

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

Fully Alive

PART

27

TITLE

That You May Have Life

SCRIPTURE

John 10:1-21



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It's great, once again, to worship with you, Providence. If you're a guest here with us, we're really glad that you are here with us. If you're in this room or in the amphitheater, at home, welcome. We're glad that you're here with us.

John chapter 10, if you brought a Bible, if you want to turn with me there. We have been in a series through John and we're up to John chapter 10 verses 1 through 21 this morning. You know, sometimes when I am in my office and I'm reading over these verses again and again and again and again to study and to know what to say, there are times when I kind of leave the time where I'm seeking to be productive and I just try to be creative with my mind and imagine what it must have been like for John to be writing this.

John loved Christ. He was absolutely convinced that Jesus was the Christ, the son of God, who had come from heaven to earth, who died on a cross, who was buried in a grave and he rose from the dead. John saw it. John witnessed these things. It totally transformed John's entire life for the next 50 years, from the time when he saw Jesus alive, resurrected from the dead, he gave his entire life to make him known. He was one who was persecuted significantly because of that. Here he writes 50 years later and he wants to record the things that he can remember, things that were literally pulled from a stockpile that was, in his own words, far too much material to ever be written down. He says, "I've written these things so that you would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that you would believe that and that you would be willing to give your life, just as I'm willing to give my life for Jesus Christ, that you would have a full life." John is for you. He's not against you. John is your friend. If you know Christ, John is your brother. He's a faithful brother who literally gave his life and his time and his energy to serve us. Such an amazing gift. Let's pray and thank God for that.

God, we do thank you for the privilege that we have to open up your word. It's amazing that we have it in our own language, in a translation that is accurate. We really do see, with our own eyes, in these words. We're going to hear with our ears what you said. It's amazing. We thank you for it. I pray again that you would speak through weakness and you would glorify Jesus Christ alone, our good shepherd, the door and the authority over heaven, hell, and earth and everything in between. We give you praise. We acknowledge you this morning. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, there's a lot of you who love animals. We have a little dog and we're learning to love a dog. He's not yet a year old and he's sort of tearing things up. We love animals, mostly. My wife, she's really creative. When we head out for a meal or whatever and we have to wait for the food to come, she's always thinking of questions that kind of stir up dialogue at the table, which, one, to stir up dialogue but, two, it's a way to distract from the reality the food's not there. The one that is used sometimes is, "Hey, if you could be any animal," often times it's superhero, "any animal in the entire world that God has created, which animal would you pick and why?" It's interesting. We got all boys and so there's a lot of lions and there's a lot of elephants. It's the things that are big and strong and courageous and wise.

Nobody ever picks a sheep. In our house, nobody ever picks a sheep because the sheep just says, “Hey, what’s up?” That’s about their whole life is, “I just need to look for something to eat. I need to look for a friend.” You know, a sheep is not something that you and I necessarily look at and stirs up our heart to think about things that are courageous and wise and strong. This is why very few teams are ever chosen like, “You know what we need? We need a sheep as our mascot.” Because nothing would really get the crowd going like, “Hey, stand to your feet for the NC State Sheep.” There is a triangle team that gets really close, but at least they put horns on their sheep. Thank God. that’s why we have you the blue City Serve shirts because we want to encourage it.

Anyway, sheep, you guys know, they’re easily frightened. They’re quickly confused and they’re mostly defenseless. The only defense mechanism God gave a sheep is legs. Literally that’s all they have. Just move from wherever you’re at to somewhere else. What’s interesting though is when you look at the scriptures and you look at what Psalm chapter 8 says, “When God looks upon humanity and he says that these people, created in my image, that they’re the pinnacle of everything that I’ve created.” Yet, when the Bible is asked to choose an animal that most describes not only our need personally, as individuals, but also our nature as human beings, our dependent nature, the Bible typically picks a sheep. It does so in order to show us that God is our shepherd and this is ultimately what Jesus wants to say to us here this morning.

Look what he says. John chapter 10, it says, “Truly, truly I say to you: He who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters the door as a shepherd of the sheep, to him, the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all of his own, he goes before them and the sheep follow him 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. Jesus again said to them: Truly, truly I say to you: I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers. But the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.”

“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. I lay my life down for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice. There will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason, the Father loves me because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father. There was, again, a great division among the Jews because of these words.

