

Together, Let's Move Forward on Our Knees

February 26, 2023

Pastor John Tilden

Good morning. It's great to see everyone. And thank you for allowing me to share some of God's Word with you this morning.

Juliana and I have been here almost 10 years. I don't know where the time has gone, but when we moved here Qorban was almost 5 months old, and the Lord hadn't blessed us with Matea yet. Now, somehow Qorban's about to turn 10 and Matea is 7.

Thank you so much for all your financial help and all your prayers. We love helping new Americans learn English and learn to drive. And for some of those folks, those who are interested, we get the great privilege of praying with them, talking with them about the Lord and giving them Bibles. So, thank you.

Before we read a portion of God's Word, let's pray for some folks.

Pray for Jared and Keri and their family.

Pray for our Pastors, Elders and Deacons.

Our message this morning is entitled "Together, let's move forward on our knees." We'll look at Jesus as our shepherd. We'll also talk about how, at some point, in God's perfect timing, we will have another Lead Pastor and how Jesus our shepherd will prepare us for that time.

Our scripture this morning is John 10:7-18. Jesus has just finished saying some things about a Shepherd and sheep, how the person who does not enter the sheep pen by way of the door is a thief and a robber and how it's the person who enters through the door that's the shepherd. He also tells them the sheep will follow the Shepherd because they know his voice, but they will run from a stranger. The people, in verse 6 "did

not understand" what he was talking about, so Jesus speaks to them again. And that's our verses, 7-18.

.... ⁷ so he explained it to them: "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. ¹⁰ The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. ¹² A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. ¹³ The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.

¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, ¹⁵ just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

¹⁷ "The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. ¹⁸ No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded."

Let's look at some important things Jesus says about Himself. In verses 7 and 9, Jesus refers to Himself as the gate, or door for the sheep. Ultimately, Jesus says He's the way to God. If you're checking out Christianity and want to learn a little bit about this man Jesus. This is what He

said about Himself. Jesus told people that He is the way to God. You don't need man-made images or idols. You don't need to live all your life hoping that on judgement day, your good deeds will out-way your bad deeds. You need the One who said He is the way to God. Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, Isa al Massih, Jesus the Anointed One. Only in Him and through Him will you receive the gift of eternal life. That's what Jesus says about Himself.

In vs 12 He says the hired hand will abandon the sheep when he sees a wolf coming. But Jesus is no hired hand. In Deuteronomy 31 God says "never will I leave you nor forsake you." I know we have a certain amount of uncertainty right now about direction, but our Good Shepherd will not leave us. He will continue to lead us and guide us.

In verses 14 and 15 Jesus says he knows his own sheep, and they know him. He says they will listen to his voice. So the question each person who follows Jesus has to ask themselves is "Do I listen to my Shepherd's voice?" Here's some good news, the Creator of the universe, the One who is all powerful and all-knowing wants to personally shepherd you and help you live in the way that He wants to bless you. And he gives us the responsibility and the empowerment to position ourselves to receive from Him. To receive what? The abundant life. Not just surviving but thriving. First and foremost, who we are on the inside.

And the main vehicle we use to position ourselves to receive from God is spiritual disciplines.

You can find a lot of books on spiritual disciplines. A couple of weeks ago, Pastor Jacob referenced a great writer on spiritual disciplines named Richard J. Foster. Another big name is Dallas Willard. A book by Kenneth Boa, called Conformed to His Image has been helpful to me.

Each spiritual discipline acts as a kind of spiritual taxi to put us in position to receive from the Lord. So let's look at some of these "spiritual taxis."

Solitude - It gets us away from people and the negative influences of the world. Jesus wanted solitude before big decisions or changes in his life. He did this in Matthew 4 before starting his public ministry. In Luke 6, before choosing His disciples he went up on the mountain, and in Matthew 26 he prepared for the cross by being alone in the Garden of Gethsemane. With solitude, we're not just getting away from things, we go be in the presence of God.

