, in the realm of the new it becomes spiritual.

You can only live if you die. You can only see God, beloved, if you're prepared to die. And then you will know the great right hand of God coming out upon you, lifting you up into resurrection life, and making you a new creation.

Glory to his name. I'm so glad that God doesn't change. Where would you and I be this morning if he did? If he was always changing his mind, if he was always off course.

We wouldn't know whether we were coming and going. This is the trouble of the world in which we live. We've lost all, the world, generally speaking, has lost all context of the abstinence.

Joni was sharing with us this morning a wee bit about that dreadful conference that's going to take place in Beijing in a few days time, that's challenging the whole integrity, beloved, of God's great wisdom in making an arrangement for the human race and families, and trying to alter the whole thing. It's probably the most terrible thing, and it's being sponsored by the United Nations, beloved, and virtually being paid for by the

United States, backed up by the President's wife, seeking to lead the world, beloved, into a realm of utter iniquity and squalor and decadence. Because men and women have lost all context of abstinence, things that are right, because they're right in God, and because they have been eternally spoken, and they're unalterable, beloved, than any man or any woman who tampers with what God has said, and who is in for trouble.

The tragedy is that most of us are so gullible, beloved, we let it all go on, and it seeps under our front door, and it's in our living room before we've woken up to the fact that it's actually happening. It's usually conceived in the heads of philosophers and people in those places, beloved, and they're so unintelligible, we say, it's irrelevant, it will never affect us, and never. But it gradually gets watered down, watered down, beloved, until you see it on your television screen, if you have one to gaze at.

This is a diluted form, beloved, to make it palatable. Like I told you the other day, that New Age philosophy is only a diluted form and a palatable reproduction of Hinduism, beloved, that is acceptable for Western people. But the principle and the spirit that underlies it is unchanged, it's unalterable.

Amen. It's in the church, it's everywhere. Those of us who live in these, beloved, recognize it.

We recognize external facets and aspects of it. I've made reference to it already, and a number of people have come and said to me, isn't it harmless? Because it is so palatable, beloved, because it is so attractive, because it's made so artistic and nice and attractive, we accommodate it, accept it. And if all we know we are, hung drawn and courted by it, and scarcely know how to get out of it.

Oh, I'm so glad, beloved, that God is absolute, and what God has said is yea and amen. That alone will give an anchorage to your life, beloved, that makes everything. Amen.

Bless God. Now again, back in the Old Testament, when God revealed himself, we are told that he revealed himself by a glorious name. In Exodus chapter 33 he said, I am that I am.

And that's who God is, and that's who God will ever and eternally be, the great I am. And when God revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ, that's what he revealed himself to be, the I am. The greatest proof of the deity of Christ, beloved, that you'll find in the New Testament, you don't need to scuttle around for an obscure text, to hang the theology of the divinity of God on, or the divinity of Jesus, beloved.

The whole New Testament is woven and embroidered with this glorious revelation. Jesus keeps saying, I am, I am, I am, I am. I am the bread of life, in chapter 6 of John.

I am the light of the world, in chapter 8 and chapter 12 of John. I am the good shepherd, I am the door, in the 10th chapter. I am the resurrection, the resurrection of love, in the 11th chapter.

I am the way, the truth, and the life, in the 14th chapter. I am the true vine, in the 15th chapter. And then when you come over to the 19th chapter of John, you'll find it in the most wonderful form.

Praise God, not the 19th, sorry, the 18th chapter, where they came to arrest Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. And it's been estimated by some that a group of some 600 armed men came to rescue this one man. And it says in verse 4, Jesus, therefore knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth and said unto them, Whom seek ye? And they answered him, Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus said, I am. And Jesus also which betrayed him stood with them. As soon as he had said unto them, I am, they went backward and fell on the ground.

As far as I'm aware, beloved, that's the only reference of people falling on their back. There may be another reference, if you know one, you can come and inform me, but I know that this is one of the rare times in the scripture, beloved, when people came into the presence of the Lord Jesus, that they fell on their back. For every other reference, you'll find them numerous in John's Gospel, they all fell on their faces.

Consciousness of the present, consciousness of their own sinfulness, consciousness of their own unworthiness. Even a man, riddled with demons, beloved, came and fell down at the feet of Jesus. Giles, when he came to get his daughter here, beloved, he fell on his face and worshipped him.

