

# Rev. Ewen Matheson - The Voice of the Shepherd

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Date: 11 January 2026

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[ 0 : 00 ] Seeking the Lord's blessing, let's turn together to John chapter 10. John's Gospel in chapter 10. And we're going to read again verses 3-6.

! For they know his voice.

A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him. For they do not know the voice of strangers. This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Especially in verse 3. The sheep hear his voice. Now this, of course, comes to us in what is a very familiar chapter.

And actually in a very familiar section of John's Gospel. Because these chapters, not just in chapter 10 itself, but what immediately precedes and what immediately follows are well known and familiar.

[ 1 : 18 ] As we noted together when we read from John chapter 9. That great miracle of the man who received his sight would be born blind. Then we have this chapter.

And then following, we have the chapter of the resurrection of Lazarus after his death. And Jesus visiting Mary and Martha, his sisters.

Chapter 10 is familiar in a slightly different way. Rather than highlighting to us the man who was born blind and the miracle performed to him.

And the same with regards to Lazarus. What we have in chapter 10 is metaphors and language that are familiar to us and very precious to us as well.

And throughout this chapter, we have Jesus speaking and conveying things of great spiritual depth. And he engages in the kind of language in which he is able to communicate something with regards to his relationship with his people.

[ 2 : 23 ] Who he is and who they are. And he reveals himself by using the famous I am saying. He speaks of I am the door.

And especially I am the good shepherd. The I am, of course, is a divine title. And we also recognize that the context of which we have this chapter as well.

That we are now moving very much close to the end of John's gospel. And John is moving us towards the upper room. The night that Jesus was betrayed.

And, of course, the death and resurrection of our Lord. So, we are moving very much towards this. And so, we recognize the significance of these chapters.

The significance of this chapter. And also, the sense, too, of which we find this association and closeness with the language. With the languages of a shepherd and sheep.

[ 3 : 30 ] And that is the most pastoral of scenes. The sheep is something we are very familiar with, is it not? The simple and ordinary creature.

And all the different elements of what is involved in keeping sheep. And the needs that they have. And the care that they require.

Then the image of the shepherd. The one who gives the care. And who displays protection. And who displays a sense of ownership.

And relationship. And into this we find part of our own spiritual vocabulary. How we speak of our own faith. How we recognize here parts of Scripture speaking to us, too.

And to recognize Psalm 23 and Psalm 100 that we've read together. The language of Israel in the wilderness is a flock and sheep. The language of David is the shepherd king.

[ 4 : 30 ] And the one who brings before us that Psalm 23. But it's the vocabulary of our own particular faith, too. It's how we describe what it is to be a Christian.

We say we are following. In order to convey that we belong to the shepherd. We are part of his flock. He is my shepherd.

The rich and deep metaphor. And as much as there is a great deal to unpack in chapter 10. I want us just to focus on one significant element.

In verse 3. The sheep hear the shepherd's voice. The focus of the voice of the shepherd. And first of all, to note the hearing.

He is the shepherd. He identifies himself here. In verse 11. I am the good shepherd. And he speaks in this way.

[ 5 : 33 ] Following on from how he has introduced this in verse 1. He speaks of others who are not shepherds. And they are a danger to the flock.

And they don't care about the flock. And this, of course, is a direct reference to those who are listening to him. At the end of chapter 9 and verse 40.

Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said, Are we also blind? Then he speaks of those who are dangerous to the flock. And he speaks then of how he is different to them.

Different to those who have been oppressive and critical. And caused danger. And are a threat. And are not protecting the flock.

But rather seeking to exploit them. And he says that he is so different. And the difference is known by his connection. And he speaks in this way in verses 1 and 2.

[ 6 : 36 ] And he is identifying himself clearly there in verse 11 and verse 14. As being that good shepherd. And how this is confirmed by recognition.

In verse 2. He who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To whom the gatekeeper opens. The gatekeeper recognizes. But then in verse 3.

The sheep, they hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name. And he speaks there in verse 4. They know his voice because they know him.

They are able to discern and distinguish. This is their shepherd. This is the one who they will follow. This shepherd is known by the sheep.

We're familiar with that image as well. In the culture here of these days of the New Testament. What you had was that the shepherds would gather together at the end of the night.

[ 7 : 36 ] And there would be one sheepfold. A communal sheepfold. That they would all use. And so that there would be protection there at night of all the dangers. All the wild animals that would prey on the sheep.

And in the morning each shepherd would come. And in turn by their voice. They would just call out their own sheep. And their flock would follow them. We see that even.

When the crafters are out feeding their sheep. And there may be two crofts together. And there may be two flocks. One in either croft. And when the particular shepherd comes and stands at the gate. He speaks. And his own flock. They lift their heads. From what they have been intensely engaged in.

In feeding. And they hear that voice. But the flock next door. They don't move. And if somebody else comes. These sheep wouldn't move. But they know their own shepherd.