Many of them said, 'He has a demon and is insane. Why listen to him?' Others said, 'These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'"

Providence, all of this is happening, that we just read, on the heels of Jesus healing a man. In fact, if you look at your Bible, John chapter 10 verse 1 is simply the continuation of the conversation of where we left off in John chapter 9. It's the exact same setting. It's exact same moment. It's important you understand what he's going to do in John chapter 10 on the heels of what took place in John chapter 9. You see, in John chapter 9, Jesus was walking out of Jerusalem and he sees a man who's been born blind. He sees him and has compassion. He goes over and we're told that he spits on the ground, he makes mud, wipes it on the guy's eyes, and he says, "I want you to go to the pool of Siloam and I want you to wash your eyes." He did so in faith and he went and all of a sudden, his sight was restored.

All this took place on the Sabbath day and the Pharisees of the day said that you're breaking one of our rules. They began to blaspheme Jesus. The man who's healed begins to worship Jesus. There's this big division. This constantly happens between now and the end of John where literally stakes are put into the ground and people have to go this way or they have to go this way. This is exactly what happens here in John chapter 10. You see, Jesus, in our text, is going to make three sledgehammer statements in order to drive a stake directly in the middle of the road, forcing you and I to go one side or the other, to conclude either that Jesus is insane or Jesus is God. Those are your options and you get one and you have to pick one. That stake that he's driving is so deep and so tall you can not go over it, you can not go under it. You have to go around it. He gives us two options: insanity or deity.

What's interesting is what he does is he sets up these statements with a word picture. Now, a word picture, he says in verse 6. You see it. It says this figure of speech, this word picture, it's an illustration. Often times when someone that's speaking in public, they look out and they see people's eyes begin to glaze over because they're either bored or because they know that, "I already know this." It's just natural to start to tell a illustration. The reason is because when the front door of our mind gets locked, the only way into the heart is through the backdoor. The backdoor, in Jesus, and you see this time and again through all of his parables, his stories, is that once he recognized, "I can't just tell them the truth because they're too resistant to it," what he does is steps around and he tells a creative word picture in order to stir people's hearts to get interested again. Then, all of a sudden, he gets into the back door. He still gets to the door because he wants to get to the heart.

This word picture that he talks about in the first six verses is something that was very, very common to people in Israel. It was about a sheep pen. Most people lived in small villages and small villages were poor villages where you had a lot of shepherds and not every shepherd was all that well off. Most of them had a modest number of sheep. They would spend all day out in the field with their sheep and then they would bring their sheep back to the village at night. They had a communal sheep pen, a sheepfold is what he calls it.

What would happen is if you were a shepherd, you would bring your sheep back, you would put them through a door, it would be walled off by rock or brick or a cave or something like this. There was one entrance to it, one way in that was legal. As the shepherd, you would entrust, you would hire out a hired man or a, as it says here, a gatekeeper. The gatekeeper's job was to stay up all night to protect the sheep from thieves and wolves while the shepherds would go and get some rest. Then, the next morning, they would come back out to the sheepfold. Unlike thieves that would seek to scale the rock wall in order to grab a sheep or to steal a sheep, they knew they had the authority, because they knew they were the owners of the sheep. They would go right up to the gate, right up to the door, and they would talk to the gatekeeper. All of a sudden, he would speak to the sheep and the sheep, knowing the voice of their shepherd, they would follow that shepherd out to the pasture.

Now, because there's no break between John chapter 10 verse 1 and the end of John chapter 9, we know that this word picture was describing what was happening at the end of John chapter 9. If you remember what happened at the end of John chapter 9 is that some people were blaspheming, one man was worshiping, and so the people or the Pharisees that are blaspheming, they threw the blind man, now healed, out of the temple and he says that you can not worship here anymore. He's calling them the thieves and the robbers. At the end of John chapter 9, Jesus says to them, "If you are blind, you would have no guilt, but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." What's happening here is Jesus saying, "You say you can see. Okay. I'll tell you what. Let me draw a picture for you. Tell me what you see." Knowing that their spiritual eyes were too dim in order to translate his pictures in the spiritual truths, Jesus lays his art supplies down and he picks up a hammer. The hammer was not used to beat them up. The hammer was used to drive three specific stakes into the ground that were so deep and so tall that you had to go around one way or the other, saying, "I believe in him," or, "I blaspheme him." Those stakes are very, very clear.

The first one he says is, "I am the door to heaven." The second one is, "I am the shepherd of all God's people." The third, he says, "I am the son of God and I have absolute, complete authority over life and death." Let's look at each one of these. They start in verse 10.