The woman with the issue of the blood, fell down, worshipped him. They all fell down. Amen.

But these men, beloved, when Jesus said, I am, all went flush on their back. The great I am, the eternal God in the person of Jesus Christ, all that he had to say, beloved, to come to the devil was to say, I am, I am. Hallelujah.

Jesus is the great I am, the eternal one. As I say, the greatest proof of his divinity. And all that I, you and I, will ever really know of God, beloved, is what is revealed to us in the person of Jesus by the Holy Ghost.

He is the greatest revelation and manifestation of God that will ever be given to man. And by his Spirit, beloved, he's here to do that. And not only reveal himself to us, but to reveal himself in so that all that related to him, beloved, as the Son of Man, should become increasingly ours day by day.

Amen. Of course, no one recognised him when he was on the earth. That's why when he told this parable in John chapter 10, they hadn't a clue what he was talking about.

No one knew who Jesus Christ was. It began in the first chapter of John's Gospel. They didn't know him.

He came unto his own and his own received him not. They didn't recognise him. They'd been anticipating him.

They'd been praying for him. They'd been living in expectation of him. For generations upon generations, they were anticipating the Messiah.

The New Testament word for Messiah is Christ, the Anointed One. That's why he was called Christ at his birth. He was the fulfilment of all the great prophetic expectations.

They'd been waiting for him. They'd been looking for him. They'd been anticipating him.

But when he came, they didn't receive him because they didn't recognise him. Even his own cousin, John the Baptist, didn't know who he was. Amen.

But when John the Baptist came within the context of the person of the Lord Jesus, he kept saying, I am not. That's why there was lots of room for the great, I am. Amen.

That's the principle of death and resurrection working again. But God has got to bring you and me to the place where we know that we are not. I am not.

I am nothing. I am death. That will be an indication, brothers, that we've come face to face with Jesus Christ by the revelation of the Spirit.

That's the first thing that happens to a man or a woman. When God reveals himself to them, they know who they are, they know what they are, and they know that they're undone. I am not.

And then the Spirit of God can come into you and me and say, I am. Glory to his name. Let's turn back into this lovely 10th chapter of John's Gospel.

Now, twice here, or more than that, but he uses two analogies. He says, I am the door, I am the good shepherd. And of course, you know that that's one and the same thing.

We don't appreciate that in modern society, because we don't know too much about sheep farming, and sheep shepherds don't do what shepherds did in the days of Jesus. The shepherd was the door. When they drove the sheep into the fold at night, once they were all in the fold, the shepherd lay in the hole in the wall.

He served both the shepherd and door. So, when he says, I am the door, when he says, I am the shepherd, he's virtually saying the same thing. Praise God.

Scripture, even the New Testament, has to take on a tremendous diversity of analogy, picture, figure, and type to convey, beloved, the reality of the truth. No one thing is adequate. No one natural thing is sufficient to describe the multiplicity of the nature and character of God, as he's revealed himself in Jesus.

That's why we need to ponder all of his lovely truths. They all have baptism aspects of revelation. I love the analogy of bread, beloved, that hand that holds out to me the great invitation not to stand at arm's length anymore, but come right nigh under him.

Amen. And partake, and receive, and imbibe all that he is. Amen.

He says, and if you won't do that, you'll have no life in you. Doesn't matter what you believe, doesn't matter where you belong to, doesn't matter how long you've been going to the church where you've been attending, if you won't receive me, and it's nothing to do with the breaking of bread, essentially. That was all given, beloved, because of the frailty of human nature that constantly needs to be reminded again and again of these great eternal truths.

It is a reminder. Amen. Of course, it should be more than a reminder.

When you and I break bread, there should be a transaction within our spirits and an appropriation of all that that means to our inward man to constantly nourish us and feed us with the life of God. That's a wonderful thing, beloved, but you know that you can eat him, that you can drink him, so that all that he is. We discover in the New Testament, beloved, how often Jesus would take the natural thing and invest it with such dimensions of spiritual revelation and truth, the most ordinary and everyday thing of life.

From a human point of view, beloved, everyone would understand what he was talking about, but having understood it all, they didn't understand. That's what it says here in this chapter. In verse 6, this parable spake Jesus unto them, but they understood not what he, they were which he spake unto them.

