

“Sheep & Shepherds Part 2: Jesus, the Chief Shepherd”

John 9:39-10:21

March 8, 2020

Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service

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Well ... as I've done several times now, we are returning to a longer text in John's Gospel for a second time.

Last Lord's Day we looked at John 9:53-10:21 and we focused on the theme of Jesus as the *good* shepherd. This morning we will focus on the implications of Jesus as the *chief* shepherd.

With that in mind, please listen carefully to John 9:52-10:21, for this is God's word for us this morning.

^{9:39} Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.

^{10:1} “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. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ 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, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

¹⁹ There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰ Many of them said, “He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?” ²¹ 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 the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let's pray ...

Lord, as we come to your Word,
along with the psalmist we ask you to teach us the way of your statutes,
that we might keep it to the end.
Give us understanding, that we may follow your word
and observe it with our whole hearts.
Incline our hearts to your testimonies,
and not to our own selfish ends.
Turn our eyes and attention now from frivolous things,
and give us life through your word.
Grant this for Jesus' sake. Amen.
[Based on Psalm 119:33-34, 36-37]

Jesus, as we discussed last Lord's Day, gives us a figure of speech here – something of a parable.

And he places us as sheep. And central to the sheep here is their needs. The sheep need provision – they need pasture to sustain them. And the sheep need protection – they need to be guarded from predators. And we need the same things – we need to be sustained and guarded in this life, both physically and spiritually.

But then, when we seek to meet those needs, we encounter false solutions – we encounter thieves and hired hands.

Thieves, Jesus tells us in verses one, eight, and ten, come to exploit the sheep. They come to feed *on* the sheep rather than to feed them.

Hired hands, Jesus tells us in verses twelve and thirteen, will work for the sheep, but the moment the costs outweigh the benefits – the moment a wolf shows up that threatens the hired hand as well as the sheep – then they cease to protect the sheep. They don't exploit the sheep, but they don't really protect them either.

And in contrast to both of these, Jesus tells us that he is the Good Shepherd. He is the one who comes to his sheep rightly, through loving care and service. He is the one who treats his sheep not as a means to an end, but as individuals – he knows them each by name, as he tells us in verse three. He is the one who opens up true pasture to his sheep, that they may be filled – satisfied and sustained, as he tells us in verse nine. And he is also the one who protects his sheep at all costs – even being willing to lay down his life for his sheep, as he tells us in verse eleven.

And so the foundational – the fundamental thing this text does, is that it urges us, as Christ's sheep, to hear his voice and to follow close to him: trusting him above all others to provide for our ultimate needs, and trusting him to the end to protect us from *all* our enemies – from sin, and Satan, and even death.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep, so that if we follow him, we will be fed by him, and be blessed for eternity with him. That is what is at the heart of this passage: at its heart it addresses the question of how we relate to God. And the answer it gives is: through trusting in and relying on the love of Christ.

That is what we focused on last Lord's Day. That is the main point of this text.

But it's also not the only point of this text.

Because in addition to telling us how to relate to God, this text also tells us how we are to relate to one another.

And we can see where it does that in verse sixteen. Verse sixteen is easy to pass over. But this morning I want to suggest that a whole ecclesiology – and if we press it, maybe even a whole social theory – lies inside verse sixteen.

Jesus, in this passage has been talking about how he is the Good Shepherd, and how his sheep will hear his voice, and will recognize his voice, and will follow him. In fact, he implies that that is exactly what he has been doing in his earthly ministry – it is an explanation of all those who are following him up to this point.

And then, in verse sixteen he adds this – Jesus says: “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, one shepherd.”

What's going on with that?

Well, as commentators affirm, Jesus is talking here about the Gentile mission – the incorporation not only of Jews into his flock, but of non-Jews who will also hear the voice of Jesus, and follow him as his disciples – as his sheep. The Jews are one fold that Jesus will draw his flock from. The Gentiles are another fold. Jesus will call his sheep from both folds and will draw them out and into one flock – the flock of his people.

That Jesus will call sheep from the fold of the Jews is no surprise – we have seen him doing that throughout his earthly ministry, as it has been recorded in John's Gospel so far.

But that then leads to the next question: When does Jesus go out and call the Gentiles – the non-Jews – from their fold, to join his flock?

And the answer is ... that he doesn't really ... at least he doesn't in a significant way in his earthly ministry.

Instead what we see is that he calls them through his Church in the book of Acts. Which is something we should pause and reflect on.

