

Following the Shepherd of who leads us to life

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[0 : 00] Today's scripture reading comes from John 9:39-10:21. Please follow along your Bible! If you don't have a Bible, please do still grab them from the front of the stage or at the back near the door.

Our passage is on page 842. Jesus said, For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.

Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, Are we also blind? Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no guilt. But now that you say, we see, your guilt remains.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the 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 his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

[1 : 14] 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.

So Jesus again said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who come 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 he 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 knows me.

[2 : 20] Just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.

So there will be one flock and 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.

And 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 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? This is the word of God. Okay, great. Thanks, Betty. Let me pray for us, and then let's look at this passage together. Father, this passage is sometimes hard, sometimes challenging, sometimes confrontational.

[3 : 24] But God, like all of your words, it is good. And Lord, we want to hear what you have to say. So come and speak to us. Jesus, help us to hear clearly your voice. And God, help us to respond.

Spirit of God, we ask you to come and speak to us through your word. Lord, these are my words, my opinions don't count for anything. But God, we want to hear you speaking to us through your word.

So help us to understand. Help us to respond. Help us to find life in your name, we pray. Amen. Amen. Friends, let me ask you a question. Who are you following?

Obviously, not talking about social media, but who is leading you? Whose voice or opinions carries weight in your life?

Who is shaping your life or influencing your decisions? Who is informing the kind of person that you become? Friends, whose opinions, words, or instructions cause you to do things?

[4 : 25] Maybe even difficult things? Costly things? Dangerous things? Who is leading you? Who are you following? For many of us, we like to think of ourselves as independent thinkers.

We are not controlled by anybody. But actually, all of us have voices in our lives that shape us. For many of us, it will be our parents. Maybe for some of us, our grandparents.

People that were formative in the early stages of our lives. And even though we've grown up, and sometimes maybe those people may have passed away. Still, their voice, their opinions, their desires can be so strong that they shape us.

And that we dare not do anything that would disappoint them or go against their wishes. Even those that are no longer maybe in our lives. Maybe they've passed away. Or maybe we have grown up and have our own families.

And yet their voice is still so prevalent. For some of us, maybe it's a mentor or a senior at work. A boss. For many years, I still thought about my first boss when I was in my early 20s.

[5 : 27] Even though I'd moved on from the company and I was working in church. For years, I thought, how would Jerome handle this situation? He was such an influential boss in my life. But for all of us, we've got these voices, these people, whose opinions and perspectives matter so much to us.

Friends, who is leading you? Whose voice are you following? We who live in Asia have a very high regard generally for family and for community, for our tribe.

Maybe much more so than our Western counterparts. People from Asia generally give a lot more authority and respect to those in positions of authority. But the question is, the people that have authority in our lives, are they trustworthy guides?

What gives them the right to have that authority? Is it just their position? Or is it who they are? Now, we are working through John's gospel, and we're coming to the end of a section. John chapter 10 is the end of a section.

And so next week will be our last sermon in this series until we get to Advent. We'll pick it up again next year. But in this passage, I wonder if you noticed from what Betty read to us, that the scripture we're looking at today, John chapter 10, flows straight out of John chapter 9.

[6 : 39] In fact, it's actually Jesus' speech is part of the same conversation. We must be careful when we read the Bible not to put too much weight on the chapter divisions. The chapters only came many hundreds of years later.

But the very first audience or readers, they wouldn't have seen chapter 9, chapter 10. For them, it would have just been one book. And look at how Jesus' words flow here. At the end of chapter 9, remember from last week, he's quite confrontational with the leaders.

They're religious leaders. They're Jewish leaders. And how does it end? Jesus says to them here, For judgment I came to the world, that those that do not see may see, and those who think that they see may be shown to be blind.

Some of the leaders said, Are you talking about us? Are we blind? And Jesus says, If you were blind, you'd have no guilt. But now, because you insist, No, no, we're fine. We see. Don't worry. Actually, your guilt remains.

And there's this conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders. And Jesus goes straight into that, into the passage that we're looking at today. Look at chapter 10, verse 1. The flow of thought continues straight away.

[7 : 46] Truly I say to you. And in this passage, there's this compare and contrast that's going on, right? Jesus is contrasting himself with the leaders of his day.

And Jesus is saying, I am the good shepherd. They are thieves and robbers. Jesus says, I know my people intimately. They are strangers and hired hands. I lay down my life for my people.