They were blind as that. They hadn't a clue. And all of us, beloved, if we had an atom of honesty with us this morning, know that that has been true for you and me.

We've read the Bible, we've discovered, I often say it doesn't matter how modern your version of the Bible is, if you still won't understand it, hmm, Bernard's laughing because he's got a more modern one than mine, but it's not the modern version, beloved, that helps us. He did ignore us not to leave our brains outside the tent door, amen, but you won't get in by your brains. God comes and ministers to our thought, and then to our understanding, and then we're in a position to teach others also.

The problem with many of us, beloved, is we try to push God through the spittle of our intellect, and if he doesn't come up to what we anticipated or thought, beloved, we dispose of him. We dispense with him. We think that we're better than him, and that's what's going on in the world today.

Men and women think that they're better than him. They know better than he did in the beginning. Glory to God.

As a man thinketh in his heart, so he is. That's where we think down here. But if God has given you a good brain, beloved, you have a responsibility to be a steward of it and use it, amen, and the more you use it, well, the more sensitive it will become.

Amen. And once you would have thought that you were sick, and then you suddenly discovered that you're not so sick as you thought you were in the beginning. I want to testify to you, beloved, that when God baptized me into the Holy Ghost, he did something with this up here, as well as something with this down here, and gave me a capacity to think and understand.

You know, you can sit in a meeting like this, and just sit there like a sponge, all gullible, soaking it all in. Amen. But I sit in a meeting, beloved.

I don't sit there with a critical spirit, but I do sit there with an intelligent desire to understand what's being said to me. First of all down here, and then up here, and then I go away, beloved, and think about it. No one's infallible.

Glory to God. When you read a book, beloved, you should read it intelligently. Most books are a mixture.

You have to learn how to sort wheat from chaff. There are lots of books that I would never give to unbelievers, but I would read them. Well, you might say that's boasting, but I have been in the way a little while.

Praise God. Amen. But they didn't understand, beloved, and they didn't understand until the Spirit of God and you and I won't understand.

You and I won't know Christ. We can revel in the truths of the book, beloved, unless the Spirit of God come and quicken those truths. They will only compound us, beloved, in our position.

Instead of setting us free and bringing us out into life and truth of it all. Glory to his name. One word read, spoken, understood in the power of the Holy Ghost, will do you more good than volumes and volumes of other things.

I don't think I quite read four books a week, but I'm a very good competitor with Bernard. Someone was talking to me about about me at the Laura conference, says he doesn't need to go to a bookshop, he studies a bookshop. Amen.

Hallelujah. The Spirit of God has to come and illuminate our hearts and give us an understanding. Look at this lovely statement, it's repetitive.

And I love repetition in the scripture. It's an indication that God is really trying to hammer the point home. He knows how stupid most of us are and how slow we are to learn.

How many times have you had to be told the same thing again and again and again and again? That's why when you read the writings of the Apostle Peter, he keeps saying, remember, remember. There was a song some years ago, it was called the Wombles of Wimbledon Common. The only thing I can remember about the Wombles was, remember, remember, remember.

Glory to God. Peter wasn't ashamed, beloved, to remind Peter to repeat what he'd said before, blessed be his name. And Jesus often said the same thing again and again and again.

In verse 11 he says, I am the good shepherd. This is again down in verse 14, I am the good shepherd. Peter talks of him as the chief shepherd.

In the Hebrew epistle of the last chapter he's also spoken of, amen, as the great shepherd. The psalmist spoke of him as my shepherd. Amen.

The good shepherd, the great shepherd, the chief shepherd, my shepherd. Of course we all love Psalm 23 because it says my shepherd. Amen.

Don't get too offended when Bernard says you must eliminate all the my's and I's. You have to start with the I. He told us that himself, didn't he? He says you have to start with mom before you begin to understand God, or someone who will argue with him about that. Amen.

They say you have to start with God before you can understand yourself. Debatable point. Amen.

You see this is how I think. I don't sit there just listening. There's God and I know he doesn't sit there listening either.

Amen. We've been around with each other for quite a long time. Glory be to God.

I'm not contradicting what he says and he doesn't contradict what I say. Amen. Have you noticed that sometimes Jesus says one thing but of one way, and then in another place he seems to say it in an entirely different way? That's why most people write him off.

