

## Introduction

- Story from “A Christmas Story”
- Little boy collected box tops to send off for a special decoder ring.
- It was all little Ralphie thought about outside of his beloved BB gun
- He couldn’t wait to use it and there’s this great scene with him listening to the radio and taking down the code
  - He’s intently listening to the production, each letter is like a revelation to him
  - And then, what does his code ring discover
    - A simple advertising message
      - Drink more Ovaltine
- It’s a humorous way of looking at the way that the world does us sometimes
  - Sometimes, no matter what, we’re taken for a ride, our energies depleted and we’re left holding the bag.
- On the other hand, here’s the way the Lord makes us feel
- Story about Lillian
  - One day, I see Lillian as I approach her in the car pool pickup line
    - She’s positively enthralled, you could just see that she was excited.
    - She got into the car and before I could say anything, she declared, “Today is the best day ever!”
      - I couldn’t help but wonder
        - Did she make a good grade, did she make a new friend, what was it that had her in such a good mood?
  - She soon told me, today, on the playground, I found three pennies and a rock.
    - She couldn’t have been more content.
      - That’s what Jesus wants for us, to be completely and fully alive
        - Abundant life, he calls it and Jesus teaches us about how to have it versus how to have a very ordinary, worldly life.
- The Two ways deliver different outcomes,
  - Children raised in the faith have much better outcomes in terms of school, social interactions and just in general

- The data is there, if it weren't religion, the state would dictate it for everyone its so good for them
- In our reading today, Jesus promises believers an abundant life, just like Lillian had had that day.
  - But he calls us to that kind of life every single day but there are other voices calling us and unless we're listening carefully, we might be following the wrong voice.

### Moving with the Right Flock

- I remember one time at basketball camp we were all in a big group that needed to be divided so that we could go to our dorm rooms.
  - Well, I got turned around and ended up with the wrong group
  - We lugged our things over to a dorm at Winthrop
    - That's where I found out I was in the wrong group and had to walk a mile in the other direction to get to the right dorm.
      - Sometimes, we make decisions that lead us in the wrong direction
        - But this passage teaches us that when that happens, we are not alone, our shepherd is with us and his voice is calling us out in the right direction to be with Him again.

### Return to John

#### John's Gospel

- In John's Gospel, Jesus is large and in charge, knows what's going to happen and is leading events to their natural conclusion
- This passage occurs immediately following his healing of a man born blind
  - We talked about this last week, how the man was healed by Jesus did it on the sabbath and that created problems with the present leadership
    - The present leadership was wanting to persecute Jesus for blasphemy among other things
      - But he wasn't guilty, he was just proclaiming the truth and performing signs
- Signs

- John's Gospel contains seven of them, each of them designed to teach us something about Jesus and his power
- There are also "I am statements"
  - We get one here in our passage, don't we?
    - I am the Good shepherd
      - Israel has had bad ones, in fact, during the prophecies of Ezekiel, priests themselves had become issuers of falsity
        - They and the secular leaders had become corrupt, leading the people astray
          - God wanted them to know that, despite appearances, they did have a good shepherd

### Sheep

- I think if we realized how dumb sheep are, we'd be highly insulted when we realize that's what we're referred to.
- Judas goat
  - In fact, in sheep slaughterhouses, they have a goat that's trained to lead the sheep right into the slaughter
    - They follow willingly to their own demise
- God wants us to see that, in a lot of ways, we're like sheep and sheep are always imperiled apart from the shepherd
  - That's why Jesus makes the claim that he is like the sheepfold
    - Sheepfolds
      - At night, multiple shepherds would herd their flocks together behind a fence to protect them from predators
        - In the daytime, sheep would display one of their unique traits, the ability to hear and discern.
          - They respond to their shepherd's call, sortin them out
- This is Good News for us
  - It means that when Jesus calls, we can't help but hear his voice calling us
    - Maybe it's been a while since we've been to church and this service is the way God is calling us back to Him.

- It means that God isn't indifferent to us, cares about us intimately and is going out of his way to assist us

Good News – God Knows us

### **Bold Claim of Intimacy**

- **I KNOW MY SHEEP And mY SHEEP KNOW ME**
- At first glance, this sounds tender and pastoral, and it is. But it's also **radical and divine**. Jesus is not saying, "I know facts about my sheep." He says, "*I know them*" — and then He compares that knowledge to the relationship **between Himself and the Father**.
- That's staggering.
- The Father and Son are of **one essence** (John 1:1; 10:30).
- Their relationship is eternal, perfect, and intimate.
- Jesus is saying His knowledge of us carries that same **depth and relational integrity**.
- This isn't knowledge as **data** — this is knowledge as **devotion**. Not **information**, but **intimacy**.

### **B. Jesus' Knowledge is Total**

Let's sit in that for a moment:

Jesus knows **everything** about you.

- Your strengths and gifts.
- Your fears and traumas.
- Your sins and failures — even the ones no one else knows.
- The doubts you carry but are afraid to say out loud.
- The wounds you hide because you're not sure if you'll ever be whole.

And yet — He **does not turn away**.

- He doesn't recoil. He doesn't reject. He doesn't reassess your worth. Instead, He draws **closer**.

### **Psalm 139:**

"O Lord, you have searched me and you know me... You perceive my thoughts from afar... You are familiar with all my ways."

The Good Shepherd sees *the whole sheep* — not just the wool others admire but also the burrs stuck in the fleece, the limp from an old wound, the stubborn streak that won't go away. And still, He calls you **His**.

## Conclusion

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