

March 27 Notes

Jesus Is The Good Shepard | Jesus Is \_\_\_\_\_

Ryan Bramlett | John 10:11-18



---

Traders Point, how are we doing?

Hey, so good to be with you today. And even in this season that we're in, this is a good season. I don't know if this is a real thing, but this is Easter season. It's bigger than a weekend, this is a season that we are leading into.

Alright, we're not done. I'm going to build up to it.

But Easter is a really big deal to us, in our faith. This is the weekend that we celebrate the crux of our faith. People witnessed a man live His life, they witnessed a man being murdered on a cross, and then thrown into a grave, and then three days later, they saw Him rise. That event shaped and changed the world. That event is why we are here two thousand years later. So every year we remember that day and we throw a party.

It's also a big deal because there are some people who only come to church on Easter. It's more of a traditional thing. There is not really a relationship with Jesus, but they come on Easter. And the other thing is that there are a lot of people who have never come before, but they will come for the first time on a holiday, just to check things out.

So it's a really big deal and we're all in this together, right? One team. One dream. I love things that rhyme. That's all of us. And it's going to take all of us on that weekend to remove all of the unnecessary barriers so people can come and hear the truth about who Jesus is, all that He has done, and what He wants for them.

So we just want to put that out there to you. Maybe if you've been back for a little bit now, but you haven't jumped back into serving and you're wondering when your time is, lucky for you I found your time. It's right now.

Or maybe you've been coming, checking us out for a few months and you're like, "I want to get involved in serving, I just don't know when, I don't know how." Today is the day. You can text the word serve to 87221. We will reach out and give you all of the things that you need to know to help you find a spot here on one of our teams for Easter weekend.

One more time. Are you guys excited for Easter? At all of the campuses, make some noise. I can't wait to see what God will do on that day, especially all that He's been doing in this series leading up to Easter... Jesus Is \_\_\_\_\_.

Is there anybody here today who was here last weekend and got to experience what happened then? Okay, only a few of you. You'd be clapping louder than that if you were here, I'm telling

you. Last week we heard that Jesus is Healer. And at the end of the service, we just said, "Hey, God is still in the business of healing people. And then at all of our campuses the aisles were flooded with people coming forward to ask for healing.

I want to tell you the miraculous happened. People walked in here with limps, whether that was physically or mentally. And they walked away healed. We saw that happen last weekend.

There is this one story that really hit my heart. There was one couple who came forward. They were a little bit older. They have adult kids. And one of their daughters, they hadn't been able to speak to for months. There was kind of a separation there. They didn't know where she was or how she was doing or anything.

So their very vulnerable prayer was, "God, could we just hear from our daughter? Could we just hear her voice to know that she's okay?" They prayed that prayer right up here at the front of the stage. By the time they got to the doors, before they left this building, their daughter called!

And I just want you to know that Jesus is Healer. Every single week you can respond and ask for healing no matter how big, no matter how small it is. That's why we have people at all of our campuses after service lined up here by the stage. They're not changing the light bulbs or anything. They are really here to pray with you for whatever that is.

But this series Jesus Is \_\_\_\_\_, I think it is really going to shape our church because what we're doing is just opening God's Word and saying, "Jesus, who do You say that You are? I want to know the real Jesus."

Because from the beginning, ever since Jesus lived, died, and resurrected and His church began, there were different versions of Jesus that began to pop up. And the writers in the New Testament would even reach out, "I can't believe that you are already believing this different gospel, a different version of Jesus."

Here's why that's a big deal. Left alone, we begin to make God small, because it makes us feel safe. And as our time goes, recognizing who God is, a little flip happens where we go from saying, "We're made in God's image," to it's more like God is made in our image. "And we're really close. I mean, the things that I like are the things that He likes, and the things that He hates are the same things that I hate."

And the longer we look out at the world and begin to believe that, that there's nothing more that we can learn from God, that there's nothing more to know, or there's nothing more that He wants to do in our lives, we're lying to ourselves.

Hear me. We are a little bit like God, but God is nothing like us. It reminds me of this guy, anybody know this guy [Brian Scalabrine]? I remember him because there are not too many white, redheaded guys in the NBA. And he hung around for a very long time, like for a decade he played in the NBA.