They say he's inconsistent. That's why if you come to the Bible brother with a natural mind you'll conclude, beloved, it's a book of inconsistencies. It doesn't hold together.

But once the Spirit of God has illuminated your heart, brother, and brought you into the realm of the Spirit, it's no longer a book of inconsistencies. You've moved out of the realm of natural things into the realm of the heavenly things, beloved, where everything isn't glued in or locked into a situation. Mr. Clement talked to me yesterday morning after the meeting and we were discussing this whole thing in relationship to guidance and how the Lord has spoken to us on former occasions.

Now the Lord may tell you to do one thing on one occasion, to act in a particular way, in a particular situation on one occasion, and then on another occasion he may seemingly say to you to do exactly the opposite thing. Now if you get locked in to the thing that he said to you on the former occasion and believe

that that's the only way he's ever going to talk and that's the only way he's ever going to speak to you, beloved, you've replaced him by what he said. We have to keep our hearts open, beloved, to him.

He can say what he likes, when he likes, how he likes, lead us this way one day, lead us that way the next day. He'll talk to one person in one beloved and say exactly the opposite to another person in another situation because he talks relevantly to our condition, glory to his name. Isn't that wonderful? Praise God.

He wants to bring us into a relationship with himself, a living God, not just a code or a system or a collection of rules. See that's why you don't have ten commandments. Now the ten commandments haven't been abrogated in the New Testament.

Paul made that absolutely clear, Jesus made it clear. Lots of people think they can play fast and loose, beloved, with God's word as it was revealed in the Old Testament. They think that they can do what they like, they can throw the commandments out of the window.

You can't, beloved. You have come into the great new covenant of God, you don't keep the laws of God, beloved, because the laws say he should do, but you keep them because the fulfilment of the law has revealed himself in you and they become just spontaneously outworking you. Don't play the monkey.

You know lots of people take out one and do this with it and another and do that with it. Thou shalt not kill. I haven't heard anyone suggesting, beloved, that should be changed.

I wouldn't be at all surprised if people start changing that. Well they do, they have changed it, haven't they? They have changed it. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

We say we don't believe in polygamy. No, we just legalise it and call it divorce. It's another way of saying the same thing.

We don't believe in murder, but we just legalise abortion. Men point the finger at the Chinese because they let a million girls, babies and deformed boy babies sort of die every year. America points the finger, England points the finger.

Jesus said, I am the good shepherd. The lovely picture, the lovely picture. There's more than a picture.

Glory to his name. Verse 11 he said, I am the good shepherd, because God speaks in that. I am, that I am, am the good shepherd.

The young man who went to Jesus, wanting to know how he could get eternal life, he said, good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? Jesus said, there's none good, but one, God. It wasn't what he said, it was what he didn't say, beloved, that holds the truth in that sentence. He didn't say, I am not good.

He said, there is only one good, God. Another way, beloved, of declaring he was divine. And that was the first facet of the answer to the great question, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? First of all, you've got to acknowledge that I'm God.

Amen. I am the good shepherd, and the good shepherd giveth his life to the sheep. And he's repetitive in this as well.

Amen. Up in verse 15, the Father knoweth me, even as I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. Sheep have I 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. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. Amen.

That's what the good shepherd does. He lays down his life. He gives his life for the sheep.

Doesn't give anything less. Doesn't give anything inferior. He says, I will give you my life.

In the 10th verse of this same lovely chapter he said, I have come that you might have life and life more abundantly. Not many people probably know that sort of life. That was the life of God.

That was the life of Jesus, the good shepherd, the abundant life. In the same chapter he refers to it and elsewhere as eternal life. Paul talks about this life in the fifth book.

He says, the life that I now live. Isn't that wonderful? That's probably one of the finest definitions of genuine Christianity that you'll read anywhere in the New Testament. The life that I now live.

This is what the good shepherd came to. He came to lay down his life, to give his life, in order that you and I might live that same life, that abundant life, that eternal life, that God life, that Christ life. That's why Paul said, Christ is my life.

For me to live is Christ. Wonderful. Hasn't palmed us off for something inferior.

Come to give us himself. Moses, in the scriptures that we were looking at earlier, and ones which preceded the ones which we actually read in the meeting, beloved, speaks of the fact that Moses ate and drank up there on the mountain. Amen.

He communed. It is the anticipation of the breaking of bread, if you like. It was all going on before.