The first one is, as the door, Jesus is the entrance to eternal life. Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you I am the door." Let's back up for a second. He's just healed a man and, all of a sudden, he tells a word picture. Now what he's going to do is he's going to insert himself into the word picture at different places to say, "Actually, you know that door that the shepherds had to come through to drop their sheep off and they came back? Well, I'm that door." He says, "I am the door and all who came before me are thieves and robbers." Don't forget, Jesus is speaking to Pharisees but he also knows that there's a flock of Jewish people that can hear everything that he's saying. He's calling those the sheep. Some of those will believe in him. But there's thieves and robbers seeking to take them and to distort them and to control them.

You see, he said that the thieves, what they try to do is they enter and then rule the pen even though they do not have access through the door. You have to remember these Pharisees just threw a man out of the temple. They didn't go through the door. He says they're thieves and robbers and now they're inside the pen and they're trying to rule the pen that they're not even allowed to be in. You see, these are like the guys who have no ticket to the ballgame so they secretly jump a fence into the stadium. They have no ticket, they didn't go through the appropriate door. Yet we find them on the field demanding to be referees. Jesus is saying this is what the Pharisees are doing. They're ruling the pen by refusing to use the door. Jesus says, "I am the door."

Now, for some of you, you desperately need a door today because you're standing on the outside of eternal life and not on the inside of eternal life. See, the Bible tells us that we have all sinned and fallen short of his glory. If we die in our sin, that we'll be separated from him for all eternity. Every single one of us, in our conscience, we know that there's this moral debt and that's why so many of us, even prior to Christ, we spent a lot of our time trying to be religious or trying to be moral or trying to be good or trying to pray enough or trying to give enough or trying to be kind enough in order to stack up a resume, in order to bring to God when we get to the door and say, "See, God. I've done enough." What Jesus says is, "I am the door. If you believe in me," he says, "that you will be saved. Whoever enters by me will be saved." You see, Jesus is the only door into the safety of the pen.

This is one thing you and I know about doors. You will walk in a door and you're going to walk back out the door and it's the same thing with sheep. That sheep pen literally had one door. They got into the pen through the door and they get to get back out of the door through the door. When these sheep come in, it's to protect them for the night. Ultimately, this is the picture that Jesus wants for us, it's for you who are outside wanting for God's favor to rest upon you. He says, "You simply need to believe that I am the son of God, that I am the door."

There's a lot of people, I love it, many of us in this room love it, but there's a lot of people in this world that do not like Jesus' exclusive claims. When he says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." When he says, "I am the door. I'm not a door. I'm not a possible door. I am the door." There is safety in salvation through that one door. Jesus wants us to know is that for the sheep who listen to his voice and come into that door, he says there is protection, there is survival, there is salvation for you. You know, it's interesting is the shepherd would come back to that very door and the next morning he would take those same sheep back out into pasture in order to feed them. I think ultimately what he's saying is that Jesus is not only the door for protection, he's also the door for plenty. That why he says thieves, they hop the fence in order to kill and steal and destroy. He says, "But I came to give you life and life abundantly." Abundantly, plenty. Protection and plenty comes at this door. I just want to encourage you, particularly those who do not know Christ, by way of applications, let's trust in the unique accomplishment of Jesus.

Now, you and both know that there is a lot of voices that are claiming that there are many doors in our world. The landscape in terms of religion, the landscape in terms of human philosophy, the landscape in terms of what is politically correct looks a whole lot like this picture where there's a lot of doors. There's doors that you can go and most people think that all the doors, they all go to the same place. What the Bible tells us though is that although there are many doors that people have put up on the wall, there's only one that is open. There's only one that brings you into the presence of God and it's Jesus Christ.

His claims and perhaps my repeating Jesus claims to you seems narrow or maybe even arrogant. Before you weigh out the arrogance of any statement, I would exhort you to first consider its truthfulness. You see, when we don't like something, we naturally just call it arrogant. We all like two plus two equals four so we don't say, when someone says that's the answer and that's the only answer to two plus two, we don't call those people arrogant. We call them truthful. The reason is we've all come to understand that two plus two equals four. There's truthfulness in this so therefore there's no arrogance to this statement. When Jesus says, "I am the way," most people look at that and they disagree and they say, "That's arrogant." Before they can say that's arrogant, you need to go and research and say, "Is it true?" If it's true, then it's the humblest thing Jesus can say and it's the most loving thing that he can say. If it's really one door and only one door and only one door gets to God, then to say, "I am the one door," is the most humble and gentle and compassionate and kind thing that he can say and it's the most kind thing that we can say.