But people used to talk so much trash to him. Not in the NBA, people watching from home. People responding on social media like, "This guy is horrible. I could beat this guy. I'm better than him."

And he began to respond to them, which is hilarious. And he had this line, which I think is amazing. He said, "I'm closer to LeBron than you are to me." And he's admitting that he's a way off from LeBron, but he's saying, even with that, there is a giant difference between me and you.

And then he went out to all of these guys who called him out and he played them one on one and destroyed them. They were not like him. And they were definitely not like LeBron.

And we are not like God. He is perfect. He is powerful. He is all-knowing. He will not let us make Him small. If you read the Scriptures, you see over and over again, He is about His glory. And He is a big God. He is a powerful God. This is a God who speaks universes into creation. This is the God who raises the dead to life. This is the God who moves heaven and hell. This is an all-powerful God. He's not safe and He's not small.

It makes me think of C. S. Lewis' *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Maybe you've heard of those books or read them. If you're an adult and you haven't, I would just encourage you. I missed out on them when I was younger but just read them a few years ago. They still work.

It's an incredible story and in this story there is a lion that represents Jesus. And early in this series these kids are about to meet this lion and as you could imagine, they are a little bit nervous. And they are like, "Hey, I'm a little nervous about meeting this lion. Is he safe?" And Mr. Beaver, the one who is talking to them almost falls out of his chair and is like, "What do you mean, is he safe?" Look at what he says, "Safe? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good."

Our God is not small, He is not safe, but He is good. And that's what we're going to be looking at today. That is one of the ways that God describes Himself.

If you have a Bible you can go ahead and flip to John, chapter 10. We're going to be starting in verse 11. And if you're opening up there, and your workbooks there, you see the title Jesus Is and here's what the title is for today:

## JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Jesus is the Good Shepherd and what we're going to do is we're just going to read through all of these ways that God says, "This is who I am, not who you were made to believe that I am, not what was downloaded to you, but this is who I truly am. I am the Good Shepherd."

So let's take a look at what that means. And we don't get far before we have to stop and explain, but Jesus steps up onto the scene and He says:

“I am the good shepherd.” John 10:11 (NLT)

I am the Good Shepherd. And this is more than Him saying, “I am the Good Shepherd,” these first two words here say everything about what Jesus is saying. He was being very clear with this statement when He said, “I am.”

You see, I Am is the way that God described Himself. Back in the book of Exodus, there is this guy named Moses and he’s out walking through, and he notices this bush that catches on fire but it’s not burning up. So that intrigues him a little bit. And he steps over and he begins to have this conversation with the living God. And this God tells him, this one man, “Hey, I’m about to send you to Egypt to rescue My people. I’m going to send you, just you, to take over the biggest empire in the world.”

And Moses, he asked a lot of questions, got some follow up. And then at the end he says, “Okay, I’ll go. I’ll do it. Who do I tell them sent me?” And God has one of the dopest lines in all of the Bible. He says, “Tell them I Am sent you.” I Am. Okay. Alright. I’ll do that. I’ll go tell them.

But what He was saying is, “I Am everything. You can’t define me by a word or a name. I’m not a small, little god that Egypt believes in. I Am.” “So who am I?”

“Are you going to be the one who saves Israel from Egypt?”

“I Am.”

“Are you going to be the one who sends the 10 plagues.”

“I Am.”

“Are you going to be the one who splits the water so that the people can walk through it on dry land?”

“I Am.”

God was saying, “Everything that you are going to need Me to be, I Am. Every area that you’re deficient in, I am not.” This is the way God was known, as the Great I Am. And Jesus steps up and says, “I am the Good Shepherd.”

Look at what He says next. He says:

“The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don’t belong to him, and he isn’t their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. The hired hand runs away because he’s working only for the money and doesn’t really care about the sheep.

“I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.” John 10:11-16 (NLT)

This is what Jesus says. Jesus says, “I am the Good Shepherd.” So we have to start with this idea. What is a shepherd? Any shepherds in the room today? No shepherds made it to career days at your school either?

