

## **John 10:1-21 – Meet Jesus – Find the leader you’ve been looking for**

### **An Almighty Sorry Mess**

There are of course. Some who still think. They don’t actually need a leader. And they can take care of things. Perfectly well themselves. Thank you very much. But for the rest of us. Who’ve lived with our failings long enough. We know we need someone. Who can protect us. Care for us. Inspire us. Guide us. And show us a better way. In other words. A leader.

But therein lies our problem. Because who can we trust? And who can we follow? Unless you’re young. And a follower. Of the radical left. You probably don’t have. A lot of confidence. In political leaders. After all. In these days of saturation media coverage. Where we know. More and more about our leaders. It’s hard not to be cynical. Isn’t it? Because the more we know. The less we like. And the harder it is. To trust them. I mean even when they look the part. As soon as they open their mouth. We’ve got a problem. Because we cannot seem. To get a straight answer. One simple question. Followed by. 5 minutes of evasion. Instead of telling us. What they stand for. That’s the very thing. We don’t get to hear. Perhaps because. Getting in power. And staying in power. Seems to be the main objective. No doubt they believe. They can do lots of good. When in power. But it’s hard to trust people. With a hidden agenda.

And if we can’t trust our political leaders. Then what about religious leaders? I wonder if perhaps. Your cynicism soars to a whole new level? Often we expect. So much more. From our religious leaders. Which is why it’s so devastating. When we get. So much less. I’m talking about. The charlatans. Predators. Bullies. And hypocrites. You probably know. Some religious leaders. Demand our money. Like prosperity teachers. Or those in religious pyramid schemes. Like Scientology. Others demand God forbid sexual favours. In those awful creepy cults. Like the Children of God. Not to mention abusive priests. Some religious leaders. Demand control. That you only listen to them. And no one else. Like in everyone’s favourite Korean cult Shincheonji. But that’s not. The only kind of control. In some groups you’re told. To cut off all ties. From family and friends. And move into their compounds. And once there. It’s difficult to leave. Except in a coffin. Anyone remember David Koresh? Branch Davidian? Waco Texas?

Of course not all religious leaders are crazy. Or out to get us. Some are just hypocrites. Who say one thing. And do another. Who like to have a reputation. For serving God. But seem more committed. To building their brand. Instead of the kingdom. And protecting their power. So many varieties of dodgy leaders. And that’s where Jesus begins. Doesn’t he? Here in John chapter 10. With the thieves. And the robbers. In verse 1.

### **False Shepherds**

Funny thing is. Those first hearers. Didn’t actually immediately get the point (verse 6). When they of all people. Should’ve understood. Coming as they did. From an agrarian society. Where farming. And farming sheep. Were common practice. Not to mention. The rich Old Testament background. Surrounding this imagery. Going back. All the way. To Moses himself. The original leader. For the people. As he neared the end. He looked forward. To God providing his people. With another such leader. Lest they be. Like sheep without a shepherd (Numbers 27:15-17). After Moses and Joshua. Came the leadership of the judges. And you know. They too were shepherds of God’s sheep (2 Samuel 7:7). Then you have the kings. Like David. Responsible to shepherd God’s people (2 Samuel 5:2). Furthermore. We hear that. God himself is David’s shepherd. Remember Psalm 23? “The LORD is my shepherd”. In other words. God is the ultimate shepherd. Over his people (Psalm 80:1). With the kings being the under-shepherds.

All too often. After David. These kings failed the people. Effectively leaving them. According to the repeated refrain. As sheep without a shepherd (1 Kings 22:17; 2 Chronicles 18:16; Zechariah 10:2). And this idea. This imagery. This language comes to a climax. In Ezekiel 34. Where you have. An extended complaint. From God. Through his prophet. About how. Not just the king. But the whole leadership structure. Of the nation. Has failed the people. Because the so-called shepherds. Care for themselves. Instead of the flock. The whole situation so disastrous. That God himself. Promises to fix it. To step in. And shepherd his sheep (34:11-16). And also give them. A true son of David (34:23-24). A faithful king.

And so. Here in John 10. When Jesus begins. To speak once again. About a shepherd and his sheep. They should have heard all those echoes. Can you hear them? Such a diabolical history. Of leadership failure. For the people of God. And yes. It continues still. Into Jesus' day. Where he speaks of. False shepherds. Who are little better than thieves and robbers. Dangerous strangers. And he's talking of course. About the religious authorities. The Pharisees. And the teachers of the law. No political double talk here.