They run away at the first sign of danger. And throughout this passage, Jesus is saying, Who are the leaders in your life? Who are you going to listen to? Are you going to listen to me? Or to the other leaders of society?

Those that hold a prominent voice in our culture, in our day. And Jesus is this back and forth. He says, This is who I am. This is who they are. This is how I behave. This is how they behave. This is

what I've come to do.

This is what they want to do. And Jesus here is being seriously confrontational. He's looking at the religious leaders, all the prevailing voices of the day, the people that everyone looked up to and respected and honored and thought, They are the people that I must really listen to.

[8 : 49] Jesus is kind of looking at all of them. And he's saying, In a way, You guys are frauds. You guys are charlatans. And it's a very, very confrontational passage. And Jesus says to them, And he says to us, If you follow them, It will destroy you.

But if you follow me, I will lead you to life. Okay? And so the big idea here is, Follow Jesus. Listen to Jesus. Submit to his leadership. Jesus is a voice of authority, And he wants us to follow him and to listen to him, Because his way leads to life.

Okay? So, As we look at this passage, Three simple questions I want us to think about. What does Jesus, Who does Jesus claim to be? Why should we trust him? And what does that mean for our lives?

Okay? Who does Jesus claim to be? Why should we trust him? What does that mean for us? So, Firstly, Who does Jesus claim to be? Now, In this passage, Jesus uses a number of different analogies or pictures to describe himself.

And it can be a bit confusing, Because he kind of alternates between these different imageries. And actually, It says in verse 6, This figure of speech Jesus used, They did not understand. And, Well, We also, Maybe sometimes struggle to understand.

[9 : 58] Because on one hand, Jesus says, I am like the door, Or the gate to the sheep pen. Okay? Verse 7 and 9, He says that. I am the door. And, What does he mean by that?

Think of, A sheep pen. By the way, Jesus is going to use the picture of sheep and shepherds a lot. In the Bible, Shepherds is a picture of leadership, Spiritual leadership.

And Jesus here, He says, Firstly, I am the door to the sheep pen, To the sheep fold. Right? It's a bit of a strange picture. What does he mean? Well, What he's saying is, I am the legitimate way for the people of God to go in and out.

Right? So, Think of, Sheep are in their pen at night, And they go through the doorway, Out to find pasture, And they feed during the day, And they come back through the doorway at night, And they find safety and security.

And, The legitimate, The natural, The right way for that to happen is to go through the doorway. And, He compares and contrasts this with others. He says, There are others. There are thieves and robbers.

[10 : 57] They don't go that way. They climb over walls, And they steal sheep, And they want some sheep, And they throw them over the wall, And they maybe kick them or beat them. And Jesus is saying, That those shepherds, Those other voices, Those people that are asking you to follow them, They are illegitimate leaders.

They are self-seeking. They don't care for the people of God. They are self-serving individuals. They care nothing for those that they're leading. They only think about what they can get out of it. But I, I am the legitimate leader.

I'm the one that leads my people to life, To pasture, To feed, To health, And I lead them back to safety, I am the legitimate leader. But then, Jesus changes analogies, And he then talks about himself as a shepherd.

And this is kind of the main picture, In this passage that he gets at. I am the shepherd. And he says here, A couple of times, Verse 11 and verse 14 again, I am the good shepherd. I lay down my life for my sheep.

And again, 14, I am the good shepherd. I know my own, And my own know me. Now, As I said, In the Bible, The picture of shepherds, Is a picture of spiritual leadership.

[12 : 03] It's those that care for, And guide, And look after, And feed, And protect God's people. And that's why in Psalm 78, Actually, God talks about David, His great leader, The King David.

He speaks about him shepherding his people. Remember, David was a shepherd of his father's flocks, Ewes and rams out on the mountainside. And God took him from shepherding sheep, To shepherding his people.

Right? Same job, Different congregation, Different flock. And he says, You were shepherd of animals, Now I'm going to make you shepherd of my people. And so in the Bible, This picture of shepherd, Is always a picture of those that care for, God's people, And lead and guide them.

And God's appointed leaders, Were often, Sometimes good, Like David, David was a good leader. Moses, Moses was a good leader. Abraham. But many of the leaders in the Bible, Were very terrible leaders.

They were abusive, They used and abused people, They were just self-serving, Looking after themselves. And one of the most famous passages, In the Old Testament, Which is kind of the background, To this passage in John chapter 10, Is found in Ezekiel, Ezekiel 34.