A shepherd... this idea of sheep and a shepherd is a theme that pretty much runs the whole course of the Bible. We see over and over again that God would raise up shepherds over Israel and He would appoint them, and He would say, “I want you to look over My people. You care for them. You take care of them.” But over and over again they would fall short.

So when they would have heard Jesus say, “I am the Good Shepherd,” they would have first heard, “I am,” and they would have known that this guy is saying that He is God.

And then as He began to talk about the Good Shepherd, they would have been reminded of God’s words in the book of Ezekiel. This is straight from God as well when God looked at this situation of the sheep and the shepherd, look at what He said back then. It says:

“Then this message came to me from the Lord: ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds,’ and who are the shepherds? They are “the leaders of Israel. Give them this message from the Sovereign Lord: What sorrow awaits you shepherds who feed yourselves instead of your flocks.

“Shouldn’t shepherds feed their sheep? You drink the milk, wear the wool, and butcher the best animals, but you let your flocks starve. You have not taken care of the weak. You have not tended the sick or bound up the injured. You have not gone looking for those who have wandered away and are lost.”

There’s this problem, “Instead, you have ruled them with harshness and cruelty. So my sheep have been scattered without a shepherd, and they are easy prey for any wild animal.” Ezekiel 34:1-5 (NLT)

And then He says one more thing in verse 11, I believe. He says:

“For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search and find my sheep. I will be like a shepherd looking for his scattered flock. I will find my sheep and rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on that dark and cloudy day.” Ezekiel 34:11-12 (NLT)

This is Jesus stepping up and saying, “I am the good shepherd. I’m the One who is stepping in because all of the other shepherds have fallen short. And I will not neglect My people. I will not

abuse My people. I will not take advantage of My people. I will be the Good Shepherd, the One who God had always called on. I am here to fulfill that role.”

Church, this is who Jesus is. And just to be clear because I know we don't like... I get what you're thinking. It's true. Let's just break it down.

Jesus = The Good Shepherd

And there's only one other character in the story, the sheep. That's me and you.

Sheep = Us

And I know that that's maybe not your favorite way to be described, but it is one of the ways that God describes us. It's not the only way. Maybe you're more familiar with His masterpiece or a living temple for the Spirit of God or as royalty, as family, as sons and daughters of God. All of those are true. All of those help us to understand how we are supposed to come to God and what this relationship looks like. And one of those is that He is the Shepherd, and we are the sheep.

Now, I don't want to spend too much time talking about sheep about how dumb they are and all of those other things. Mainly, I don't really know any sheep on a personal basis. I don't call on them like that. But the other thing is, it's not a story of the bad sheep, it's a metaphor of a good shepherd. But there is one line when I started to look at what sheep are and why they are the way that they are, this is something that came out. It says:

Sheep have been bred to serve the needs of humans.

It sounds like this became the biggest problem of the leaders of God's people back then and still today. The leaders, instead of using their platform and using their voice to make sure that everyone was taken care of, instead of wielding their power in that way, they began to take advantage of the weak, they began to make them believe a certain thing about themselves to make them fit into the system so that they could take advantage of them.

And as I was reading that I just wondered, does anybody feel like that? As you go through your life, it just feels like, "I've been bred to serve the needs of humans. I just kind of fit into the system. People just constantly push me down and take and take and take but it doesn't seem like anyone really cares about me."

I think this is why there is such a problem right now. When we look at this, the good shepherd—the shepherds were the people who would oversee a community or a city or a country. And this is why we have such a problem with authority right now because we wonder who we can really trust. It seems like the people who take office, the people who are appointed as leaders, you just give them enough time and they seem to be exposed as frauds. They seem to be giving

one message over here, but you just give it time and it seems like, “Do I even know this person over here?”

And you see there are cultural shepherds who have made it their way to suppress and to keep people down, to make you believe that you are small, that you are inadequate, and the best thing about your life is that you get to report to them. And they take your wool—this metaphor is going to break down quickly—they take your milk. You just feel like they take and they take and they take. And you just wonder, “Am I more than that?”

Can I just say that you are? You are made for more than just to serve the needs of the people above you. You were created in the image of God. You were created and made for a relationship with Him. And that is so much bigger than the little lives that we try to live a lot of the time.