Providence, we need to know that if we're going to repeat Jesus' words, that they're going to get uptight with us just as they got uptight with him. He puts the stake into the ground and you have to go one way, he's insane, would an idiot say he's the door, or you have to say that he's the son of God and what a friend to tell us which door to enter. As a church family, we commend you to Christ. You know, Jesus saved my soul when I was sixteen years old. I was in my room and it looked like there was a lot of doors and every door that I was pulling on was locked and Jesus saved me. There's one door. His accomplishments, you have to understand, come because Jesus Christ came from heaven to earth and he lived a righteous life and he died on a cross and he rose from the dead. Because he did, he satisfied the wrath of God almighty that was pointed at you and at me. You see, no one else is offering you forgiveness of sin. No one else is offering you their righteousness to stand before God almighty and be judged on the basis of his merit and not yours. No one's offering you adoption into an eternal, heavenly family because of the sacrifice that he made on our behalf, nobody but one, and his name is Jesus and he's the door.

The second thing he tells us here. He wants to drive another stake. He says that, as the shepherd, Jesus is the provider and protector of eternal life. Jesus says, "I'm the good shepherd and the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." He says, "He who is the hired hand sees the wolf coming and he leaves the sheep. He flees because he cares nothing for the sheep." Now, you and all know that there are times when people take a job because they need money, not because they love the people who they're serving. There are people that work in security in different places where there's a mall or a bank or the country.

I don't know where they are. Then, all of a sudden, once things start going bad and there's eminent danger, if there's not a love within the heart either for personal responsibility or for the people that they're seeking to protect or been entrusted to protect, there are people in history that you know of and I know of that literally, when things go bad, they retreat and they run out with the sheep. They say, "You know what. I don't love these sheep this much."

What Jesus is saying is this is that's normal. What's not normal is for the shepherd to lay down his life for sheep. That's not normal. That's what it says that Jesus does. It says, "I'm the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. I lay down my life for the sheep."

You know what's really cool? It's amazing when you think about all of scripture, how many prophecies are fulfilled and there's a prophecy in Ezekiel 34 that many of us have not read in a long time, maybe ever, about the messiah that would come and I want to show you this text. God is literally condemning the shepherds of the day, not the shepherds like those who actually care for sheep, but those that are caring for people. This is the priest and the prophets and the pastors of the day. This is what God says to them. "Shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves, should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat and you cloth yourself with the wool and you slaughter the fat ones but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened. The sick you have not healed. The injured you've not bound up. The strayed you have not brought back. The lost you've not sought. With force and harshness, you have ruled them so they were scattered. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth with none to search or seek for them."

Then it skips down to verse 11. God tells us what he's going to do. He says, "Behold, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out." You continue to read Ezekiel 34, he keeps talking about the different ways that God almighty is going to be the one that literally comes to the earth to be the shepherd and how that shepherd is going to care for his sheep.

By way of application of him being our shepherd, our provision, and our protector, I just want to encourage you. Let's yield to Jesus as our shepherd. See, our shepherd knows what we do not know. This good shepherd sees what we do not see. As our shepherd, Jesus wants to nourish us and protect us and comfort us with his presence. Sometimes isn't it true that we think freedom is found in casting off God's word? Ultimately what we find here is that freedom is really knowing where we can move safely inside of his fence. This is why, to follow Jesus, he says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened. I'll give you rest. Take my yoke upon you."

The life of a Christian is not a yokeless life. It's not a life where you have no lord, no master, no shepherd over you. It's a life where you have a loving shepherd over you who leads you to pastures that are green, that lead you to still streams of water, beautiful, clean streams of water. He looks after you and cares for you. One of the things that I want to encourage you with, some of you right now, this week, you're about to make a big decision in your life.

For some of you, the way that you go out making decisions is you get out a piece of paper and you draw a line down the middle and you put pro on one side and con on the other and if there's more pros than cons, it's a good idea. If there's more cons than pros, then it's a bad idea. I want you to know that God wants to help you to inform your decision this week. You need to seek his face. He says, "Anyone who lacks wisdom, let him call upon me and I'll give you wisdom." I want to encourage you. He's your shepherd. He wants to lead you to good places. He knows where the dangers are at, where your eyes, as a sheep, simply can not see. He wants to take care of you.

