

John - Part 32 - Sermon Manuscript - John 10:1-10 - King of kings

Go ahead and turn with me to John chapter 10. As you get there, think about this...

If you were to describe who Jesus is, what words come to mind?

God? Savior? Lord? Messiah? Friend?

All of these are good, but for me personally, there's one word that's used to describe Jesus that humbles me...

King. Jesus is our King!

Jesus Himself accepted the title of King. Not long before Jesus was crucified, Pontius Pilate asked Jesus if he was the king of the Jews. Jesus said, "You say that I am a king." That's a first century way of saying: *Yep! You said it!*

And then after His death and resurrection, we see that many Christians were referring to Jesus as their King - which, if you're in the first century Roman Empire, calling *anyone* other than Caesar your king could get you in a lot of trouble!

[Blank] Case in point... Have you ever heard about Jason in the New Testament? He's only mentioned a few times, but I love his story. Jason was a Jewish man that lived in a city called Thessalonica.

The year was around 50AD (20 years or so after the death and resurrection of Jesus). And during this time Jason met a missionary named Paul. But he wasn't alone... He had a whole missionary team with him.

When they arrived in Jason's city, Paul walked straight to the synagogue and explained to everyone there that the Messiah in their Hebrew Scriptures had to suffer and rise from the dead. Then he told them that *Jesus* is that Messiah!

Paul must have been really good at arguing his points because normally you'd be kicked out of the synagogue, but Paul and his buddies lasted a few weeks, which resulted in a lot of people believing in Jesus... including Jason.

Remember, Jason was a Jewish man that now believed in Jesus. We've talked about what that would mean for someone like him - he'd essentially be kicked out of his Jewish community and would be better off moving to another city.

But Jason wasn't going anywhere. Instead, he invited the believers to his house! Imagine that... This new community of believers was only weeks old! It was growing fast, with both Jews and other people! That would have been just as exciting as it was dangerous...

It was dangerous on a couple levels. On one hand, you have the Jews who *didn't* believe in Jesus. They were outraged at the number of people choosing to believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

They were so angry that they went to the marketplace in Thessalonica and found some evil men (NIV "bad characters"). These bad characters and the angry Jews formed a mob and started a riot in the city. That mob then rushed to Jason's house because somehow they knew the Jesus followers were hanging out there.

They went there specifically looking for Paul and Silas because they were the ones that seemed to lead this Christian group. But Paul and Silas weren't there. So instead, they dragged Jason and some of the other believers outside into the crowd and took them to the city officials.

Here's what the angry Jews said:

Acts 17:6b - "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here [notice that Paul's mission trips were well known]..."

Acts 17:7 - "...and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus."

I want us to notice that Christians used *King* as a normal title for Jesus! We might think: *Okay, so what? What's the big deal?* Well, it was a huge deal! Here's what happened next...

Acts 17:8-9 - "When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil **[the city officials were completely disturbed and even confused by this!]**. Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go **[they had to pay to get released]**."

So, for Jason and his friends, not only was it dangerous to call Jesus the Messiah, but it was also dangerous to call anyone other than Caesar your King - that was on the level of treason!

[Blank] But that was 2000 years ago on the other side of the planet. It might be hard for us to relate because we live in The United States of America. We don't have a king that governs our land. We don't live in a United *Kingdom*.

If we did, our *entire* way of life would be different. Freedom would have a whole new meaning for us. We'd only be as free as the king would allow us to be.

And what if we had a bad king? There's not much we could do about it. He would be king as long as he lived.

But what if our king demanded worship like Caesar did in the first century? What if we weren't allowed to call Jesus our God and King because that's how our leader saw himself?

If we lived under those conditions, *then* we could begin to understand what it was like for Christians like Jason. We know that Christians from the first century were eventually persecuted so badly that they were being killed for sport!

...All because they claimed Jesus was their *King*.

[Caesarea Picture] I shared this image with you before, but I remember being in Caesarea back in 2019, and I stood in the very spot where Christians were brutally killed. They weren't just killed because they had faith in Jesus. The

main reason they were executed was because they claimed that Jesus was their King.

For me, that may have been the most humbling moment of my trip.

[Blank] So again, Jesus is our Savior; He's the Messiah; He's our Lord and our Friend... but let's not forget that He is also our God and our King.

You might be wondering what any of this has to do with John chapter 10.

After all, John 10 is about shepherds and sheep.

Well, in the ancient world, the picture of the shepherd with his sheep is often used to describe the king and his people.¹

For example - In Ezekiel 34 Yahweh God is holding the kings of Israel responsible for their sin. He says that they took care of themselves and disregarded Israel. They didn't search for the lost. They didn't heal the sick. They ruled the people of Israel harshly and brutally.

But the interesting thing is that in this chapter, the people of Israel are described as sheep and their kings are referred to as shepherds. Israel's shepherds allowed for their flock to be scattered over the whole world. They became food for the wild animals. And because of this, here's what God said through the prophet Ezekiel...