Because Jesus's words here state that *he* will bring those sheep among the Gentiles in, and that they will hear *his* voice. But the fact is that it wasn't Jesus who physically went to call them, but it was his Church – his followers. How then does that work?

Well, Jesus and John give us some direction on that, later on in John's Gospel. In chapter twenty-one, Jesus is speaking with his disciples after his resurrection from the dead and before his ascension to the right hand of God. And in that time Jesus talks with Peter. Now, there are a few things going on in that conversation, but one of them is that Jesus is giving Peter a charge.

In chapter twenty-one we read this – it says:

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to

him, “Feed my lambs.”¹⁶ He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.”¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

Jesus calls Peter, his Apostle, to be his undershepherd – a lower-ranking shepherd who works under the chief shepherd. And as we read the Apostle Peter’s words written later on, it becomes clear that this conversation shaped the way that Peter understood his ministry. Because in Peter’s first epistle he addressed the elders of the churches saying: “I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder [...]: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” [5:1-4]

When Peter tells the leaders of the churches what their role is, he tells them that it is the same as his: they are to serve as undershepherds – as lower ranking shepherds – who serve under the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. And they are to fill that role by following the same pattern Jesus described here in John chapter ten: by caring for the sheep, rather than using them as a thief or a hired hand.

And that is what Peter did in the book of Acts. It was Peter who was sent by God to the house of Cornelius, the Gentile. It was Peter who preached the gospel to them so that they would believe and be incorporated into the flock of Christ. It was by Peter that Christ called his sheep among the Gentiles.

Imbedded in verse sixteen of our text is the fact that Jesus calls the first Gentiles – as well as all the Gentiles who would follow them – not by his own mouth in his own earthly ministry, but by the ministry of his people, whom he charges to be his undershepherds, doing his work, calling and caring for his flock, as he, the Chief Shepherd, oversees them. [Augustine, Tractate XLVII.3]

And, yet, even so, verse sixteen stresses that it is truly Christ who is speaking and working in all of this. Augustine, preaching on this passage, puts it like this – he says: “But perhaps some one thinks that, as [Christ] Himself came not to us, but sent [others], we have not heard His own voice, but only the voice of those whom He sent. Far from it: let such a thought be banished from your hearts; for He Himself was in those whom He sent.” He goes on to point out that Paul said that it was Christ who spoke through him [2 Cor 13:3], and that Jesus claimed here that *he* spoke to the sheep in the Church’s Gentile mission. “Therefore,” writes Augustine, “even when it is by the instrumentality of His servants, it is [Christ] and not another that brings them. [...] It is He Himself who speaks by His servants, and it is His voice that is heard in those whom He sends.” [Tractate XLVII.5]

Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd of the sheep. But Christ uses undershepherds, and those undershepherds (who are not limited to the Apostles) are called to shepherd the flock by the same pattern that Christ shepherds them. Christ is the Good Chief Shepherd. They are called to be the undershepherds.

That has many implications for us, and for how we relate to one another. But let me draw out two. It means that we are called to seek *out and follow* faithful undershepherds. And it means that we are called to *be* faithful undershepherds.

First, we are called to seek out and follow faithful undershepherds.

And this reality should shape our thinking first and foremost in the Church.

When it comes to leaders in the Church, most of us can be prone to either cynicism or naïve idealism, and Jesus will not permit either to us in this passage.

First, it won't permit naïve idealism because it tells us that there are false shepherds – it tells us that there are anti-shepherds: thieves and hired hands. Some, like the hired hands, are lukewarm in their commitment. Others, like the thieves, are even more devious. And it tells us that these anti-shepherds can work their way into church leadership. In fact, that is exactly what we find in the events leading up to Jesus's words in chapter ten: the leaders of the synagogue are thieves and hired hands who have just cast the man born blind out of the synagogue. So much abuse and pain in the Church has come from a willful naivete – and a refusal to admit – that anti-shepherds *can* rise to leadership in the Church. We must not fall into the same blind idealism.

At the same time, this passage will not allow a pessimistic cynicism about the Church and its leaders either. Here we read about how Jesus truly speaks through the Church – through its leaders, through its fallen and fallible teachers and preachers – through men like the Apostle Peter who denied Christ three times. Through Peter, Jesus called his sheep and saved them. And he has been doing the same thing for his people ever since. Jesus truly works through the words and deeds of his people, who can be faithful undershepherds even while they are very far from perfect.

Admitting both of those realities then, we are to desire and to seek spiritual leaders who live and speak as faithful undershepherds of Christ, the Good Shepherd. We are to look for those who strive to *protect* the sheep. We are to look for those who are determined to *provide for* the sheep. We are to seek those who will sacrificially serve and lay down their lives for the sheep.