[13:08] And in this very famous passage, God gives a stinging rebuke, To the leaders of Israel, The spiritual leaders. And look what he says here. He says, I, You shepherds of Israel, You who have been feeding yourselves, Should not shepherds feed the sheep?

You eat the fat, You clothe yourself with their will, You slaughter the fat ones, But you do not feed, Or care for my sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, The sick you have not healed, The injured you have not bound up, The strayed you have not brought back, The lost you have not sought, But with force and harshness, You've ruled them.

And every religious leader, In the first century, Would know this passage, It's a very, Very famous passage in the Bible. And Jesus, Is holding this passage up, And he's saying, This is you. This is the leaders of the day.

This is the people, That you look up to, And respect and follow. This is what they like. And remember how, Chapter 9 finished last week. There is a man, Who's born blind, Visually impaired, And Jesus heals him.

And how did the leaders treat him? Not with tenderness and grace, With scorn, And severity, And harshness. 9 verse 28 says, They reviled him.

[14:19] That means they hurled, Abusive insults at him. Verse 34, They say to him, You were born an utter sin. How dare you teach us? And they cast him out. This is the leaders of Israel.

How they treat their own people. And Jesus is talking about, These false shepherds, These hide hands, These strangers. And he's holding up Ezekiel 34, And he says, This is the leaders of Israel. This is the people, You're looking up to, To give you wisdom, And advice, And teach you how to go about life.

But Ezekiel's passage, Wasn't just a reprimand, It was also a promise. And so, God says this, I, I myself, Will be the shepherd of my sheep. I will set up over them, One shepherd, My servant, David.

He will be their shepherd. Now, David had long passed away, But God is saying, I'm going to set up a new king, A messiah, A ruler, Who will care for, And love my people. I will set up my king, David. He will lead them back to life, And flourishing. And Jesus stands up, In the midst of all these people, At the festival. And he says, This is me. I am the shepherd that Ezekiel spoke about.

[15:23] I am the good shepherd. Okay? Now, You say, Okay, Okay, So Jesus is a good leader. That's wonderful. But so what? But Jesus is saying more than that.

Jesus is not just saying, I am a good leader. Listen to me. Jesus is saying, He's the only legitimate leader, To occupy the place in our life, That speaks with authority.

And Jesus says that, The choice between him, And every other leader, Is a choice between life and death. Do you notice how many times, This passage uses the word life? Life, I've come to give them life.

Look at verse 10. Jesus says, All those other voices, That demand our attention, And our allegiance, And our hope. Voices of financial success, And financial prosperity, And voices of career progression, And voices of social status, And all those other voices, What does Jesus say? They end up stealing, And killing us, And destroying you. And Jesus says, But I, I have come to give life, And life in abundance.

[16:26] And in John's gospel, When Jesus used the word life, Often he talks about eternal life. Eternal life is not just, When you die, Then one day you get to heaven. It's talking about the life, That God designed for us, When he made us in the garden of Eden.

A life of flourishing, And prosperity. And that has been destroyed, Because of sin. But Jesus says, That when you come to me, You experience life. It's like, In the concrete of our world, A shoot of hope, Bursts forth.

And that will continue, Into eternity, Sure. But eternal life, In John's gospel, Is the life of heaven, That bursts into our life now, And that we get to experience, In this world now.

Jesus says, I've come to give you life, Not just one day when you die, But in this world, In the midst of the storms, And the struggles, And the challenges, In the midst of parenting challenges, And financial challenges, And relational challenges, In the midst of all the brokenness, That this world brings, I've come to bring life.

I've come to bring life, And that you may have it abundantly. And when I looked at this verse, For years, When Jesus says, The thief comes to steal, Kill and destroy, I thought that just spoke about the devil, Right?

[17:36] Okay, The devil, That's him, But Jesus. But actually, As I looked at this verse this week, What I realized, Yes, There's a devil behind all of that, Sure. But Jesus is actually talking about, The competing voices in our lives.

The other leaders, That we give credence to, And authority to, And we listen to them, And we follow them. Jesus says, You follow them with your life, You give your devotion to them, Their heart is to kill you, To kill the joy out of your life, To suck the joy, And to steal hope, And to destroy you.

And so friends, Whose voice is the loudest voice, In your heart? Whose voice are you listening to? Whose opinions, And word, Is guiding your life, And causing you to become the person, That you're called to be?