There are lots of pictures and figures of this wonderful arrangement that God had made in himself. Glory to his name. He constantly wanted you and me to receive his life.

Jesus does it another way in the second chapter of this lovely gospel, when he said, if any man thirsts of him, come unto me and drink, and out of his belly will flow rivers of living water. This he spake of the Spirit. And when he talks about drinking it's not just having a sip.

No, it's not just quoting the psalmist. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. That's wonderful.

God wants you to have more than taste. The language, the grammar of the scripture says, drink and go on drinking all the time. The same lovely truth that you'll read in the Ephesian, if it's a chapter 5, where it says, be filled with the Spirit all the time.

Terrible English grammar, but marvellous theology. Amen. God's not confined, beloved, to the limitations of language.

Probably that's why he gave the gift of tongues to help us out occasionally, when we run out of words. Glory to his name. It's not just coming and tasting or experiencing.

God's come to give you life, and life more abundantly. The life of the Son of God, received into you and me by the Spirit, beloved. That's when you know that your eyes have been opened, and you've been brought out of darkness into light, out of death into life.

You live! There aren't many people, beloved. Many people exist. They're called a living soul.

Adam was. And so was every animal that breathed. Called a living soul.

Many people are mere animals. And of course you don't need to be very intelligent, beloved, or read much of contemporary literature, in the form of newspapers, to come to the realisation that basically the majority of humanity are little more than animals. And in fact have the ability to behave in a way more depraved than the animal creation.

Horrific! Especially imaginable, what some people would do, and how some people live. Of course most of us are shielded from it. And the parts that we're not shielded from, if we don't like it, we can easily turn it off.

And it gets too uncomfortable. He says, I am the good shepherd, and I lay down my life, I give my life for the sheep. Amen.

What a shepherd. What a God. Come to give us his own life.

To impart to us his own glorious divine nature. To give us an ability, beloved, and a capacity to understand and realise what life is all about in him. Not God up there and you down here.

The acme of revelation, beloved, is when those two great aspects of truth coincide within the depth of your being, and you know that you've been made one with him. Blessed be his name. Glory.

That leads us on to another lovely truth. It says in verse 15, as the father knoweth me. Now verse 14, I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

As the father knoweth me, even so know I the father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. Further down in the chapter, verse 27, it says, my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. We've got the truth up in verse 3 as well.

It says, to him the portereth openness, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name. He knows them. Amen.

He knows them. Another wonderful thing. He knows you.

He doesn't just look on the outward appearance. That's what God said to Samuel when he was in search of David, to be the second great king of Israel. He said, you're not to look on the outward appearance.

God doesn't look on the outward appearance, he looks on the heart. Now the outward appearance of David, apparently was very attractive, but that wasn't the thing that enamoured God. God looked on the heart.

And of course, the human assessment of the situation God failed totally to understand. And that's why they went right through the collection of brothers, starting at the eldest, coming down, down, down, down. And they all disqualified.

None of them satisfied God. Amen. And it caused Samuel to wonder.

And he said, Jethro, have we any other sons? And he said, oh, have we? Have we any other sons? Have we? Is there anyone else? You know, many of these people had so many children, but they had no idea who they were. We know a lovely girl called Colette, who lives in Keckham, in Consumma. She's the 130-something daughter of her father, and he didn't know that she existed until it came to the fact that he was going to be able to get the bride price.

And then he came up very aware that he'd got a 139th whatever daughter she is, and stashed the price very high, and squeezed it out of everyone until he'd got what he wanted. Oh, dear old Jethro was a bit like it, beloved. He'd lost sight, he'd lost count of his sons.

Father Logidian, he was the least of all his father's sons. He didn't count. They weren't in the running.

From a human point of view, beloved, they had everything going against them. They disqualified. Do you ever feel that you've got everything going against you? Amen.

That's invariably an indication that God's got things going for you. Wonderful. Bless the Lord.

But David didn't count. But then they remembered this boy out there with the sheep. And of course, the shepherd in those days, beloved, wasn't the sort of person that the sheep farmer is today.

He was a dread, a dread of a different man. He wasn't looking down on the outward appearance, he was looking on the heart. I love that scripture in Hebrews chapter four, where Jesus is described as a sort of a spirit that divides between soul and spirit that discerns or knows the thoughts and intents of the heart and declares that we're all naked and open before him with whom we have to do.