And the reason these leaders, the reason we trust them, the reason we follow them is because we have these longings in our hearts, these aches, and when someone steps up on a platform and says, “Hey, I can settle that. I can solve that. If you trust me I will take it away.” But I think we’ve all lived long enough to realize that they never follow through. We’re always left wanting.

What Jesus is doing here is He is stepping up on the scene and He’s saying, “I could not be more different than all of those people. I am the Good Shepherd, the good leader, the One who won’t take advantage and the One who truly can speak to your deepest needs. I am the Good Shepherd.”

You know, there is a Psalm that references the good shepherd. It’s Psalm 23. And it’s one that is read probably more so than any other. It’s read at funerals; it’s read at times when you are struggling, it’s very hopeful.

And I learned about Psalm 23 probably the same way that you did, from this guy [Coolio]. You thought I was going to say Veggie Tales? No, no, no. Walk through the valley of the shadow of death, take a look at my life. There’s nothing left.

But here’s the line that I think speaks directly to people’s souls. It’s why they want to hear it when they lose the people that they love the most. And it’s this truth from God:

The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need.

I might have lost a bunch. This may look different than I thought, but here’s what I do know. The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want. He provides everything for me—everything.

This is who God is. This is truly who God is.

And what we’re going to do now is we’re going to go back to John 10. We’re going to go back to John 10 and really what Jesus does here in verses 11 through 18 is He compares and

contrasts who He is, the Good Shepherd, to the hired hand—they are in complete opposition to one another.

There are kind of three big ways that Jesus separates them. Here's the difference between Me and those other leaders. Here's why you can trust Me and not them. He said, "The hired hand is known by a few things. He:

RUNS FOR HIS LIFE TO PROTECT HIMSELF

IS MOTIVATED BY MONEY

KNOWS THE SHEEP BY WHAT THEY CAN PRODUCE

Now I just want you to put the filter on the leaders in your life or corrupt leaders or people who have fallen short. I want you to think about this. Does that seem to describe them? That they are just in it for themselves. When things get hard, they are running, and they are leaving you behind.

They are motivated by money. Everything was going well until it wasn't and then your motivations get seen and they're really just in it for what they can get.

And they know the sheep by what they can produce, there might not be a worse way to be known and to accept than that your identity is based upon what you can produce or what you can do and to be known by that and only by that. That will take life from you.

And Jesus says, "No. no. I'm not like that. I'm the Good Shepherd. He:

SACRIFICES HIS LIFE TO PROTECT THE SHEEP

IS MOTIVATED BY LOVE

KNOWS THE SHEEP BY NAME

He could not be more different from the leaders we've been exposed to. And He wants to be your leader. He wants to be the One you follow. And He gives us all of these reasons why we can trust Him. So I just want to walk through each one, one by one, starting up there at the top. This is the difference between the Good Shepherd and the hired hand.

The Good Shepherd sacrifices His life for the sheep. A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him, and he isn't their shepherd. He says he is there until things get tough and then once it hits he is gone, because he's a hired hand.

Anybody here ever been a hired hand? Yeah, somebody. Some of you own your business now. You own your business now and you remember what it was like to not have ownership in your job. And being an owner isn't the only way to have ownership of your job, but when you're a hired hand you approach work very, very differently.

I've been a hired hand, alright? Speaking from experience here. Hired hand, you do just the bare minimum to keep everybody else off of your back. You show up. You clock in right on time. You leave right on time. You know your job description better than HR. And not because you're really psyched about your job. It's so that when anybody tries to bring you something that is not within your scope, "I wish I could help you. Not my job. Not my job."

I was a hired hand. I worked at Burger King for years. And one day I went in, I was 16 years old, and I was being released from being a hired hand. I was being fired, alright? There was a situation that had happened that weekend. And here's the situation. They put me on the schedule, and I did not come. In all fairness, I told them weeks before, "I'm not going to be there." But they told me, "These are requests, we do not have to honor them." I didn't see it the same way. I told you what I was going to do. That was all I could do.

So, I go in on Monday after the weekend and I clock in. And Miss Tina comes up to me and she says, "Hey, I just want to let you know you're fired." I said, "Oh, thank you, Miss Tina." Then she said this, "But, we're pretty short-staffed tonight. If you want, you can stay and finish out your shift."