I think that just one other thing that is just absolutely critical in this text that you see before we're out of time is this. This is number three. As the son of God, Jesus is the authority over eternal life. He's the authority over eternal life. You see what he says here. He says, "Look, I lay down my life that I may take it up again." Then he says something that no one in this room can say. He says, "I have authority to lay my life down." We can all say that, right? We can all go take our life this afternoon if we wanted to. Then he says something that no one in this room can say. That is, "I have the authority to bring it back up." That's not something that you and I can say. You see, no one has the authority to return our very life from the dead, but Jesus said that he could. You see, what we find here in this passage is that not only is he the entrance and the protector and the provider, but he's literally the authority. He is the sovereign authority over eternal life. This is why they got so uptight about it.

I want you to see something in the midst of this text, which is really, really important for us as people who have already trusted him and have already sought to yield our life to him as our shepherd. That is verse 16. He says, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold and I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice." The question that we, as a church family, one of the things that God has done in this body and for this body is he has built us for a purpose, for a mission. You need to understand this. God did not form the church and then say, "Now, what should we have him do? I'll tell you what we should have him do. Let's have them spend their time doing this." No, no, no. God formed a mission and it was a rescue mission for the world in order to have a tool, an instrument on the earth.

What he did was he then formed the church. The church is for the mission and at any place that the church gets off its tracks and loses its perspective of why it's being created, it becomes literally a relic of the past, a distraction for all the people, a hindrance instead of a help. You and I were literally created by God to be a part of this rescue mission. If you notice what he said, he says, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold." You know what that means? There are people in this world today who have not heard about Jesus Christ who don't come to Providence. That's a very simplistic way to say this. What he's saying in this context is he's talking a Jewish audience. He says, "You know what? Some of you, I'm going to speak your name and you're going to come to me because you know that I'm your shepherd." To a Jewish audience, what he's saying is this, "I want you to know something though. That is that there is more people in the flock that I have that will be represented in heaven than a Jewish population."

You see, it's amazing what he's done here. He's called you and me to be the people to take this gospel to the ends of the earth to a people that are a part of his flock but have no access to the gospel so that they can trust and know that he's the door and that he's their shepherd. The application here, because he's the authority over eternal life, is let's take this good news to the world. You see, Providence, it's been proven often in history that the church has become, will become, ingrown and indifferent to the world if we lose perspective of why we were created. Now, I realize that you and I were created as a church to be a worshiping people and a loving people and a learning people. We've also been commissioned to be a going people. You see, it's so easy for us to become comfortable within our own fold. Jesus said that he has sheep ordained for the foundation of the world in places right now without the gospel and he intends for the gospel to get to them. Now, how do you think they're going to get it? It's got to come through us.

It's really interesting that this very passage was instrumental in the lives of two very, very important missionaries in Africa. One of them is David Livingstone. It was sort of his life verse. He was a pioneer medical missionary. He traveled all over Africa at one point in time. You know, it was interesting. There was a man who was born in 1867. His name was Peter Cameron Scott. Peter went through a time where he had to come home from the mission field. He was pretty discouraged. He got encouraged. He went back with his brother and his brother died on the mission field. He came back and he was really struggling.

All of a sudden, he chose to go to Westminster Abbey. He's walking around, looking at tombstones, and he comes upon David Livingstone's tombstone. He looks at it and this is exactly what it looks like. You can see it right here. It talks a lot of things about David, but if you look at the far left, the words that are actually written going downwards instead of across, was David's life verse. "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice." Encouraged by the reality of these words, he went back. Instead of going back only to the coast lines, he went into the inland. He formed something called the African Inland Mission. The last 120 years, there's been over 2 million people that have come to faith in Christ in Africa as a result of this ministry effort. It all came because one man recognized and believed that Jesus really did care about sheep who did not have gospel access.

To you and to me, Providence, one of the things that we've been working on a lot is our next five year vision. It's going to start after Vision 220 concludes in June of 2016. One of the things you're going to see in there is seeking to have a provision to where a quarter of us will go on a short-term mission trip every single year and that every one of us will have the opportunity to go somewhere in the world who does not have the gospel at least one time in that five years. It's going to take willingness and it's going to take resource and it's going to take prayer, but there is one door and there is one shepherd and there is one son of God who is worthy of their worship and so we've got to go. We've got to go.

Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we love you. We're grateful for your incredible love for us. I pray, Father, for those who are contemplating your words and wondering if they need to conclude, Jesus, that you're insane or if you're the son of God. I pray, Father, that you would help them to see the winsome character and nature of Jesus. Jesus, open up our eyes to the breadth of your love for us. We thank you, Father, for the privilege that we have to be on mission with you. I pray, Father, that as we sing to you and as we give, God, that you would take these offerings and that you would glorify Jesus Christ and expand the name of Jesus Christ, not only in our own hearts and our own country, but in our world. We love you and we're grateful and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



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