That is true for our ministers, for our elders, and for our deacons – for all of the officers in the church. But it's true as well for the many non-officers who serve in the church. There are many who serve the church in a variety of ways. Our text reminds us that the kinds of leaders we are to seek in each role are faithful undershepherds. And that means a few things.

First, that means that those are the kinds of leaders we are to *choose*. We will have elder elections coming up in the next few months. No man is perfect, and we all fall short. But at root, this is the characteristic you should look for: men who will be faithful undershepherds – not mere hired hands, and certainly not thieves.

Second, it means that these are the kind of traits we are to value in our leaders at all levels: we value sacrificial service over charisma, we value true spiritual provision over catering to our desires, and we value spiritual protection over popularity.

And that last one is worth noting. Because those two things: spiritual protection and popularity, can be at odds with each other. Protecting people from the world, the devil, and their own sinful hearts often means warning people against things they want to do, and rebuking them when

they'd like to be left to themselves. But to leave them to themselves – to leave them to their spiritual wolves – is the act of a hired hand, not a faithful undershepherd.

You should value leaders who will rebuke you in your sin – even when they know it will cost them.

Of course, these are high standards. As I've reflected on them the past couple weeks, I myself have felt deeply convicted by them. I can see the ways I have fallen short of them. I can see the ways I have been quiet when I should have spoken.

Which brings us to our third point: All of this also means that you should pray for your leaders in the church. Pray for your leaders, that they may be faithful undershepherds – that they might serve as Jesus served.

These are some of the applications of this concept and of this text. And they fit because the most obvious and the primary applications of all of this is in the church. But I would also argue that it is not limited to the church.

Jesus here speaks of his redemptive work, and in the work of redemption his people in the Church are his undershepherds.

But redemption is not the only place where Christ has dominion, and it is not the only place where he uses other people.

God shepherded his people well before the fall. Adam and Eve were called to shepherd each other's hearts. Adam's silence at the temptation of Eve was, in many ways, a failure of shepherding. He acted like a hired hand.

Had they not fallen, Adam and Eve still would have been called to shepherd their children's hearts – to train them to follow the Lord. As the population grew in an unfallen world, we could imagine that as they fulfilled the cultural mandate to fill the earth and subdue it, some organization would be needed, both in terms of labor and the distribution of the results of everyone's work, and in terms of civil organization. Even in an unfallen world there would be relationships of authority, and those in authority would be called to serve as God's representatives and as undershepherds of those under their care.

In other words, while necessary changes have to be made, and while the amount of commitment and loyalty each sphere demands would vary – still the dynamic remains that serving others as an undershepherd is not limited to the Church and the *redemptive* work of Christ – but it is a calling that Christ puts on his people in all areas where they have authority or influence over others.

And this has a number of implications for our relationships and callings.

For all of us, this should shape the kind of friends we seek out and invest in. Do you have close friends whom you trust as faithful undershepherds towards you in your life – as faithful representatives of Christ, the Chief Shepherd?

For those of you who are single, this should shape the kind of person you seek to marry – for they will shepherd a significant part of your heart and your life. For those of you with children, this should shape the kind of place you want to send them to school. For those looking for a job

this should shape *something* of what you hope and pray for in an employer. For those involved in politics, this should shape the kind of person you want to vote for or support.

In the church, but also in all areas of life, to whatever extent we have a say in it, we are to seek out, value, and follow faithful undershepherds.

That's one implication of our text.

A second is that we also are to work to *be* faithful undershepherds to others.

And this applies to us in many of the same ways that we just considered its application to others.

It means that in the church – whether in our formal role in the church, or the informal roles by which we relate to our brothers and sisters in Christ – we are to strive to be faithful undershepherds of the Christians around us, not thieves or hired hands. We are not to exploit others for our own gain, of course. But we are also not to be committed to other Christians only so long as it's mutually beneficial for us. We are instead to seek to sacrificially love them as good undershepherds.

That means that we point them to the truth so that it might nourish them. It also means that we guard them from spiritual danger. And that last one can be especially challenging for us.