Ezekiel 34:10 - This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them."

Ezekiel 34:11-12 - For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will

¹ Wright, Tom. John for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-10. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004. Print.

rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness...

Ezekiel 34:15-16 - I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. 16 I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

Again, Israel's kings (shepherds) were not doing a good job. They led their own people into sin which resulted in God's people being attacked and scattered over the whole world.

So, God's plan was that He would be their Shepherd. He will search for them and rescue them from their enemies. He will bring back the lost sheep and will bring them rest.

[Blank] This is the Old Testament context for the shepherd and sheep illustration that Jesus uses in John 10. Let's read it...

John 10:1-6 - Very truly I tell you Pharisees [these are the same Jewish religious leaders Jesus was talking to in John chapter 9], anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." 6 Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

Let's pause here...

Shepherds kept their sheep safe at night by using a sheep pen. They had all different kinds of pens, ranging from temporary ones made out of thorn bushes to ones that were walled in on every side.

The point here is simple: *No one* should be entering the sheep pen except through the gate. The shepherd is in charge of who comes in and who stays out. If anyone tries to enter the pen through another way, they must have evil motives.

Jesus calls them thieves and robbers. In His day, thieves were people who broke into someone's home. Robbers were found along the country roads, hiding for the next person to pass by so that they could rob them.

But either way, these were “bad characters.” The shepherd was supposed to protect his sheep from these kinds of dangers.

But the shepherd offered more than protection. The shepherd knew his sheep by name. He would literally name them like we name our pets today. The sheep would grow accustomed to his voice, to the point that they wouldn't follow anyone else's voice.

The sheep would eagerly follow their shepherd because they trusted him. If anyone else besides the shepherd would try to herd them, they would have to do it from behind and usually with dogs just to get the sheep moving.

Now, these are all very interesting facts but Jesus is making an illustrative point. He's going to eventually say in verse 11 that He is the “good shepherd.”

In other words, Jesus is thinking back to passages like Ezekiel 34 and He's saying that He is the Shepherd of God's people. He's their King. He's their Messiah. And He knows His sheep and they know Him. They don't trust anyone but Him.

This is what the Pharisees didn't understand.

John 10:7-8 - Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers [**He's talking about the Jewish leaders of His day**], but the sheep have not listened to them [**Because “their voices were not the voices of authentic shepherds”²**].

² Mounce, Robert H. “John.” *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke–Acts (Revised Edition)*. Ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland. Vol. 10. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007. 502. Print.

John 10:9 - I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved **[saved from following inauthentic shepherds; and saved for eternal life]**. They will come in and go out **[this is a saying that means “all the time”]**, and find pasture **[they will rest in Jesus]**.

John 10:10 - The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Following inauthentic shepherds only leads to death. But Jesus, the true Shepherd, leads His sheep to life! And that word life is often used in John's gospel as shorthand for eternal life.

Only Jesus leads us to eternal and abundant life. And He has the authority to do that because He is our true Shepherd. He is our true God and King.

[Revelation 19:16] In fact, in John's last book - the book of Revelation - Jesus is called the *King of kings* and Lord of lords!

Speaking of kings... I think of King David in the Old Testament. David was the King of Israel, and yet, the LORD God was his King! I often quote his words from Psalm 23...

Psalm 23:1-4

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing **[The LORD is his King!]**

He makes me lie down in green pastures **[He leads David to rest]**

He leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil,

For you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

In other words, David is saying that even though he's going through the worst time in his life, he will follow the LORD as sheep follow their shepherd. David knows the LORD... He depends on Him... He trusts the LORD... He doesn't need anything because the LORD is His shepherd - His King.

[Blank] Jesus is saying that He is that Shepherd. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. And as our King, when we put our faith in Him, we are promised the gift of eternal life.

But it doesn't stop there. **The fruit of our faith will be shown through our trust in Him, our loyalty to Him, our obedience for Him.** The fruit of our faith will be shown through our love for Jesus and for others.

Ephesians 2 says that God has planned good works for us to do - these good works are all about connecting people to Jesus so that others will know Jesus as their God and King.

But it's not just about people knowing Jesus, our King Jesus *knows* us! He knows us by name. He knows every hair on our head (Luke 12:7)! And He's a good King that leads us to truth and salvation. In fact, He is the *only* way to truth and salvation:

John 14:6-7 - Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Any shepherd that claims to know the way to God that's not Jesus, is an inauthentic shepherd. They're the thieves and robbers that invade the sheep pen. Their promises of a good life only lead to death.

Jesus is the only way to true and eternal life. He's the only way to have life to the full. He's the only voice we need to follow. But how do we follow His voice? Well, we have His Word. And we also have the Holy Spirit that guides us to truth.

[Blank] So, as we think about this passage today, I want us to ask ourselves:

Do I trust Jesus as my Shepherd - My God and King? Have I been following voices other than Jesus?

Let's Pray