And maybe you're wondering. Why he speaks. so strongly against them? Well you only need to go back. A few verses. To the previous chapter. For there a man. Blind from birth. Has been healed by Jesus. Can you imagine it? Years of darkness. Gone in a flash. What a deed. Of grace. And power. And wonder. But instead of celebrating. The religious leaders are upset. Because it took place. On the Sabbath. One of their lines had been crossed. And as a result. They pick a fight. Try and goad the man. The once blind man. Into condemning Jesus. And when he won't. They boot him out of the synagogue. In other words. They banish the sheep. From the flock. Thieves and robbers indeed. Claiming. Acting. With illegitimate authority. Over the sheep. Exploiting the sheep. Just like in Ezekiel. For their own agendas. Damaging the sheep. And ultimately destroying them. Making them. Twice as much the sons of hell. As they themselves were (Matthew 15:14; 23:15).

### **The True Shepherd**

Callous leaders. Self-interested leaders. Insecure phonies. Compared with Jesus. Who claims to be. The true shepherd. After all. He enters by the gate (verse 2). In other words. He has legitimate access. Every right. To lead his people. Born of the tribe of Judah. With royal blood. Flowing through his veins (Matthew 1:1; Ezekiel 34:23-24). But furthermore. Out of all the Davidic descendants. He's the one. Approved. By God himself. Publicly authenticated. At his baptism (Matthew 3:16-17). And then again. At his transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-5). Not to mention. His countless miraculous signs (Matthew 12:15-21). Where he acted. With the power of God. And fulfilled. The promises of God (Isaiah 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 61:1-2). Making the blind to see. Delivering people. Out of evil. Bringing healing. And salvation. To the lost and needy. And all building. To the climactic sign. Of his death and resurrection (John 12:23-24; 13:30-31; 17:1). Where he bears the guilt of sinners. And is then raised. Triumphant. And glorious. To the Father's right hand (Acts 2:32-33).

Unlike the imposters. The religious hypocrites. There's nothing hidden. Or covert. About Jesus' leadership. Anyone today can read what he said. And did. Here in the Bible. As it was. Back in his day. Because from the outset. For from the outset. He's transparently upfront. About his exalted status (Matthew 9:6; John 6:35; 8:12). And how the kingdom of God has dawned. Under his watch (Matthew 4:17). He doesn't massage the truth. For his audience. He tells people. What they need to hear. Even when they don't like it (e.g. Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23; 8:19-22; 23:1-36). He calls a spade a spade. Or if you like. A religious leader a thief and robber. This shepherd. He stands for the truth (John 14:6). He speaks the truth. And his sheep. Recognise the truth. When he speaks. Do you see the language there? In verse 3. They listen to his voice. They trust his voice. He knows them. Personally. And they know him.

Because if you haven't already worked it out. It's not the kind of leadership you see. In modern day industrial scale sheep farming. Like you might see. Here today. In Australia. Where the shepherd struggles to distinguish. One sheep from another. He doesn't have. A personal relationship with the sheep. When he wants the sheep. To go somewhere. He uses dogs. And fear. To drive them. So different. Isn't it? From sheep farming. Ancient style. Where the shepherd is always present. With his sheep. Day and night. He knows them. Deeply. Personally. He loves them. And so they trust him. And follow where he leads. His voice is enough.

Do you see the point? If you want to meet Jesus. First and foremost. You listen to his voice (John 8:31-32). Read John's gospel. Uncover John. With someone you know. You might be surprised. By what could happen. And if you'd like to do that. Come and talk to us afterwards. We'd love to help. Of course. If you're already a Christian. As many of you will be. Then this applies. To you as well. Doesn't it? Embracing the leadership of Jesus. It means. Paying close attention. To his voice. Allowing him to set. The direction of your life. Both your coming in. And your going out. And even when the Bible says things. That we find difficult. As it will. We don't toss it aside. And assume. We know better. No we honour the shepherd. We trust the shepherd. By taking his word seriously. You might say. Something like this. 'How

can that be Lord? And yet surely. You know better! Help me understand. To see the goodness of your ways.'

Jesus is the true shepherd. The ultimate leader. You can trust. He enters by the gate. In fact it turns out. He is the gate (verse 7). You see when the sheep are gathered. Into their pen. It's he who stands. Between the sheep. And danger. By lying across the entrance. He is their source of safety. In other words their saviour. He will keep the enemy at bay. And on the day of God's judgement. He will shelter them. In the storm. This true shepherd. Will save his people. And he will bless them. Do you see the language of verse 10? Life in abundance. Under Jesus' leadership. It's really important. That we hear this. Because so often we hear. From other voices. That choosing Jesus. Is choosing restriction. A lesser life now. Even if we get. The compensation of heaven to come. But it's just not so. Abundant life. Beginning now.