Augustine notes this in a sermon on this text. He says: “Who is the hired hand that sees the wolf coming, and flees? He that seeks his own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. He is one that does not venture plainly to rebuke an offender. Look, someone or other has sinned – grievously sinned; he ought to be rebuked, to be excommunicated: but once excommunicated, he will turn into an enemy, hatch plots, and do all the injury he can. At present, he who seeks his own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's, in order not to lose [...] the advantages of human friendship, and incur the annoyances of human enmity, keeps quiet and does not administer a rebuke. See, the wolf has caught a sheep by the throat; the devil has enticed a believer into [sin] you hold your peace – you utter no reproof. O hired hand, you have seen the wolf coming and have fled! Perhaps he answers and says: See, I am here; I have not fled. [But] you have fled, because you have been silent; you have been silent, because you have been afraid.” [Tractate XLVI.8]

As Augustine points out, we are often afraid to raise a concern when a brother or sister in Christ seems to be opening the door to a temptation, or straying from faithfulness, or wandering from the flock. Stray sheep don't like it when someone gets in their way. But that will often be our calling as undershepherds of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

And so ask yourself, whether in feeding them or in protecting them: How is Christ calling you to be a more faithful undershepherd to those around you?

Beyond the church, we are called to the same thing in our families: to love our family members, not just to tolerate them; to give ourselves for them, rather than use them for selfish gain or in a social contract of mutual benefit. That is not how Christ has treated you. He loved you sacrificially, and put your needs and protection above his own.

And so how might he now be calling you to be a more faithful undershepherd to your spouse, or your children, or your siblings, or your parents, or some other part of your extended family?

Christ calls us to be his faithful undershepherds in the Church. He calls us to be his faithful undershepherds in our families. And he calls us to be his faithful undershepherds out in the world as well.

When it comes to our callings in this world, the Christian philosopher James K. A. Smith has recently drawn people's attention to the letters that Saint Augustine wrote to a man named Boniface, who was both a Roman general and an African governor [Smith, 197-201]. Two letters in particular address the details of Boniface's life. One is written during a period when Boniface is living faithfully and asking Augustine for further advice on living out his faith. Another is written sometime after Boniface's wife had died, and Boniface seems to have lost his way spiritually and in a number of other areas of life. We wouldn't agree with everything that Augustine wrote in these letters, but at the same time, together, they give us an interesting and personal picture of our callings to be undershepherds out in the world.

As Augustine either confronts or exhorts Boniface, he calls on Boniface to carry out his work like a faithful undershepherd in the specific places the Lord has called him to in the world.

Of course, on the one hand, Boniface could prove to be an anti-shepherd if he carried out his duties like a thief or a hired hand. To that end, Augustine gives him a number of warnings. He warns him about the dangers of catering to the sinful desires of those he serves alongside, and of leaving those under his care open to their exploitation. [220.6] He warns him of being so preoccupied with his own career advancement that he neglects the protection of those under his charge. [220.7] He warns him against abusing or humiliating his opponents in battle, rather than working for peace once the battle is over [189.6] He warns him about being led astray by the many temptations that can accompany his line of work in the military and in government. [189.7] In all these ways, Augustine warns Boniface of being an anti-shepherd – of being one who would use or exploit those under his authority for his own personal benefit.

But Augustine also warns him against being an anti-shepherd by *abandoning* his calling in the world. Boniface had told Augustine that he desired to leave his roles in the military and in government in order to live a monastic-style of life instead. And Augustine's response was to urge him not to do that. [220.3] Instead, in his letters, Augustine lays out for Boniface what his calling is as an undershepherd of God in the world.

He reminds him first that at the heart of all he does must be love for God and love for his neighbor. [189.2] He goes on to exhort him, in all that he does, to seek the good and the priorities of God over the goods and priorities of this world. [189.3] He reminds him that though some would look down on his role spiritually, the Scriptures gave him no reason to doubt that he could serve the Lord faithfully as a military leader – just as David did, or the centurion whose faith Jesus praised [Matt. 8:8-10], or Cornelius whom the Lord praised through an angel [Acts 10:4], or the soldiers baptized by John the Baptist [Luke 3:14]. [189.4]

And from there, he points Boniface to the specific service he provides for others – including the people of God – by his work in the military.

He directs Boniface to 1 Corinthians 7:7 which says, “each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.” Applying that broadly, Augustine compares those living as monastics to Boniface out in the world, and writes: “Some, then, in praying for you, fight against your invisible enemies; you, in fighting for them, contend against the barbarians, their visible

enemies. Would that one faith existed in all.” [189.5 (here and in what follows I have updated the language of the translation in minor ways)]

Augustine says that each, in a sense, serves as an undershepherd for the other. Those in ministry serve Boniface by shepherding him spiritually. Boniface serves those in ministry by shepherding them physically – protecting them from the barbarians who were attacking the land. [See also Augustine, 220.3,12]

And so, as we consider our various callings to be faithful undershepherds in the world, Augustine helps us see several things. First, and most obviously, as we go out to serve in different roles in the nonbelieving world, there is a temptation to act like the world – helping others only so long as it helps us, abandoning others when helping them might put us at risk, even exploiting others for our own gain. As we go out in the world, we are called to turn from such ways.