Silence - It's difficult in our culture, and you really have to make it happen, but If you want to listen to your shepherd's voice, silence is huge.

Prayer - If you don't have the prayer-life you'd like to have, choose a time, choose a place, set an amount of time to pray and do it daily. One way to help keep it well rounded is the acronym ACTS. Adoration (praise), Confession (agreeing with God about something, Thanksgiving, and Supplication (intercession and petition).

More spiritual disciplines include studying God's Word.

Meditation - Not emptying our minds but filling our minds with God's Word.

Journaling

Fasting - It lets us know how much we are controlled by our bodily appetites and helps us have self-control.

Chastity - Includes continually saying "no" to improper thoughts and feelings.

Confession - sets us free from the burden of hidden sin.

Fellowship - Our brothers and sisters from other

countries, more communal countries do a great job with fellowship, but some of us from the U.S. could grow in our fellowship and community.

Submission - to others as an expression of our submission to Christ.

Guidance - Is about recovery of spiritual direction. And it's not only on a personal level with a mentor, it's also a corporate discipline where the local body of Christ seeks a Spirit-directed unity.

Simplicity - Helps us resist the extravagance and consumption of the world.

Stewardship - As you reflect on how you're doing with time, ability and money.

Sacrifice - Has us give up a need, not just a want.

Celebration- One chooses gratitude and focuses on all God has done on our behalf.

Service - Focuses on the needs of others.

Witness - Getting outside our circle of believing friends, so we can bear witness to Jesus.

Jesus says there will be one flock with one shepherd. Here's a pretty cool thing to think about. Right now, God is preparing His chosen pastor for us, and He's preparing us, His chosen flock, for His chosen pastor. This is why spiritual disciplines are so important. Not only will God use them to grow us individually, He will use them to grow us as a Church Body and prepare us, as a Church Body for His chosen pastor. Let's pray for His chosen pastor.

When I think of God's chosen flock, that's us, the mental picture I get of us being healthy is described by these words: "Together, moving forward on our knees." We must move forward together, or we will find we haven't really moved forward at all.

In verse 16 Jesus says there will be one flock and one shepherd. He's talking about Himself as the Shepherd and Israelites and Gentiles together

being one flock. But it applies to us as well. We, as a local body of Christ will not move forward with the one flock who voted this way, and the one flock who voted that way. We have to be one flock.

And with the organizational structure we typically use in the Assemblies of God, it needs to be one Lead Pastor. Years ago, it would not have worked to have Lead Pastor Jared and Lead Pastor John Wilson. In a similar way, in God's timing, we, together, need to be all in on God's new chosen pastor. One flock, one shepherd.

To come together, we have to face our anger.

Anger is a secondary emotion. Our adversary, Satan uses three emotions in a sneaky way, to hold up anger. These 3 emotions are like the shaft of an umbrella, with anger being the canopy.

Fear - I know some of us are afraid: the numbers seem to be going down, the giving might be going down, what if the next pastor is not very good?.

Frustration - I know some of us are frustrated: It felt like we didn't really have a lead pastor for a year, now we really don't have a lead pastor.

Hurt - I know some of us are hurt: I love Jared and Keri, and it hurts to see them hurting. But if we are going to "together, move forward on our knees," we have to take any fear, frustration and hurt, and give it to the Lord.

I'd like to read a song written about 3,000 years ago.

Psalm 23
A psalm of David.

¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. ² He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful

streams. ³ He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. ⁴ Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. ⁶ Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.

Vs 6 "Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me." The Hebrew word translated "pursue" is a technical military term. In battle, when the enemy would flee, this word was used to tell the Israelite army to pursue for the purpose of overwhelming their enemy. David the shepherd, who is also David the King, the military leader, uses this word about God's unfailing love. "God, surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me for the purpose of overwhelming me all the days of my life."

We can't see it now, during this uncertain time, but trust Jesus, your Good Shepherd. One day, we will look back and know how God pursued us for the purpose of overwhelming us with His unfailing love.



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