And Jesus says that, That if you let him lead you, If you trust him, And yield to his leadership, And follow him, Though at times, He will lead you through the valley, Of the shadow of death, Right? Remember Psalm 23, The Lord is my shepherd.

Sometimes he leads us through, What feels like the valley, Of the shadow of death, But Jesus says, I will be the one, That's leading you through that, Out the other side. I won't abandon you there. Yes, It will sometimes be hard, But I will lead you, I will guide you, You will follow me, And we'll come out the other side.

[18:50] Friends, Who is leading you? Who is shaping, And guiding your life? Whose opinions, Matter most to you? Who are you following? Friends, Maybe the people, Whose voices matter the most to us, Are actually people, We've never even met.

People online, Influencers, And we follow them, We give our devotion, To their words and opinions, But is it leading to life? And look at how Jesus, Describes the other voices here, He says, Though they are dressed up, In priestly robes, And they offer religious prayers, And they offer us, A kind of salvation, Right?

They say, Follow me, And I will give you hope, Follow me, And I will lead you, To prosperity and abundance, Jesus says, They offer a kind of salvation, How does he describe them? They are thieves, They are robbers, They are strangers, They are hired hands, They are those that have no right, To the kind of devotion, That they ask for us, And in many ways, Jesus here, Is actually giving us, A binary choice, You notice the binary nature, Of his conversation here?

It's a bit hard, Because in some ways, There are 10,000 voices, That are asking for our allegiance, There's the voice of, You know, The financial times, And our parents, And social media, And school, There are 10,000 voices, But in one sense, Jesus is putting up, A binary choice, He says, There are all these choices here, Or there's me, And these voices, There are many of them, There's lots of shades of gray, But they all lead to the same place, But there's one other voice, Who is the loudest voice in your heart?

Who are you going to follow? And Jesus says, I am the shepherd, Who has come to lead you to life. Now, Why should we trust him? Why should we trust him? Well, You may think to yourself, Hang on, Why should I trust some guy, From 2,000 years ago, Who made some radical claims, Said some outrageous things, Why should I trust him?

[20:36] But actually, That question, Is not just a modern question, That's the question, That people asked, In the ancient days as well. Why should we trust, A penniless carpenter, Who was born to an unwed, Teenage mom, In the backwaters of Bethlehem, Some no name brand town, Right?

Who makes some radical claims, Why should we follow him? And actually, If you look at verse 19 to 21, At the end of our passage, This is the division, That's going on, Right? There was again, A division, A schism, Amongst the people, Because of these words, Many said, He's a demon, He's insane, Why should we listen to him?

Others said, These are not the words, Of one oppressed by a demon, Can a demon man, Open the eyes of the blind? So even in that day and age, People are asking the same question, Why should we trust him? Jesus here in this passage, Gives us two main reasons, Why we can trust him.

And in both of them, Verse 11 and 14, Jesus says, I am the good shepherd, And then he gives us a reason, Why we should trust him. And he says this, He knows us better, Than we know ourselves, And he gave up his life for us, That we can have life.

Okay? So let's look at those two things. Firstly, Look what Jesus says, Look at verse 14, I am the good shepherd, I know my own, And my own know me. I recently, Actually as elders, We recently received an email, From some person, And somewhere in the world, And I've never met this person, I don't know them, But when you read the email, It sounds like we are long lost friends, Right?

[22 : 01] Or brothers, That grew up together. Listen to how he starts off his email, He says this, Dear brother, Slash sister in Christ, Warmest greetings, From PSSWS, Okay?

I know that you are a great servant of Christ, I know that God uses you for his glory, Like a great servant of Christ worldwide, I am blessed by your friendship, And relationship, Because you are so encouraging, And spiritual, I am so happy, With sharing this great prayer, For the African brothers and sisters with you, For your knowledge and information, Right?

And then he goes on this whole long email, And it's like this very deep, And personal, Intimate email, Just between me, And him, And his other 400,000 people, In his mailing list, Right?