Now, I wish I could tell you that my 16-year-old self said, "Miss Tina, I don't know what you've heard about me, but I'm not a hired hand, okay? I am here to serve these people. These families need delicious and nutritious meals on their way home tonight. I'm not leaving until everybody gets served." No, I threw my hat off. I was out of there.

And here's just an extra tip. It's not going to be, you know, part of the sermon. But leadership management 101, if you're going to fire someone, do it at the end of their shift. If you're wondering, "Do I do it at the beginning or the end?" Do it at the end, just on your way out, "Be the last one, have a good night."

This was the idea. Hired hands back then they would take the sheep and they would take them out and make sure they got fed and everything, but if danger came, they would run. They were not staying to ask questions. And it could be anything: wild animals, lions, thieves, robbers. The moment there was a little bit of a situation, they were gone.

Jesus says, "I could not be more different. I'm not a hired hand. I own the sheep. I created the sheep. The sheep are Mine. The sheep are like family to Me. So here's the difference. When trouble comes, I don't care what it is, no matter what it looks like, I'm standing right here, and I will break the mouth of whatever tries to get My sheep.

This is the God that we serve. He is about protecting His sheep. Here's what He says. He says, "The Good Shepherd sacrifices His life for the sheep." He sacrifices His life for the sheep.

And this is so much more than just words. The amazing spot in history that we get to live in is that it's after the death and resurrection of Jesus. We know that He said it and we know that He actually laid down His life, He did it.

This is so different than your friend, you know, that you're hanging out with, and they have one, two, three too many drinks and they are like, "Hey, look at me. I would die for you." "Thank you? I don't need you to die for me, just don't throw up on me. That would be great."

But what Jesus is saying is, "I promise you, no matter what it comes down to, even if comes down to the most brutal death, the most humiliating death, if that's what God calls Me to, I will do it to protect My sheep." And that's exactly what Jesus did. He protects you. That's who this Good Shepherd is.

And then here's the next one. The next one is all about the motivation. It's not just what He does, it's why He does what He does. It says:

"And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep." John 10:12-23 (NLT)

He's only in it for the money. So if it comes down to it, he's booking it out of there because there is no amount of money that is worth it.

And this is what you would see over and over again. Whenever the leaders of Israel would get into this spot, they would be tempted by greed and money, and they would begin to push their people to put them in a worse situation so that they could be placed in a better situation.

Here's why motivation matters. A lot of people can stand up when times are going well and say, "Hey, this is what I'm about. Look at me, this is what I'm doing." But as we know, we've seen, when pressure comes, pressure busts pipes. People get into these leadership positions and then the storm hits and they become very different people, "You're talking a lot differently than you were earlier. What happened?" The pressure began to reveal what was really there.

And Jesus says, "No, no. You can be sure of My motivation. I'm not a hired hand. I'm not in it for the money." And once again, it was not just words, it was tested.

When Jesus began His ministry, the devil came before Him and offered Him everything. It wasn't just a little bit. It was the most extreme version of everything that we could be offered in our lives to make us turn from God and from people. And look at Jesus' response. It says:

“Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ‘I will give it all to you,’ he said, ‘if you will kneel down and worship me.’”

Jesus said:

“‘Get out of here, Satan,’ Jesus told him. ‘For the Scriptures say, “You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.”’” Matthew 4:8-10 (NLT)

Here’s why that’s a big deal. If money is your motivation it will allow you to take advantage of people as long as you get what is on the side of it. That’s what a value system does. It protects our decisions to get what we deem most important.

With love, though, if love is your motivation you will not do anything unless it’s what is best for the other person. And Jesus says, “Every move that I make is because I love you.” God didn’t say that He wanted so much out of the world, so He could take advantage of the world, so He could exploit or make a whole bunch of money out of the world—that’s why He came. No it says, “For God so loved the world.” See:

The Good Shepherd is motivated by love. And He’s willing to stand and fight, and He’ll sacrifice it all. His motivation is love so you can always trust Him.

