



# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

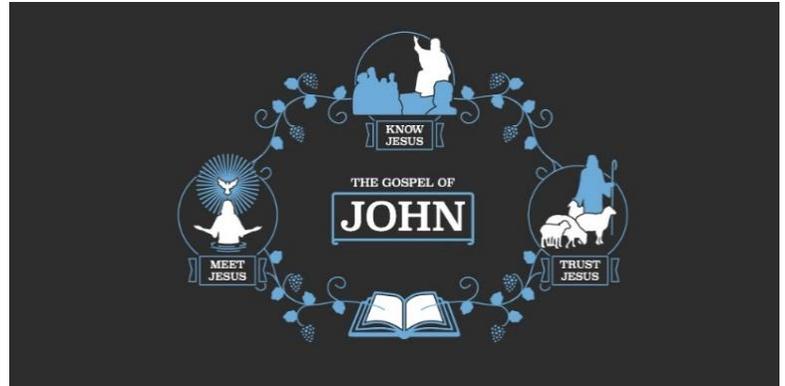
## SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

## The Good Life

### The Gospel of John

John 10:1–21

Tim Badal | February 6, 2022



We're in a series titled "The Gospel of John." We're looking at the life and ministry of Jesus and what it means to us and to the world. We're seeing Him through the eyes of His best friend, the Apostle John. This morning we come to a chapter ten in which Jesus continues to speak both to the people and to the Pharisees.

Jesus had just healed a man who had been born blind, so you would have thought there would have been parades and all kinds of accolades given to Him in response. But instead, more adversity and animosity came His way. In our chapter today, Jesus is going to invite us into something glorious, something only He can bring, and that is the good life.

Growing up, my dad had a saying, "I've died and gone to heaven." When he would say that, that meant he was having a great day. Maybe Mom had made his favorite meal. Maybe it was a good day with the family. Maybe we were doing something special. When I heard my dad say, "I've died and gone to heaven," I knew he was living the good life.

All of us want to live the good life. We have a lot of different definitions of what the good life is. For some, it's going to a beach, especially in the midst of a very cold winter. What's better than a secluded beach where one can hear the waves and feel the ocean breezes? There's something about getting away that makes them say, "I've died and gone to heaven."

For others, it's gathering around the table. As you get older, this is what heaven is like—gathering with your kids, maybe grandkids, close friends, doing something special together like celebrating a birthday or a holiday. There's something glorious about being together with them.

Still others who may be more introverted, who don't find that last picture exciting, might want to get a good book and a cup of coffee and just be alone. Maybe dying and going to heaven for them is just some time away to think and process. For them, that's the good life.

For the businesspeople and entrepreneurs among us, it's making a deal or getting a new customer. As a businessman and a pastor, I recognize this. I know the hard work that goes into securing that new customer, getting that new project, signing the new contract and shaking hands over it. That can be the good life.

For others, the good life is none of these at all. It's about getting money. In their minds, the more money they have, the more opportunities they have to buy and do things. For each one of us, there is some situation that brings us to say we've died and gone to heaven, just like Bill Badal used to say.

However, Jesus will explain that none of these things are able to bring us the happiness and hope we long for. He will use the metaphor of a shepherd leading sheep. If we follow Him like a sheep does its shepherd, we too will be able to experience the good life. We can experience all God desires for us in this world.

Also in this passage, Jesus is calling out the Pharisees for things they have done, things that have seriously damaged the Jewish people. Yet in the middle of that, He says this in verses 9–11:

<sup>9</sup>I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. <sup>11</sup>I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

These verses act as a hinge for the entire conversation, inviting us to experience the good life. But this isn't the first time God has invited His people into the good life. First, we find this in Psalm 16:11: *"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."* In the good life, God not only leads and guides us, but He also gives us the fullness of joy and pleasures forever.

You might be thinking, "Tim, you don't understand the week I just lived through, the calamity I'm dealing with. I am living in a dark and dreary place. Now I come to church and you say you want me to experience the good life? You don't know how bad things are. How can I believe what you're saying?"

Let me read another verse for you. Isaiah 58:11 says the good life can be found even in the most difficult or dreary times. *"And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail."*

This morning, I'm not asking you to look through rose-colored glasses, nor am I asking you to smile and then good things will happen. However, God promises that in the most difficult circumstances, we can still experience the good life that only He can provide. This promise is based on Ephesians 3:20, where it says that God *"is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think."*

So what exactly is this good life? Let's define it the way the Bible speaks of it. It's not referring to earthly possessions, power or pleasure. Rather, it means we can live daily in God's presence and grace. It is a calm, contented and confident life, regardless of the circumstances and situations we face. Why? It's not because we're strong or have resources in ourselves, but because we have God's promises in Scripture. We know of God's providential care for us. This kind of life doesn't mean we're exempt from grief, trials or pain. Rather, we can revel in knowing that our good Shepherd has promised to walk with us every step of the way. Because of this, nothing can overwhelm or overtake us. This life is joyful and satisfied, not because we have lots of stuff, but because we have Christ and we know He is the door to the peace and hope we all long for.

