

NOTE: There is no audio recorded for this sermon.

I'm not happy in my life. I'm not as content as I think I should be. I have too many struggles that don't seem to go away. I'm a victim of my circumstances. This town has run out of opportunities. I'm growing weary of the *same old same old*. There's got to be a good reason why I'm not as happy as I think I should be.

Have you ever known someone who suffered from the "grass is always greener on the other side" syndrome? Maybe you've gone through moments like that. I once knew a couple who, every time they vacationed out-of-state, the place they visited was so much better and had so much more to offer than here, that they were going to change jobs and relocate. The grass is always greener.

There's something in us that's always looking out for something better. Sometimes it's a better internal...spiritual...life. Sometimes we're looking for something better on the outside. Regardless of where we think something is missing, we think if we look hard enough, we can find it.

A woman once wrote a book titled, "The Grass Is Always Greener Over the Septic Tank." If a book title can capture the essence of an idea, that's it.

Today, as we move into John 10, we're going to look at where we need to be in life. How do you find a place where there is a deeper satisfaction in your life? The other side of the fence is enticing. Would my life be better if I lived over there? Would I be happier if I lived over there? Did you hear about the 24-year-old from Wisconsin who won the latest huge lottery? After all taxes are taken out, he will have about \$300 million wired directly into his bank account. Now that grass is greener, right? I like that other side of that fence. If I'm not content now, I certainly will be once that wire transfer hits.

Do you want or need to be on the other side of the fence?

Jesus talks about greener grass in John 10. He tells stories about shepherds and fields. But

what Jesus is really talking about is the assurance of being content and happy with where you are right now.

If you've been here for these past few weeks, you know we were talking about the healing of the blind man in chapter 9. What we're going to read in chapter 10 is a direct result of what happened in chapter 9. Jesus healed a man who had been born blind. What a miracle. But all the religious leaders could see was that he did it on the Sabbath. He broke their rules. Jesus healed the man the wrong way at the wrong time. We used their reaction to look at three things that keep us from seeing spiritually:

1. Doubt.
2. Rules.
3. Fear.

Then we talked about what helps us see spiritually:

1. Obeying Jesus in the ordinary things of life.
2. See Jesus in the circumstances of life.

Chapter 9...and the lessons learned...help us understand chapter 10. It will make sense to you. For now, you might want to write this down:

Once I was lost but now I am found.

You recognize that, right? It's from John 9 and the hymn "Amazing Grace." In other words, once we were without purpose, but in Christ our lives have purpose. When

we invite Jesus Christ into our lives, everything changes. I once was filled with guilt, but now I'm forgiven. I once was saddened by incomplete relationships, but now, in Christ, I am the person I need to be in order to have healthy relationships. Jesus Christ changes lives. We once we blind, but now we see. In Christ, we can see the purpose in our lives.

Chapter 9 ends with the affirmation that we are weak and God is strong. I once was lost but now I am found. What do we call that kind of attitude? What is it when I know I don't have all the answers, and I'm not strong enough, and I'm definitely not the smartest person in the room, and I can't do life on my own? What is that? It's humility. So John 9 ends with a strong statement on humility. You've already lost at life when you don't think you need help. I'll take my spiritual blindness to the grave if I don't admit I need a Savior. So humility helps us see things spiritually.

As we read [John 10:1-13](#), perhaps you'll begin to hear how the lessons from chapter 9 set the table for chapter 10...

*“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.**2** But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. **3** To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. **5** A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” **6** This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.*

***7** So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. **8** All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. **9** I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. **10** The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and*

have it abundantly. **11** *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.* **12** *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.* **13** *He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.*

Do you ever wonder why it sometimes takes you a while to see spiritually? You see something, you have a sense of what God is trying to do, but it takes you a while to connect the dots. How many times have you said, "I should have seen that sooner?" Or, "Why did it take me so long to act?" We do that, right?

This is where chapter 10 comes in.

Jesus moves us from understanding how he heals our spiritual blindness to how we live out of this new truth.

Only Jesus Christ can heal us. And then he helps us live joyfully and abundantly out of that gift. Chapter 10 shows us how we keep the gift of chapter 9 alive.

In verse 3, Jesus says:

The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

To understand what's going on, we need to get a clear understanding of the characters. We're going to be hearing about a shepherd, a gate, a gatekeeper, thieves, robbers, and some hired hands.

Let's break it down:

- The shepherd is Jesus.
- The gate is Jesus.
- The doorkeeper is the doorkeeper.

- The thieves and robbers are the religious leaders.
- The hired hands are also religious leaders.

Because of the way Jesus sets up the story, with the declaration that he is the Good Shepherd, he wants us to know there's also a bad shepherd. There's always that dichotomy. Good and evil. Light and darkness. Good Shepherd and bad shepherd.

Good Shepherd and bad shepherd. There's someone you want to follow in life and there's someone you don't want to follow. That's what we're going to look at. How do you follow the right person so wherever you are, the grass is greener?

Who have we left out of the story? We've listed Jesus and thieves and robbers and religious leaders and hired hands. Who do we get to be in the story? Right...we get to play the sheep. Yay! We get to be the sheep. Let's all say it together:

That's not so baaad!

Sheep. That's who we are throughout the Bible. Psalm 23...the Lord is my Shepherd. Jesus is the Shepherd and we are the sheep. So, if you want abundance and contentment in life, you have to be sheepish. If you want to live where the grass is always greener, then you have to live sheepishly. Notice I didn't say cowardly. There's a huge difference. Jesus never calls us to live like cowards. We want to live like sheep. Because Jesus says that's who we are. We need to think like sheep.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments we are compared to sheep. God is the Shepherd. Jesus is the Shepherd. We are the sheep. Here are a couple of similarities between us and sheep.

First, if I'm a sheep, it means I'm vulnerable. Sheep are vulnerable creatures. God didn't compare us to bears or lions. He compared us to sheep. Yet think about all the ways we try to suppress our feelings of vulnerability. We live in environmentally controlled fortresses. We think through diet and exercise we can make ourselves invulnerable to sickness and disease. We think we can be like bears or lions and power our way through life. We aggressively go after life.

The problem is, though, we are vulnerable. Like sheep. We wander. We bump into things. Predators are real. Bad things happen. They catch us off guard. Tragedy strikes. We get bad news. We are vulnerable in so many ways. That's why sheep need a Shepherd. We need to follow the Shepherd. That's how we are assured of fulfilling and lasting and joyous life. Vulnerable sheep need a Shepherd.

Here's more about the vulnerability of sheep. Sheep stay in folds. They can't stay out at night. The fold keeps them safe and warm.

Sheep also stay in flocks. What do you call a sheep who's a loner? "Lamb chops." That's right. Sheep are together kinds of animals. There's safety in numbers for sheep. That's why Isaiah says, *all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, each one of us, to his or her own way.* What's Isaiah describing? He's describing how sin leads us away from God and toward death. We need to stick together...One Faith, One Lord, One Good Shepherd.

We're like sheep. We need a fold and a flock. A fold is a pen, a place to secure our lives. And we need a flock, a companionship, a place of acceptance in our lives. That's what the church is. That's what our relationship with Jesus is. When you are in Christ, you are in a secure place with a secure relationship. We need to be with others, worshiping and serving together. We are vulnerable like sheep. But God has called us into a flock and a fold.

That's where we're going to end. Next week, Memorial Day weekend and our first 10:00 a.m. worship service, we'll look at another way in which we're like sheep.

We're easily influenced. That's both good and bad.

Next week, we'll see why.