Here’s the final one. He says:

“‘I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep.’” John 10:14-15 (NLT)

Now, this line made a lot more sense in the ancient Near East. The sheep knew the voice of their shepherd. You see, a lot of times multiple families would come together under one fold, so you would all keep your sheep in the same place. And then the family shepherd would come to the door, and they would open it and when he called for the sheep, only his sheep moved. If they didn’t recognize the voice of the one who was calling, they didn’t move.

And just like that, God is saying, “That’s what it is like with my people. They are not fearful of My voice. It’s not that they don’t know My voice, when they hear My voice they move.”

And here’s a truth that, I believe, alone, just by itself, if it’s the only thing that you hear today it’s enough to completely change your life. Here it is:

God knows your name and God knows your voice.

Think about that. All-powerful, all-knowing, holding everything in His hands God knows your name, knows your voice. In a world where it can feel so easy to just fall into a sea of faces

wondering, “Does even my neighbor know my voice? Does even my neighbor know my name? Does my manager, does my manager’s manager know who I am? Am I just another number?”

God knows your name. God knows your voice.

A good shepherd not only knew how many sheep he had, he knew them by name. It wasn’t just that one was missing, Ryan was missing. And that is the same truth about you. God knows your name. God knows your voice. Here’s the question though:

Do you know His?

Do you know His name? Do you know His voice?

There are so many voices out there that we can easily begin to follow one of them and we will run with it all the way and maybe even faithfully follow it. But what if we’re following the wrong voice? What if we’re going in a direction that is completely opposite of where the Good Shepherd is taking us? Well, we’ll never know unless we know His voice.

Here's why:

Shepherds led their sheep; they did not drive them.

Maybe the picture you see of someone taking care of sheep (if you even have that picture, I don’t) but maybe you see a sheep dog running and biting on their heels—that was not them. It was a shepherd standing in front, calling his sheep by name and they followed his voice.

And just like last week we made this big—it was an epiphany for a lot of people—this big idea that Jesus didn’t just heal back then, but Jesus heals right now. I think another big one for today is going to be that God didn’t just speak then, God speaks now.

It’s fascinating to me the number of people who believe in God and even believe that He wants a relationship with them, but once you push it, “I don’t know that God really speaks today, that seems like a little bit out there.”

Think about how cruel that would be, this whole model of having a relationship with God if He never spoke. I love the way Dallas Willard says it. He said, “If God doesn’t speak today, then the greatest disservice we could ever do to people is to tell them that they could have a personal relationship with God.”

I just want you to hear that. God is speaking. Always. God speaks beautiful things into existence. He always has. Do you hear the beautiful things that He’s saying? Do you know the things that He is trying to create in your life? That God wants you to hear from Him. God wants you to follow Him. He’s not being silent.

I know some of you, maybe you begin to believe, “Maybe God speaks to them,” or “Maybe God speaks to that group of people, but I’ve never had that moment.”

I believe that God still speaks. And if you believe in Jesus it says that just as Jesus and the Father are one, you and He are one as well. So this is a direct line here. So it’s not that God’s not speaking, it’s that we’re not hearing Him. So why are we not hearing Him?

Could it be that we live in a very noisy world? And every day we step into the noise, into the shouting. And maybe all of those voices are drowning out the voice of God in our lives. There are voices out there. There are voices in our heads, narratives that play over and over again that either give life or steal, encourage or discourage. They are there to tell us we can do things or make us believe that we could never do those things.

I just want to ask you, when you go throughout your day, when you go to school, when you go to work, when you go home, whose voice is in your head and what’s that message? Some voices are there, and they are not bad, you’ve just heard them so often you can’t get rid them.

For me, I can’t shoot a basketball without hearing my mom yell, “Good shot, get back on defense.” I can be shooting around by myself in the gym and I’m still like, “Okay, I’ve got to get back on defense.”

There are voices in your head right now. What are they saying? I wish that it would just be God’s voice over you all of the time but I have a feeling that there are other messages, messages that you’re not enough, messages that you will never be, messages that you don’t fit in, that you’re not smart enough, messages that you are ugly, messages that you are broken—the problem with those voices is that we begin to believe them.

This is why it so important to know God as the Good Shepherd because He calls His sheep by name, and He leads them. And when His voice is leading you you’re going to have a very different message in your mind. It is one that forgets all of the nonsense, removes the lies, telling you that you are a son, you are a daughter of God, you have the Spirit of God inside you. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the grave is the same One who lives in you.

