

John 10:1-30

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Sermon audio and text available at [www.stphils.org.au](http://www.stphils.org.au)

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- **Who watches you? (annoying child)**

When we were first married, we lived in Toongabbie, just near Blacktown. And we lived in a house at the back of all these other houses. And there was this young kid, about 5 years old, whose back yard looked into our front yard. And he had a tree house so he could see straight into our yard. His parents didn't spend much time with him. So he was ALWAYS out there.

And every time we came out of the house, he'd call out "Hello! What are you doing?" And we'd have to explain what we were doing.

And every time we came home, he'd call out "Hello! What are you doing?" And we'd have to explain what we were doing.

So every time we went out, or came in, he was there. "What are you doing!?"

Every time. Every day.

He was like a cute personal stalker.

And I have to say, I got a little sick and tired of having to explain myself to this 5 year old security system. "I'm taking out the garbage, I'm taking in the groceries, I'm going to work, I'm coming home from work."

One day we moved. And it was such a relief. That final time walking out of the house we hear "What are you doing?" and we replied "We're moving house!"

Now, it was annoying at times, but it was also a little nice that this child was interested in what we were doing. Every minute of every day.

Imagine what it's like to have someone follow your every move. Someone constantly watching what you're doing.

Well, you could say that Jesus is a bit like that. He's a stalker. He's always there. He's there when we're coming in and when we're going out.

But he's doing it for a different reason.

## **Jesus the Shepherd**

Jesus says that we are like sheep and he is our shepherd.

- When we hear that, a lot of people think of Jesus like the **shepherd** in this picture. (picture 1) A cuddly man who picks up his little lambs in his arms. A quiet, timid Jesus who cares about us and watches everything we're doing. And Jesus **is** a bit like that.

- But he's also like this **shepherd**. (picture 2)

He doesn't just cuddle the lamb. He also looks after the big old sheep who get injured or lost. He's tough. And strong. And he not only watches us. He protects us. Because sheep are always getting lost and always getting into trouble. Sheep are always at risk of attack from animals like wolves because of three things:

**They don't have many defenses, they can't run very fast, and they taste yummy!**

A good shepherd not only watches the sheep. He protects the sheep. Verse 4:

- *"4When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice."*

Jesus goes ahead of his sheep to face the dangers. He takes them out in the daytime to the fields to eat, and he brings them in at night for safety. He watches us go out and come in, to keep us safe.

But he also knows that there are wolves – people who want to hurt us and attack us. And a shepherd's job is to be ready for the dangers that the sheep don't even see.

### **Jesus the gate.**

So in verse 9, Jesus also calls himself "the gate":

- *"9I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be **saved**. They will come in and go out, and find pasture."*

Back in those days, a shepherd would often build a pen for his sheep, a fence, with a gap in one wall. That was the gate – the one place for the sheep to go in and out. And that's where the shepherd would sleep at night – to stop anything else coming in, like wolves. And that's where he'd stand in the daytime, personally watching each sheep as they went in and out. There was one gate. And the shepherd literally WAS that gate. A human security gate. The gap in the fence line was where the shepherd **himself** would stand.

**III** – I once went on a hike when I was about 15. And we arrived at the campsite at night. It was really dark. We set up camp and went to sleep. We were very tired. When we woke up we got a surprise. We stepped outside the tent in the morning and realized that we had camped on the edge of a very steep cliff, with a 100 metre drop to the water below. We slept very peacefully, but we shouldn't have! We were in danger.

We often think we're OK in life, that we don't need someone looking over us all the time. That we don't need help or protection. But there are dangers only God can see and Jesus is the shepherd who goes in front of us. He's not just cuddly and friendly. He's strong and he protects us.

### **Jesus the Good Shepherd**

But Jesus is no normal shepherd. He calls himself the **good** shepherd. Verse 11:

- *“I am the **good** shepherd. The good shepherd **lays down his life** for the sheep.”*

Shepherds often had watchmen, or hired hands, who would sleep at the gate of the sheep pen to keep an eye on the sheep if the shepherd was away. But if danger comes, they run away! They’re not risking their lives for the sheep, because these are not THEIR sheep.

But Jesus doesn’t leave us with a hired hand. He is there himself. He is the gate. But he is also the GOOD shepherd because, more important than anything, he lays down his life for the sheep.

The biggest wolf we face in life, the biggest danger we all have to face, is death. Death is the one danger we CANNOT deal with ourselves EVER. But look at what Jesus does – verse 17:

- *“I lay down my life – only to take it up again.”*

What does that mean? It means that Jesus doesn’t just offer to **die** for his sheep. He offers to die and then **rise again**. He faces death for us, then rises from the dead and offers us eternal life with him. In verse 28 he says:

- *“I give them eternal life.”*

Jesus is saying: “I am the **one** who can look after you. I am the **one** who can give you eternal life. I am the gate, the **only** gate. I am the **one** who brings you out to pasture and brings you in to rest. I am the **one** who leads you and protects you.”

We don’t know what dangers are around us. We need a shepherd who not only knows the dangers, but a shepherd who can **deal** with those dangers.

Other people can’t protect us from death. Other people don’t know the dangers around the corner. Because they are sheep as well. It doesn’t matter if you are one sheep on your own, or two sheep together, or 100 sheep – sheep can’t protect themselves from wolves.

- **My high school had a farm. And on that farm we had some sheep... (sheep)**

One day we arrived at school and found out that the night before, a local pack of wild dogs had broken into the farm. And they had **destroyed** the sheep. They killed most of them. Others had eyes and ears ripped off. Legs mauled. It was horrifying. There were about 50 sheep but only about 9 or 10 dogs. There’s no protection for sheep – except if they have a shepherd.

We cannot protect ourselves from the things this life will throw at us. Whether it’s the small things like sickness or exams or financial security. Or the big things like death.

Even the most trustworthy person in your life can't protect you from what they can't see.

As a Father, I would lay down my life for my children. But even I can't see all the dangers they will face. I can't always be there to give my life for them. I can't always see what lies ahead for them. Even with my best intentions, I'm also a sheep.

What Jesus is telling us is that we are all sheep. We need a shepherd. Not just some cuddly version of Jesus who is our best mate and picks us up and holds us when we're sad. We need a strong shepherd. Someone who can defend us against the wolves when they attack. Someone who doesn't just have power over the day-to-day dangers we face. But someone who goes in front of us.

Sometimes we just don't realize that we're camped on the edge of a cliff and in danger, but Jesus **does** see those dangers.

In verse 28, Jesus says:

- *"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."*

This is the strength of Jesus. There is no one who is stronger than him. No one can snatch us out of his strong hands.

So what version of Jesus do you follow? Do you follow a comfortable cuddly version of Jesus who knows your name, who watches you night and day, who loves you and cares for you? That's all good. But he has another side. He is the one who goes into battle for you. He fights off the wolves. He faces DEATH for you. And he rose to life so he could offer you eternal life with him. And no one can snatch you out of his hands.

If Jesus is not your shepherd, he wants to be.

Let me pray...