Can we agree that this is the kind of life we truly seek? Maybe we didn't even know it was available, but every heart longs for the life only God can give. Sadly, far too many of us are living mediocre lives, even as Christ followers. God is willing and able to offer us so much more, but there's something that's keeping us from experiencing it.

Jesus is going to use two metaphors in this passage. First, He says He is the door, or the sheepgate. Second, He calls Himself the Shepherd of the sheep. Those concepts are foreign to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but to the first-century audience, these were familiar images that made total sense to them. Many scholars believe Jesus may even have been pointing to or standing by these things He was using as illustrations.

Sadly, even with these visible images, we read that the people still did not understand what He was saying. Also sadly, far too many of us today don't realize Jesus is the way to the good life. So how can we receive this good life and make it part of our own experience?

## **The good life is found by forsaking the things that steal it.**

We must get rid of, move away from or release ourselves from these things. We read in verse ten, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy."* This is in direct contrast to Jesus Who offers His people the good life, but there's something that gets in the way. Specifically, that something is a thief, or rather, the thief. The people of that day totally understood what that meant. It was a common occurrence for people to steal sheep. But of course, Jesus wasn't speaking literally here. He wasn't saying there were sheep literally being stolen; rather, He was referring to a spiritual event. There were people among them who were robbing the people spiritually.

Who was this? It was the Pharisees, the leaders of Israel. He had very harsh things to say about these men. In Luke 16 He calls them covetous men. In Mark 12 He says they take advantage of the poor and oppress the widows. In Matthew 21 He says they turn the temple of God into a den of thieves. Over and over again, He tells them that although they have been made responsible

to protect the spiritual life of the nation of Israel, the Pharisees had no actual interest in caring for the people of God. They didn't care about the people's spiritual health; they only wanted to pad their pockets and raise their prestige in the world they had developed. That's why Jesus called them thieves.

The Greek word for thief is *kleptes*. It's where we get our word kleptomaniac. But this Greek word refers to more than someone who simply steals; it refers to a person who steals by cunning or stealth. In other words, you don't know you're being robbed. It's as if the Pharisees were pickpockets. They took valuable things from you without you being aware of it, so you wouldn't discover it until you needed what they had stolen.

It was as if a pickpocket had stolen your purse or wallet, but you had gone on with your day. You might have picked up all your groceries, then you don't realize you cannot pay for them until you get to the cash register and realize your purse or wallet is missing. By stealth, the thief took what was valuable, but you didn't know it until you needed it.

Similarly, the Pharisees were stealing something valuable from the people of Israel, but they had no idea this was happening—and they wouldn't know until they would one day stand before God. This is why Jesus said the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy. The spiritual life of Israel was being taken from them and they didn't even know it was happening. These people thought they were doing right, continuing their spiritual activities as they had been told. But in the end, when they stand before God, they will have missed it. Jesus said these Pharisees needed to be held accountable for their sin.

You might say, "Time out, Tim. We don't have Pharisees today. We're not a Jewish congregation. We're not living in the first century. We're not living under the Mosaic law. We don't have religious leaders who stand over us. So does this passage apply to us?" The answer is yes. We don't have one specific thief. Rather, there are many thieves who can impact the lives of Christians, causing us to not live the good life God wants us to have.

Let me give you four examples of thieves in our lives that the Bible speaks about. I'll start with the one farthest from us and the biggest, then move down to the smallest and closest.

### **The devil**

The first thief is the devil himself. The Bible tells us clearly that he is a thief and a liar (John 8:44). He's been known to greatly harm the people of God. He does this by tempting us, by enticing us to not obey the words of God, to not follow our good Shepherd. Some of us are in the clutches of the devil's lies. We're believing in and following him and because of this, we're not experiencing the goodness of God.

### **The world**

John also wrote the book of 1 John where he speaks of how the lusts of the world are a problem to us. It seeks to conform us to its patterns. It advertises to us that life and happiness can be found in the accumulation of the things it offers. Sadly, all this is also a lie.

How many people have sought to accumulate all kinds of temporal things, only in the end—as Solomon said—to find out they had been chasing after the wind. It might have been possessions, pleasures or prestige, things only a king like Solomon could have. But at the end of his life he said all these things were vanity, like chasing after the wind and meaningless.

We don't have to look any farther than the advertisements that tell us over and over again, "Eat this, take this, have that, then you will find the joy and peace you're longing for."

### **False teachers**

The Bible also tells us, especially in the New Testament, that false teachers in the church are people we need to watch out for. They look like pastors, they act like pastors in many ways, but they are using the ministry to pickpocket people. Their ministry may look, sound and feel like a real church ministry, but in the end, the only thing that's happening is the false teacher is being enriched. We see them on TV and hear about them in other media, people who live lavish lifestyles while promising good things to the people of God. In the end, they care nothing about the people or about God; the only thing they care about is themselves.