There might be a million people who don’t know your name or pretend like you don’t exist or look past you, but there is a God who has His eyes set upon you and will not look away. He will never forsake you. He will never abandon you.

How do we hear God’s voice? I just want to give us a few things that we can do this week to hear God’s voice, to take back the narrative and to begin to follow His path as the Good Shepherd leads us. Here’s just a few things:

Seek out solitude. You will not stumble into solitude.

I mean it's not an accident. I love when people were coming up to me about my hair in the lobby, they were like, "Oh, what happened?" Like I fell into a barber shop and it's like, "Ah, I've got you."

You won't stumble into solitude. Solitude has to be formed, it has to be created, we have to make a decision that before we go into the noise we're going to start in silence. That's what solitude is.

And a lot of times you've got to get up really early to do that. I know. I have so many kids at home, and they keep getting up earlier and earlier. You've got to beat them. Don't let them beat you.

So you get up early and before anyone else gets to say who you are, you get a chance to hear who you are from God. Your value is not determined by who other people say that you are. Your value was validated on the cross. You are worth dying for. There is a Good Shepherd who knows your name, knows your voice, has a plan for your life, a Good Shepherd who calls you His own. If you can start your day with that, it is amazing the difference in how you perceive everything else that comes next. That's the first one, solitude.

The second one:

Read God's Word alone and with other people.

God speaks through His Word. What a gift. Pages and pages of who He is, all that He has done, and the life that He has carved out for us, what He wants for us. And if you can sit there in solitude and just bask in that, it doesn't even have to be multiple—just a page. Just sitting underneath Him and being overwhelmed by who God is. He will speak to you.

And then read it with other people. It's amazing to me when I get into a group and we all sit down and we all study the same chapter all week. And I have my notes right there and then somebody goes before me and they start talking and I am like, "How did you get that from here?" And sometimes that's a really bad thing. But other times it's amazing how God uses them in that moment to speak some truth into me to show me that God speaks through His Word, and He speaks through other people too. But we have to read His Word, daily.

The other one:

Talk to God and leave space to listen.

So many of us have quick prayers when we ask and we ask and we ask. And I'm telling you, ask away. Your prayers are probably too small if anything. Go bigger. Get bolder. That's not the problem. But I also know that a lot of our prayers end with: Amen.

“God, what about this? What about this? Would you do this? Amen.” And then we’re off to the next thing. Leave a little bit of time to hear from God. Have faith to believe that the God who heals is also the God who hears, who wants to know. And then believe that that same God will also speak. That the Spirit within you, that’s what He is doing. He is working in your life to make things known to you that you could not possibly know alone.

Then here’s the final one:

Check the thoughts in your mind against the words of God’s heart.

Some of you are like, “That sounds like a lot of work. I have so many thoughts.” But if the thoughts in your mind shape the life that you live, then I would approach every single one of them very delicately but very seriously.

What is going through your mind right now that you know is not of God? Or maybe you don’t know that it’s not of God. The only thing that we can do is grab each one of those one by one. The Bible says, “Take them captive, arrest them, bring them out into the light, bring them in front of God and say, ‘This is what my mind is saying. Is this true?’”

And then we take God’s Word, His heart and we lay it on top of them and sometimes they are true. They are a conviction. But other times, a lot of times they are bold-faced lies from the pit of hell meant to keep you at a distance from God, meant to be so loud that you can’t hear the sweet voice of the Shepherd. So, yes, it is a daily thing, one that I can tell you that I’ve still not come to the end of.

I have so many voices in my head that tell me who I am not. Some of you see me over here on the side of the stage before I go up and there’s a cross over here on the wall and I just grab the bottom of it and I just pray that God would remove any fear, any anxiety, any worry, any doubt, any lies from my mind so that I could just speak His truth and so that I would have the confidence to do that.

People meet me in the lobby. They are like, “You don’t seem like the kind of person who would be on stage.” I’m not. I’m the person who is terrified and afraid and worried and all-consumed with who I’m not. But in moments, in miracles every single time, God shows up and parts them, removes them, separates them, arrests them, and convicts them and then places His thoughts on me.