And he doesn't know me at all, We've never met, But he writes with such personal kindness, Like with his long lost brothers, Friends, That's not how Jesus knows us, Sometimes they think, Yes, Okay, Jesus knows me, Okay, He knows I live in Hong Kong, Me and 8 million other people, Sure, But that's not what Jesus says, Look at what Jesus says here, Verse 14, I'm the good shepherd, I know my own, My own know me, Just as the father knows me, And I know the father, Jesus Christ says, He knows his people, He knows you and me, To the same degree, That he knows God the father, And God the father knows him, And that's remarkable, Friends, Is there anything in the relationship, Between Christ and the father, That is hidden, Or unknown, Anything in Jesus life, That the father hasn't discovered yet, Anything in Jesus life, That would cause God the father, To be disappointed,

Or feel let down, Anything that God the father, Is going to say, Wow, I didn't see that coming, Is that how you behave? The father knows Jesus, 100% intimately, Transparently, Vulnerably, Everything about him, And Jesus says, To the same degree, That God knows me, And I know him, I know you, I know your fears, I know your joys, I know your hopes, I know your worries, I know your shame, I know the trauma, That you've experienced, I know the way, That people have hurt you, And let you down, I know your desires, I know everything about you, And I love you still, Friends, Is there anything, That you think Jesus, Would discover about you, That would leave him disappointed, Or disillusioned, Or feeling frustrated, That he didn't know about before, Jesus Christ knows you and I, Better than we know ourselves, And though we may be disappointed, And dissatisfied with ourselves, He never is, He knows everything about us,

[24 : 48] And in a world that's becoming, More and more inauthentic, As we hide behind screens, And it's harder to know, Who really knows us, And who can we be vulnerable, And transparent with, There is a God in heaven, That says, I know you better, Than you know yourself, Jesus Christ, Our great shepherd, Invites us to come to him, And to bring our most genuine, Our most authentic, Self, To experience his most genuine, Most authentic grace, Charles Spurgeon, Has a quote, I think we have it up here, He says, He who counts the stars, And calls them by their names, Is in no danger, Of forgetting his own children, He knows your case, As thoroughly as if you, The only creature he ever made, As if you, The only saint, He ever loved, I am the good shepherd, I know my own, And my own know me, As the father knows me, And as I know the father, Friends, We can trust him, We can trust him, And if you think about, What are the competing voices, In our world, Right?

How well do they know us? Well, Some of them know us very well, Think of the social media companies, Sorry if you work for Meta, Or anything, They know you very well, Right? But do they care for you?

Are they looking after, Your best interests? Or are you just, Contributing to their bottom line? Jesus says, I know my sheep, And I'm not a hired hand, I don't use and abuse them, I know them, And I care for them, But look at what else, Jesus says here, Look at verse 11 with me, He says, I'm the good shepherd, Who lays down his life, For his sheep, He who is a hired hand, And not the shepherd, Sees the wolf coming, And he leaves the sheep, And flees, He flees, Because he's a hired hand, And he cares nothing for the sheep, But I, I am the good shepherd, I lay down my life for my sheep, Verse 18, No one takes it from me, I lay it down of my own accord, I have the

authority to lay it down, And I have authority to take it up again, Here again, In this sustained contrast, Between those who care nothing, For the people that they are called to lead, And guide, And they are responsible for, And himself, Jesus repeatedly tells us, That he's distinctive, From every other voice in our world, Every other voice, Because rather than seeking, What he can get from us, Jesus is,

The whole basis of the relationship, Is what he can give to us, And what does he give to himself, Give us? He gives us himself, I am the good shepherd, I lay down my life for my sheep, No one takes it from me, No one demands that I give my life, I do this of my own accord, As we often say here at Watermark, Jesus Christ needs nothing that we have, And has everything that we need, And as we think about that, Jesus doesn't need our lives, He doesn't need our devotion, He doesn't need our worship, Jesus is not in heaven thinking, If only they would worship me, I wish someone would worship me, Jesus doesn't need our worship, Our devotion at all, He needs nothing that we have, But friends, Don't you know, He is the one that has everything, That we need, And out of the abundance, And the fullness of who he is, And the fullness of his grace, He pours into our lives, Grace upon grace, Life upon life, Hope upon hope, As the apostle Paul puts it, He who was infinitely rich, Became unfathomably poor,

Naked, Abandoned, Destitute on the cross, Why? So that we who are spiritually rich, Could become infinite, We who are spiritually poor, Sorry, Could become infinitely rich in him, What Paul says in Philippians, Jesus Christ, The one who, Though he was truly God, He had everything, He did not account equality with God, Something to be grasped, Or held onto, Or entitled to, Rather he emptied himself, Taking the form of a servant, Humbled himself, Where?