[ 8 : 38 ] And Jesus is using this imagery. To speak of himself. To speak of who he is. And who they are. And he is speaking. And he is speaking particularly here.

Of the power of his voice. Of how powerful it is. To his sheep. The gospel of John. Of course introduces to us.

The great image of Jesus is coming. He is the word. Who was made flesh. And it speaks to us of. John the Baptist coming. To prepare the way. And it says.

That he was crying in the wilderness. But Jesus. He is the word. And he has to be recognized. As the incarnate word. The emphasis throughout John's gospel.

Is the identity of Jesus. Declaring who he is. And calling people to respond. Are they able to receive the word.

[ 9 : 35 ] The one who is coming. Are they part of this flock. Are they part of his people. Do they hear his voice.

And in connection to this. Of course too. We have the man who was born blind. In the previous chapter. And there he is. Left at the side of the road. To beg. To try and scrape together.

A daily existence. People passing him by. People ignoring him. People criticizing him. People mocking him. But when Jesus comes.

And he speaks into that man's life. He brings transformation. He changes that man's life. He brings sight to him. He brings hope.

He brings a true change. And in the next chapter. There was a man who was dead. For four days. And Jesus speaks.

[10:35] Into that man's grave. And that man rises. From the dead. And these are all spiritual metaphors. To speak to us.

Of the power of this gospel. Of the power of his. Of the savior. Of the power of his voice. They hear his voice.

And the blind sees. And the dead is raised. And the lost is found. This is the power of the voice. Of this shepherd. Who declared in chapter 9.

In verse 7. Go wash in that pool. And the man hears that voice. And he's heard many voices in his life. Many different messages.

Conflicting. Conflicting. And contradicting. All kinds of voices. All kinds of messages. All kinds of people saying all kinds of things to him.

[11:31] Telling him what he ought to do. Telling him what he ought not to do. Telling him what would make life better. but then the shepherd's voice comes.

And we have to ask ourselves, whose voice are we following? Who are we listening to? Who are we responding to?

He hears the voice that says, go and wash in that pool, and he went and he did it. And the blind man receives his sight, and the deaf hear.

And this great wonderful image of the gospel for us, how it changes and transforms people, but not everybody.

There are some who hear the voice of the shepherd, and we refer to that, of course, as the general call of the gospel. People who are sitting under this voice yet aren't saved.

[12:43] They've heard and heard. They've given a little listening, but it has always been general. It has always been external. It has never penetrated.

Their unbelief inhibits them. They are not still deaf, still blind. They don't really hear this voice. Some of them even think that they are religious, like the Pharisees. They think they're on their way to heaven. But the voice of the shepherd has never penetrated.

They have never let this voice into their heart. They have never let this message change them and transform them. They have never really followed this Savior, this shepherd.

Have you heard his voice? You know, really heard his voice in his transforming power to say, he is my shepherd.

[13:55] There is a hearing, and so secondly, there is a knowing. Sheep know. When you go out there amongst the crops, they know. They know who is familiar to them.

They know who is going to feed them. They know who is going to protect them. They know who is going to move them. Others they do not know. And this is what Jesus is saying here. In verse 5, a stranger they will not follow.

They do not know the voice of the stranger. And this has been emphasized to us in the previous chapter, in how that blind man, he is coming to terms with the voice of the shepherd.

And in verse 17, he says he is a prophet. Then when we get to the end of the chapter, chapter 9, he is asking, who are you? He needs to have more information.

He needs to have more insight. He needs to have more penetration into his heart. And then in verse 38, he comes to this point of settled conviction, where he says, Lord, I believe.

[15:01] Where the Lord has taken hold of him. He knows this is a shepherd. He is able to distinguish this voice. He has heard.

He has listened. And so, Jesus speaks in verse 16 in the same way, those who listen. And how this voice goes out and what it means to believe.

what it means to be able to see, what it means to be able to be found, what it means to be able to be alive.

This transformation, this change, here is the voice when it penetrates. What we call the effectual call in comparison to the general call, when it becomes powerful, when it becomes effective, when it brings change, when it enters into the heart of a person, when people come to know this is their shepherd, there is this relationship, where there is this voice shaping their life, changing their life, where they hear and see things they did not know before.

In one moment, a sound brings a change. Amazing grace. How sweet the sound.

[16:27] What is the sound of amazing grace? Is it not the voice of the shepherd that brings conviction and conversion?

When it brings a person to this place where they see and they know this truth, this Lord, where they seek this Savior, where they know this shepherd as their shepherd.

And the challenge, of course, is that many people don't listen, don't know, don't seek, don't follow, don't understand, don't respond.

They are sitting there under the general call of the gospel, still waiting. For what? Another voice? But this is the shepherd's voice. And you are unwilling to come. Unwilling to realize his power.