And then I get to come up here and preach and share with you all that He’s done and all that He continues to do. And then I go over here, and I almost throw up. But this is where God has me. The Good Shepherd.

And I know that there are some of you here today, you’re on the fringe and you’re wondering, “I don’t know if I’m one of these sheep. I don’t know if this is my Shepherd. I don’t know if He

would want me in His flock if I'm being honest." That is a lie. How do I know it's a lie? Because of God's Word. Look at what it says. Jesus said:

"I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd." John 10:16 (NLT)

How many of you have heard a version of what Christianity is that it's this idea that it builds walls, and it keeps people in, and it keeps people out. Once again, this is so important that we get back to who Jesus is, because there is a day coming when all My people have been scattered, all of My people who are lost, who have not been able to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, I'm here now, and I'm telling you that I want one flock because there is one Shepherd and I want everyone to come into the fold.

So if you're here no matter what you've gone through, no matter how long you've been an atheist or agnostic, no matter how long you've pushed God at a distance, He still knows your name, He still knows your voice. And I believe that if you could have a moment of solitude here today, that His voice could ring true in your mind, and you would know that He is the Good Shepherd, and you would lay everything else down to follow Him. And you would be welcomed into His flock.

This is who you are being welcomed by, the Good Shepherd. We've already seen who He is, but I just want to close by how He closed. It says:

"The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded." John 10:17-18 (NLT)

If you're wondering who this Good Shepherd is, He's not just some moral teacher, He's not just some guy who died a tragic death 2,000 years ago, He is the I Am, He is the Son of God, He's the One who called His shot, went to a cross, died but then rose again. And then He said that wasn't an accident, "I laid my life down. I picked it back up again."

If you're going to follow someone, I'd stand with the One who defeated death. I'd stand with the One who is seated next to the Father. I would stand next to the One who truly loves you and sees you, not as what you can do or what you can produce but because of who you are. You are His. And until you are His, nothing else will ever be enough.

What we want to do right now is just to have everyone stand, everyone stand at all of our campuses. Last week we had these big moments of prayer and I just want to put it back there again. The same God who received those prayers and responded to those prayers last week is the same God here today. And we're going to have people at the front of all of our campuses so if you want prayer, and it can be for healing, it can be for all of those things, but it can also be, "I need help with the voices in my head." "I need help to decipher, to know what is from God and what's not."

Can God silence those? Yes.

"I need help seeking solitude. I'm afraid of being alone and being with God."

Can God help you with that? Yes.

There is nothing that God can't help you with today. That is true every single weekend.

I'm going to read a quick Proverb, Proverbs 3, verse 6. I'm going to read it and then we're going to pray and then we're going to go back into worship reminding ourselves that it is Jesus alone who is the Good Shepherd. Jesus alone who saves. And Jesus wants a relationship with you that can begin today.

Pray with me.

Proverbs 3 says:

"Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do. Everywhere you go, he will be the one who will keep you on track."

God, thank You for being the Good Shepherd. God, thank You for being the leader that we desperately need. And, God, we pray today for anyone who has come in and is just now seeing You as that Good Shepherd. God, I pray that they would know the gospel, that we are sinful, that we are broken, that we have been separated from You, but You sent Your Son to live the life that we couldn't live, the perfect life. And He went to that cross and He paid the penalty for our sins, everything that was keeping us from Him has been dealt with, has been paid.

And now we have a moment when we can respond to Your voice, and we can turn. No longer do we have to follow those old voices and those old messages. But, starting today, we can begin a new relationship with You as our Father and You as our Shepherd, a life where You will lead us to the best, the fullest version of what it means to live here. God, I pray that those who are here today would know that that awaits them.

God, I pray for all of the people here who are being wrecked with the idea that You still speak and what that could mean. God, I pray that You would just douse their fears and their worries with Your Spirit, and You would calm them, and You would let them know they are known. You're not small and You're not safe but You are good, and You will walk with them, and You will guide them, and Your voice will shape their lives, Jesus.

God, we love You so incredibly much. Help us to find silence this week so that we can hear You clearly. Jesus, we love You. It's in Your perfect name we pray: Amen.