Will you listen to the voice of Jesus? Will you trust him? That under his rule is more than just life. It's abundant life. Because if it's true. That Christian living is the best way to live. Then why would you settle for something less? Much less. I don't know if you realise this. But when Jesus directs his sheep. Commands his people. Those commands are promises of blessing. They open the way. To the good life. Under him. Which doesn't mean. No hardships. Opposition. Or temptation. For sometimes. The path to good pasture is steep and rocky. But no matter. How hard. Just remember. Ultimately he wants us to become. The very people we were created to be. To thrive. As we follow. The Maker's instructions. How good is that? Don't you want to thrive? That's the kind of leader we need. Someone who will look beyond. Our immediate short-sighted longings. To our long-term flourishing. Both in this world. And the next. Life to the full. **read verses 11-18**

### **The Good Shepherd**

Jesus is the true shepherd. He's also the good shepherd (verse 11). For he's ...absolutely committed. To our welfare. Can you say that of any other leader? Of course lots of leaders promise that. 'I'm here for you.' But Jesus actually lives that. Dies that. He's so committed to our welfare. That he sacrifices his own. How many leaders do you know who would die for you? Buddha was all about pursuing. His own fulfilment. And enlightenment. Not Jesus. He's all about pursuing yours. Or what about Muhammad? He was more than happy. To take life. And sacrifice others. Not Jesus. He gives life. By sacrificing himself. Find me a leader. Who really is truly. For his people. No matter the cost. To himself. The greatest of our leaders today. What do they do? They hire. Specially trained bodyguards. Who're supposed to take a bullet. To keep the leader safe. But not Jesus. He takes a bullet. For the safety of his people. Those who were previously his enemies (Romans 5:6-10). It's staggering. Isn't it? And truly wonderful. That's someone you can trust. Someone who loves. Even to death. You can entrust everything. To a leader such as that.

So you see. He's not just some hired hand. In it for himself. And then. Off and away. At the slightest whiff of danger (verse 12). Jesus is the good shepherd. Who loves his people. And faces the enemy. On our behalf. We are his. And his commitment to us. Will not fail. And it's always personal. We're not just a number to him. One of the countless faceless millions. That he leads. And saves. He knows us by name. Do you reckon Anthony Albanese knows who you are? Jesus does. And we know him. And we can know him. Deeply. Profoundly. Intimately. In a relationship. With incredible and eternal depths (verses 14-15). In a relationship. Like that. Between God the Father. And God the Son. In a relationship. With the one. Who knows how to do relationship. After all. He's been doing it. For all eternity.

And in case. There was any doubt. This leader is not just. For the nation Israel. Or those first generation hearers. This is not just a history lesson. Do you see the promise in verse 16? He's building a flock. Outside of Israel. Coming down. Through the ages. Including even. People today. He can be our leader.

And yes. He does have to die. His death was no accident. He wasn't a helpless victim. Caught up in the currents. Of history and politics. He's fully in control. And deliberately lays down his life (verse 17). He chooses this path. So we might be saved. And blessed. In his death. He drinks the cup of God's wrath. So we might be spared. And then he takes his life up again (verse 18). For God accepts his sacrifice. On our behalf. And raises him to life again. In triumph. And now. At God the Father's right hand. He rules. Or shepherds. Or pastors. Over his people. **read verses 19-21**

## **Responding to the Shepherd**

He's the true shepherd. Whose voice you can trust. He's the door to salvation. And the path to blessing. He's also the good shepherd. The absolute best. Who dies. So that we might live. Who dies and rises again. To rule over people. Like you and me. People from every nation. And in all generations. They're outrageous claims. Aren't they? And you can see. Why they responded. As they did. Because either. He's evil and demented. Or you are. If his claims are true. And you don't embrace him.

So will you embrace him? Become a Christian. Here tonight. If you're not. Tell Jesus. You need his leadership. And you need his death. To cover your sins. It's that simple. And come and tell us afterwards. So we can give you the help. That you'll need. And for those. Already Christian. Will you continue in his flock? And let him save you. And guide you. And bless you. What a voice! What a word! What a life! Life to the full.