Beloved, you might think that's terrible. I think that's wonderful. That's why I said at the beginning of the meeting, I feel vulnerable.

Because you've gone to a place where you're not afraid of being known. You're not afraid of being exposed. You're not wanting to cover up anymore.

You've got nothing to hide, beloved. What was terrible before, beloved, you can live in the confidence of that it's been blotted out, it's been washed away. It's forgotten glory to his name.

You don't have to live under the guilt and curse of it anymore. We've all got a legacy, beloved, that we're ashamed of, everyone without exception. Amen.

Some people get terrified with that scripture that one day, beloved, every idle word that you've spoken will be shouted from the housetop. That refers to the words, beloved, that hadn't come under the tremendous purging element of the blood of the Lord Jesus. God hasn't got a great sword hanging over your head, beloved, to cause you to languish in fear for the rest of your day.

The moment you and I capitulate to God in Jesus Christ and believe in, beloved, on the basis of these revealed truths, we can know that we were conscious and unconscious, beloved, it's been taken away, it's been blocked out into every single word. Amen. And you're not afraid anymore.

You don't go out shouting about your past, beloved. It's not any fine scripture, it is. You shouldn't talk about it.

It makes me wonder, beloved, when I read some biographies, not old ones, they're better ones, but some of the new ones. Three quarters of them are about the person's unregenerate life. And I know people, beloved, who have been introduced into areas of sin and experience that they never knew anything about until they read a so-called Christian biography.

Tragic. Don't talk about your unregenerate past, beloved. It's not edifying, it's not going to do anyone good.

It's enough to say that once you were dead in Christmastime and you read the Ephesians, Ephesians 1, and see how succinctly the apostle deals with sin. Amen. He introduces it in the second chapter, hardly mentions it in the first.

That's why it would be, I'd say you've got to come to terms with God first. Ephesians chapter one is all about God. Amen.

And the first two or three verses of chapter two, beloved, are about sin. And then it says, but God. Later on the chapter it says, but now.

Isn't that wonderful? The God, but now. Not a long, agonizing, withdrawal symptom, amen. But an instantaneous intervention of God in the power of the Holy Ghost, beloved, that can cut you off and set you free and emancipate you from everything that you formerly were, blessed be his name, and make you another person.

Glory to his name. He knows you. It's amazing he hasn't written us off.

Isn't it? Anyone else would have despaired of you and me other than God. Amen. Even since we'd seen the Lord.

Anyone else would have given us up, turned it over. Amen. But he hasn't.

He's endured. That great revelation in the Exodus last night, that word, you know it's one of my favourite words. The word long-suffering.

It was Rutherford's favourite word. He said it means to suffer long. Cute man he was, Scott.

George, one of your ancestors. He said it means to suffer long. Read Rutherford's collection of letters.

They're probably one of the finest collection of letters outside of the New Testament. Amen. Substantial, basic volume like this.

Hmm. Anyone read, notice how that, that in the narrative for the gospel, he says he suffered you. He suffered them.

It's a lovely phrase, isn't it? He suffered. Now, modern jargon, but he put up with them. He endured them.

It's wonderful. That doesn't mean he condones him, beloved. It doesn't mean to say that he tolerates it.

He doesn't. He hates it. We've been reminded of that again and again this week.

God, he hates it. He abhors it. And the declaration of his hatred, beloved, was worked out in the terminology of Calvary, when God poured out his wrath on Jesus.

That's why you can be free of the wrath to come. But if you accept God's provision, beloved, you'll be the subject of wrath in that great day. There's only one alternative to heaven and that's hell.

There's only one alternative, the love of God, and that's the wrath of God. Amen. And we're frightened to preach it, beloved, in case we don't get invited again.

But I'll tell you it's as important to preach as it is to preach the love of God. And we have no real understanding of the love of God until we've appreciated the wrath of God. And that's why the great revivalist preachers have virtually dangled people over the jaws of hell to bring them to their senses.

I'm not suggesting that that's the finest way of preaching, but they seem to get more results than many of us. Ah. We spend most of our time, beloved, stroking people's shoulders and trying to keep them at their nuts, the bad as they seem to be.

Whereas God is trying to tell them, beloved, that they're awful. They're abominable. Until you know that you're abominable, you won't see the need to be saved.