But along with that, we also need to beware of the ways we can abandon the world around us like a hired hand. The idea of retreating from the world is increasingly popular among evangelicals right now – of withdrawing from the market place, withdrawing from culture-making institutions, withdrawing from politics, withdrawing from local non-Christian communities and institutions. And the way that some – including myself at times – can criticize some of these institutions, can lend more of a push for Christians towards abandoning them.

But Augustine reminds us that that is the way of the hired hand. We are called to serve in this world – to love God *and our neighbors* – and that means using the gifts God has given us for the good of the Church and for the good of the non-Christians around us – in the marketplace, in culture-making institutions, in the political process, and in our local non-Christian communities as well. That is messy. That is hard. But as Augustine writes to Boniface: “we ought not to want to live ahead of time with only the saints and the righteous.” [189.5 – translation quoted in Smith, 199] In other words, the day will come when we will spend eternity with only the saints and only the righteous. But that day is not yet here. And we must live in the age the Lord has placed us. Which now calls us to use our gifts in this world for the good of our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as our non-Christian neighbors.

This means that if you are called to work in the marketplace, then this is how you are called to do it – you are to engage in it with the gifts God has given you, not in a worldly way, but as an undershepherd to the Maker of all things.

And so you are to be an employee or an employer – a worker or a manager or an owner – who doesn’t use and exploit those around them, or over them, or under them, but who works for the good of *all* around them. You are to be someone in the marketplace who feels a sense of obligation to those you work for and with, and does not abandon them to the wolves for your own convenience. And so you are to serve as a blessing to those who are under your authority, to those who have authority over you, to the owners of the business you work for, and to the customers of the business you work for. In a day when accusations fly about self-centered employees and exploitative employers, Christians are called to be faithful undershepherds, blessing those they work for and with, in whatever place the Lord has called them in the market.

And we are called to engage with government service and politics in a similar way. There too the accusations fly of the self-interested bureaucrat or the self-serving politician. But such sins are not at all inherent to government or political service, just as greed is not inherent to service in the

marketplace. We can approach any calling like a thief or a hired hand – like an anti-shepherd. But the Lord calls us instead to approach every one of them as a faithful undershepherd. And that includes politics and government.

That means that when you are politically active, you are seeking the good of your neighbor and Christ’s kingdom – not seeking the victory of one cultural tribe and the humiliation of another. It means that you approach the conflict of politics as Augustine urged Boniface to approach the conflict of war: you accept the conflict so much as it is necessary, but you long for and work for peace and blessing – peace and blessing not just for your allies, but also for those you are in conflict against. You seek, as Christ said, to be a peacemaker. [189.6]

It also means, that as Augustine exhorted Boniface, if you are gifted for political or governmental service, then you are not to bury your talents – you are not to be a hired hand who flees the dangers or drawbacks of such service – but you are to use the gifts God has given you as a government official or a politician who seeks to work for the good of his neighbors and the good of the kingdom of Christ, as a faithful undershepherd in civil government.

In each of these areas, some of us already have our vocations, and our calling is to consider how we can fulfill them as faithful undershepherds. But for those of you who are still seeking to discern your callings – who are students or who are transitioning to a new calling – you need to consider how God has gifted you and where he might be calling you to serve, in this world that is so in need, in so many places, of faithful undershepherds of Christ.

We’ve said a lot of things morning. And if we let the implications of verse sixteen and Christ’s calling on his people sink in, it can be overwhelming. It is no small task to be an undershepherd of Christ in any area of life.

But that is where we need to remember once again that in every aspect of this – whether in those who oversee us or those whom we oversee – it is Christ that ultimately does the work. Our task and our calling are still very real and very serious. But it is a task we can pursue – it is a task we must pursue – while fully relying on him.

Because even as we are called to *find* good undershepherds, and even as we are called to *be* good undershepherds, even so, at the same time, we are also Christ’s sheep. And we fulfill our roles as undershepherds the same way we fulfill our calling as Christ’s sheep: by listening to his voice, and by following close behind him wherever he calls us. For he is the Chief Shepherd. And he is our Good Shepherd.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

Augustine. *Homilies on the Gospel of John*. Tractates XLV, XLVI, XLVII. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series, Volume 7.

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