[28 : 32] To the point of death on a cross, So that you and I, Could be raised up in glory, And seated with him, And friends, Ultimately, Jesus would lay down his life on the cross, As an atoning sacrifice, For our sin, Paying the price that our sin deserves, Cover our shame, Jesus Christ, The only legitimate leader, Of God's people, Of your life, And my life, Jesus would sacrifice himself for us, So that we can be freed, From the hellish tyranny, Of all the voices in our lives, Demanding that we, March to their drumbeat, Pulling each one of us up, In every direction, And shouting at us, In different commands, Jesus comes, And says, Follow me, Friends, Are you tired of giving yourself, To a thousand voices, Are you tired of trying to be, The perfect employee, The perfect boss, The perfect boyfriend, The perfect girlfriend, The perfect father, Mother, Son, Or daughter, Who or what are you giving yourself to, Jesus Christ, Heaven, Earth's true king, Invites you and I, To come to him,

To follow him, To let him have the predominant voice, In our hearts, I am the good shepherd, I lay down my life for my sheep, No one takes it from me, I lay it down of my own accord, And so as we come to a close, Finally let me ask, What does this mean for us?

Well, Two things very simply, Individually, Friends, Each one of us this week, Are going to hear a thousand voices, Calling for your attention, Asking you to march to their drumbeat, And asking you to follow them, To give yourself heart and soul to them, To listen to them, And let them have the place of authority, In your life, Friends, You are going to see things on Instagram, You are going to read things, In the financial times, You are going to get it from your family members, You are going to hear a voice in your own head, Telling you try harder, Be more, Be better, Your colleagues and your bosses, And your family are going to make comments, That make you feel like you are missing out, Getting left behind, If you don't listen, And in the midst of all the cacophony of voices, This loud, Din of voices, That are shouting at you from every angle, There is a still, Small voice, Almost a quiet whisper, The voice of Jesus saying, Listen to me, Follow me, I love you, I know what's best for you, Listen to me, And follow me, I will lead you to life, Friends, For those of you that aren't Christians, What are you waiting for, For how many decades, Have you been following the voice, Of society and culture, Pulling you in a thousand directions, And where has it got you, Jesus says, I'm the one who will lead you to life, Follow me, Why not let me lead you, Friends, So many of us in this room, Have come to the place, Where once upon a time, We had to make that decision, And we chose to follow, Friends, What are you waiting for, If you're not a follower of Jesus, Why not choose to follow him, Today, For those of us that are Christians, But have wandered from him, You come to church, But if you're honest, Jesus' voice is being drowned out, By a thousand other voices, Why not return to him today, Get rid of the hired hand, Get rid of the thief, That's climbing over the wall, And stealing your joy, Get rid of the stranger, That just wants you to do their bidding, Come to the shepherd of your soul, The one who laid down his life, Who died on the cross for you,

Come and let him lead you, And then secondly, What does that mean for us individually, Secondly, What does it mean for us as a church, Very simply, Who is the ultimate leader, Of Watermark Church, Friends, Who is the one whose voice, Is most prominent in our church, Whose voice, Are we as a church, Going to listen to, In the good times, And the bad times, Friends, Can I say, It's not the elders, It's not me, I cannot be the leader of Watermark, My voice is fallible, And broken, I do not know all things, I do not know you perfectly, I did not go to the cross for you, But there is one who does know you, Who does know our church, Who laid down his life for you, Friends, Jesus Christ must be the most prominent voice, In our church, And in our lives, Jesus says, There's a cacophony of voices, That are clamoring for our attention, And there is one, That drowns them out, And says, Follow me, We as a church, Let's follow him, And so friends, We come to a conclusion, Jesus says, There are a lot of voices, Who are you going to follow, Who are we going to follow, This week, This year, For the rest of our lives,

[32 : 52] The thief comes to steal, Kill and destroy, I have come that you may have life, Let's follow him, And trust him, Let's pray together, Will Jesus help us to do that, We pray, God, In some ways, It's easy to sit in the seats, And listen, To this in theory, But God, When we go to work tomorrow, And our bosses are shouting at us, And the stock market is shouting at us, And our family are disappointed, God, Help us to remember, That your voice, Is a voice that leads to life, Help us to remember your ways, And to trust you, And God, For those of us this morning, That find it hard to trust you, Maybe we've never become Christians, Or maybe we've been Christians, But God, The other voices have drowned you out, Lord, Return our faith, Give us faith, Help us to trust you, And follow you, We need you, And so spirit of God, Come and work in our hearts, And have your way, I pray, In your great name, Amen.