And that's why so many people never get properly saved, because they don't see the reason why they need to be saved. They don't see that they are children of wrath. They don't see that they're indwelt by the prince of the power of the air.

They don't see that they're dead in sin. They don't see that they're without God in the world, without Christ. That they're aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and straying into the covenants of promise.

They don't see it. They don't know it. That's why I said the other day, we so often build castles in the air, and that's why they keep all falling down.

Because we've never got rid of the garbage. We've never fulfilled the requirements we laid upon a man called Jeremiah when he was told to pull down and destroy. Amen.

And then later to build. Actually, it reminds a lot of our theology. That's God.

He knows it. He said, I know my sheep. I know they know.

But then that always rebukes me. He knows all our names. I've got a head like a sieve, you tell me your name.

It goes in one ear and out of the other. Amen. He knows our names.

And of course when it says, again, you know that we've said it a time and again. When he talks about the name, he's talking about your nature. He knows your nature.

He knows your character. He knows the pattern of your behaviour. Our names.

The sheep know his name. His nature. His character.

And when he gives us a new name, glory, that's what he gives us. He gives us his nature. He gives us his character.

He gives us his inward knowing. Called eternal life. Read it in the 17th chapter.

Read the same lovely truth at the end of the first epistle of John too. In chapter 5. Glory. Verse 18.

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not but keepeth himself. Sorry, but we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself and the wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God and the whole world's light and wickedness.

And we know that the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding that we may know him that is true. And we are in him that is true even in his Son Jesus Christ. And this is the true God and eternal life.

We know. We know. We know.

Amen. Sounds presumptuous sometimes to say I know. That's when you can begin to speak with authority and conviction when you know.

You don't just think. You don't just imagine. You don't just reason.

You're not just suggesting. You see, that's the problem with many people. They suggest it could be this or it could be that or it could be the other.

When Jesus spoke, he spoke as one having authority. Why? Because he is. God has to bring us to a place where we know.

And in fact the only thing that we can speak of with authority is what we know. Because what we know has become us and what we are, beloved, it's what we are we speak and what we speak we are. We know.

It's not presumption. That's faith in operation. It's having appropriated the truth of Jesus by faith and it's working.

Amen. You're then certain. Of course lots of people don't believe that you can ever be certain.

We had, we stayed the night with Philly and Keith and they were talking about a group of people who lived over the hills from them and they don't believe that they can ever be certain. That they can never be certain that their sins were committed. They say it's presumption and I understand that that's a underlying facet within Catholicism.

You can never be certain. You can never be sure. You can never be absolutely convinced that you are forgiven.

You can never be sure that you have eternal life. You can never be sure that you're going to heaven. I tell you, beloved, that's horrific.

That's what brought many people, beloved, out of systems of religion when they have been told and they met someone, beloved, who knows they're sure. I remember once having lunch with a Jehovah's Witness, it was a Jehovah's Witness or a Mormon, but one of these people say there's only so many, so many people, 144 people in heaven. Jehovah's Witnesses, that's it.

You see, you don't really have to know much about Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons and these people. It's enough to know, beloved, that they deny the deity of Christ. Amen? And that's reduced them to another mere system of religion that has brought no revelation or hope to men and women.

You don't have to get all dug down into their wretched theology. As someone once said to me, you don't have to jump into a stew to know that it stinks. That's when they were reviewing Lady Chatterley's love and suggested it should be the reading of every young person.

It was my landlord, who I stayed with in St Helens and Lancashire in those days, he said, you don't have to get into a stew to know that it stinks. Lots of people think you have to, you know, you have to examine it, you have to read it, you have to get involved with it. You don't, beloved, I tell you, get your soul all contaminated.

There are times, beloved, when we do have to explore and do certain things and be prepared, beloved, to risk, if you like, if there's any risk in it at all. Jesus was able to go right down into hell, beloved, and come up totally uncontaminated. Bless the Lord.

It's a wonderful thing to know, beloved, that you can be forgiven. And you'll know that because you've got the spirit of forgiveness in you. And Jesus said, unless you have the spirit of forgiveness in you, you'll never be forgiven.

That doesn't condition God's power to forgive, amen, but it prevents you from enjoying the reality of forgiveness. Glory be to God. He knows you.