[17:27] Unwilling to open your heart to hear this voice. Jesus says in verse 6, there are those who, this is a figure of speech that he is using.

This is the picture of the shepherd speaking. Speaking powerfully. Calling people to know him. To really know him.

The danger here is that people are missing the main thing. That there are other things that are good. And other things that are commendable.

And other things that are right. But there is one main thing. And the main thing is, are you part of this flock? Is this your shepherd?

Are you hearing his voice? Have you responded to the main thing? The call of the gospel speaking into your heart. Bringing change and transformation.

[18:28] Those who do become part of the flock. They become children of God. They belong to him. They become his sheep. In verse 5. A stranger they do not follow.

It's him. He is their particular shepherd. They discern and know that it is him. This is through saving relationship and being part of this flock. I ask you again.

Are you hearing his voice? Are you part of his flock? Do you know and understand Jesus as the shepherd of your soul?

There is a hearing here for us to consider. There is also a knowing. But thirdly, as we know of sheep, there is a following.

the one who goes out to their sheep. They are leading their sheep. We know the sense of the vulnerability that sheep have.

[19:33] They need care. There is something rather helpless and dependent about them. They are notoriously stubborn.

They need protected from themselves. And sheep, they are not leaders. They are followers. But they do follow. There is an activity there. Not an inactivity. They don't stay unmoved. He speaks here in verse 3. The sheep hear his voice.

He calls them by the name. He leads them out. The sheep, in verse 4, they follow him for they know his voice. They come to this point as sheep where they follow the shepherd.

They leave everything else behind. Here they are in the ancient days in a communal sheepfold there. And the voice comes and the sheep follow and they leave all the other sheep behind to be part of this one flock.

[20:37] To go behind this one shepherd because they are hearing this voice. They are evidencing that they belong to him and that they believe this is a safe place following this shepherd.

This is the image, of course, of the Christian life and Christian commitment where our following Jesus is a following of the entirety of our lives where we must stay close to him.

We must listen to his teaching, his instruction. We need to follow him. We need to give ourselves to our spiritual walk. We need to go where he leads us.

And we must walk this way. An image, of course, of our separation from the world, our holiness, our recognition that there is no one else we follow but him.

He is ours. The Lord is my shepherd. shepherd. And we are part of his flock.

[21:50] The image here that Jesus is using is one that is relational. There is a relationship between the sheep and the shepherd.

And he speaks of this in terms of his relationship with his people. How he speaks to them. How he leads them. How he cares for them. How he feeds them and nurtures them. How he keeps them safe.

and protects them. It's an image of sacrifice. The shepherd, Jesus says, lays down his life for them. Wonder of his love. His care. His work. John's gospel is leading us to this point.

Where he is speaking here of his laying down his life. Where he is chosen in the next chapter that he will have the victory over the grave. Speaking to us of this shepherd who loves us so greatly. [ 22 : 51 ] Who will save us by his own death. There is relationship here. There is sacrifice. There is here too a sense of discrimination, isn't there?

We capture here. We capture here the image of the sheep knowing this voice as the fact that the believer discerns the voice of Jesus.

Is able to comprehend where to get truth from. But this voice discriminates between people. The shepherd comes back and he will call all people to himself.

And his voice will divide sheep and goats between the right and the left. This is our opportunity to respond to the voice of the shepherd.

To really know what it is to be part of this flock. to be safe. To be following him.

[ 23 : 59 ] And we're asking this question today. Do you hear his voice? Do you follow this shepherd?

Because if you don't well whose voice are you following? and where are you going? Where are you going?

In verse 3 the sheep hear his voice. Verse 4 the sheep follow him.

Amen. May the Lord bless our thoughts. Let's pray together. Gracious and most holy God we give thanks to you for your word and for the great wonder of our saviour our shepherd who laid down his life for his own.

We pray that every one of us would hear that deep and penetrating voice into our own heart and soul and bringing salvation and hope to us.

[ 25 : 10 ] Bless us then we pray and forgive us our sins in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Let's turn then to sing together in page 33 Psalm 28 verses 6 to 9 verses 6 to 9 of Psalm 28 on page 33.

Praise the Lord for he has heard the plea for mercy which I made. He is my strength he is my shield I trust in him who sends me aid.

In verse 9 Lord save your people your own flock be pleased your heritage to bless be their good shepherd carry them forever in your faithfulness.

Let's sing verses 6 to 9 on page 33 of Psalm 28. Praise to the Lord for he has heard a plea for mercy which I made he is my strength he is my shield I trust in him who sends me aid my heart uplifted lives for joy my thanks to him

I gladly sing the Lord God is his people's land a saving fortress for the king Lord save your people your own flock be pleased your heritage heritage to bless be their good shepherd shepherd carry them forever in your faithfulness now may the grace of the Lord

[ 28 : 05 ] Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all Amen as with you all as with you as