You know Him. Not just about Him. You know Him.

He's in you. You're in Him. You're worth it.

Why the analogy of marriage, beloved, is so predominant in the scripture? From the first book of the Genesis to the last book of the Revelation. Amen. Because God has always been wanting, always wanting to know.

He's always been wanting men and women to know Him. Amen. Go up in the chapter.

Here's another lovely truth. Versed in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth.

The sheep hear his voice. He calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. Amen.

Isn't that wonderful? He's going to lead you. Right, these people aren't taking exception. They're going to get the baby.

They're going to lead them to where they'll get their lunch. The shepherd promises to lead us. Hmm.

People take their dog out on leads so that the dog goes where they go. Amen. You don't have to be more clever than a dog and some dogs are very clever to follow the lead.

Amen. Of course most people don't want to be led. They want to go their own way.

They want to do their own thing. They've got their own plans. They've got their own scheme.

Amen. God's got to break you in, beloved, to lead you. It's what they do with horses, beloved, and once they've been broken in they can be led.

Jesus was led. He was led of the spirit up into the wilderness to be tempted. That's the first thing that happened to him after he got filled with the Holy Ghost.

You'll read in Matthew 4.1. He was led of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted. What did it prove? He was the son of God because he came out of the wilderness as full of the Holy Ghost as he went in. Glory be to his name.

He was led. Listen to this. He was led as a lamb done before his shepherds.

So he opened up his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken Who shall declare his generation? Those who are led. Amen.

You'll read it from Isaiah chapter 53. You'll find it in Acts chapter 8 quoted by the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading the book, beloved, on his way back to Ethiopia where he'd been up to, after he'd been up to Jerusalem on business for his queen Candace of Ethiopia. He's reading the book.

Not only was he being led, but Philip was led. What a wonderful testimony of a man who was being led. He'd been led, beloved, out of Samaria into the wilderness.

I often say, what did God lead him there for? It was a strange leading. You know, sometimes God leads us in ways that we don't understand and we think it's all gone wrong. What do you think Philip thought, beloved, when God told him to leave Samaria and go into the wilderness? God was using him, God was blessing him.

Read the preceding verses in the 8th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. God was blessing him, God was using him. One of the most tremendous evangelistic campaigns spoken of in the New Testament.

He could have argued, Lord, they need me. You're blessing me here. This is happening, that is happening, but God should go to the desert.

I often say, well, you're going to evangelize in the desert. Robert, but the scripture simply says, he went. It's like Abraham, beloved, when God told him to go and sacrifice Isaac, it just says, he went.

That's a clear indication, beloved, that God has done something very wonderful in the life of a man. When he stops arguing the top and just goes. God knocked the argumentative disposition out of you, beloved.

It always thinks that it knows best or knows better. It says, he went. Now we're not told how long he was out there in the wilderness.

Might have been days, it might have been weeks, it could have been months. You know the story, how in the fullness of time, beloved, away in the distance he saw on the skyline a cloud of dust. Now you know what the cloud of dust was all about, but he didn't.

And as it approached, beloved, the Spirit of God came and spoke to him and said, go and join yourself to the chariot. And he ran. Amen, he didn't argue again.

He ran. That was suicide. That was instantaneous death, beloved.

A madman, for only a madman or a robber would come running through the wilderness towards a chariot. I'm going to read the story of the Good Samaritan, beloved, to know what the terrain was like. The desert terrain outside of the cities in that part of the country in those days.

There he was running, beloved, all that the man that was in the chariot, raised his finger and the fellow shot down. Instantaneous death. Didn't worry Philip because he'd already died.

Amen. He died to his own will. He died to his own plans.

He died to his own schemes. He'd heard the voice of God, beloved. The Spirit said go and he went.

Amen. And he came alongside the chariot and he heard the man reading. I wonder if he would have known where he was reading from.

He hadn't got a Bible to regularly meditate upon. He'd heard it from time to time, probably in the synagogue. It says beginning at the same scripture he preached unto him.

Jesus. Look at his name. He was led.

Hallelujah. How are you prepared to be led? Wonderful. These were, these are things, beloved, that will indicate that God in the person of our Good Shepherd, the Great I Am, has brought you into a relationship with him.

So there's no argument anymore. No division anymore. No covering up anymore.

Because he's given you his life. He's died. Amen.

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