## Ourselves

The devil, the world, the false teachers—these can all be thieves. But there's one more thief who can be even more subtle. You might be surprised by this, but I believe another thief who can rob you from living in the goodness of God is you —and me.

We so often think our enemies can only come from outside, but they can also be within us. Some of us are struggling with our problems without taking them to God. We're saying, "I can figure this out. I'll do it my way." Some of us are validating our issues by calling them habits. We tell people, "Just leave me alone. Don't try to change me." Then instead of finding victory in Christ, we allow ourselves to have a victim mindset. We must be careful not to dwell in our difficulties without releasing them to God. God wants to set us free, but some of us are robbing ourselves of the joy and hope God wants us to have.

So whatever is trying to sell you on how the good life can be found, if it is saying it can be found apart from Christ, it's a thief. Jesus tells us, "I am the door. The good life comes through Me."

## The good life is found by following the One Who supplies it.

Once we identify and forsake these thieves, we now can follow the One Who can actually supply this good life. Jesus says, "I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly." But how do we get this? Look at verse nine: "I am the door." Right away, the people understood this image, but today we can't relate to this metaphor. Usually the sheep pens held the flocks of a number of shepherds. Each community would set up a pen nearby, where all the sheep were gathered until it was time to take them out to pasture. They were all intermingled. So how did each shepherd sort out his particular group of sheep? He would call them by name. He would stand at the door calling for them and they would come to him. It's quite amazing. It would be like what we experience in America when we call our dogs. The sheep know the voice of the shepherd and respond only to that voice.

Today there's another voice that calls us by name. Jesus says, "I know you and I'm calling you." He says, "Tim, I want you to come to Me. I want you to follow Me. I will lead you, guide you and give you what you need." In order for us to receive what He offers, three things need to take place.

### Jesus needs to pave the way.

One of my favorite commentaries on the book of John is by James Montgomery Boice. He wrote this: "Jesus did not call Himself a wall, for that would mean people would have to climb over it to be saved." It would involve hard work and many might not even try to do it. He continues, "Jesus did not compare Himself to a long, dark hallway." There people would be too afraid to venture in. Jesus didn't call Himself a wall or a hallway—He called Himself a door. "A door is a beautiful picture," Boice wrote, "because a door can easily and instantly be entered." So when Jesus says, "I am the door to the good life," He's not saying, "Fix your life and think about it for a while." He says, "You can enter it instantaneously."

All of us walk through doors all the time. We don't even think about it. But here's what the door metaphor helps us to understand. A door is a way to enter, so if you want the good life, Jesus is saying, "Come through Me. I am the way by which you can enter it."

Not only does a door serve as an entrance, it also is a means of exclusivity. It separates two rooms. You entered the sanctuary because you came through the door this morning. Then after you pass through that door going out, you're no longer in the sanctuary, you're in the foyer. So because Jesus is the door, you're either with Him or you're not. Jesus was telling anyone who would listen, "You can enter. Anyone can enter freely. But when you come and follow Me, it means you're no longer with the Pharisees. You have to make a decision. They are thieves, but I am the Good Shepherd." We cannot get the good life without Jesus.

### Jesus protects the good life for us.

As is clear in this passage, there are a lot of things that can rob us of the good life. We've already talked about the thieves and robbers that can come, but there are other adversaries. Let's pick up in verse 12: "*He who is the hired hand is not the shepherd...*"

This hired hand "*sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.*" This hired hand cares nothing about the sheep. That's a problem.

Go back to verse nine where Jesus says, *"If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture."* Some of us think the good life in God is segregating ourselves from the world. We come to know Christ, then we leave the world. We spend our time in church activities because "that's where God is." We're going to be in the sheep pen called the church, so we'll limit our lives to staying with Christian people. But notice that the pasture Jesus mentions is outside that sheepfold. He tells us we must go out into the world to reach that pasture. Therefore, if the good life is to be found only by doing Christian things with Christian people, then He would have taken us directly to heaven the moment we got saved.

Rather, for us now, the pasture is out in the world and here's what Jesus tells us: "I promise to protect you as you go in and out." As you go to your workplace, your school, into your community, there will be thieves and robbers. There will be wolves that come. But Jesus is saying, "I will protect you." You will not be overwhelmed or overtaken, because he who enters by Him, *"will be saved"* (verse nine). We might think this refers to our salvation. But Jesus is using a word that literally means to be delivered safe and sound. What He is promising to all of us is that the good life can be found in this world. Despite all the pain and difficulties, if we follow Jesus, then and only then will we find the safe harbor as we go in and out of the world. Then at the end of our lives, we will be delivered safe and sound into eternity with Jesus.

The Apostle Paul told the Philippian church, *"He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 1:6). He told the Romans, *"Those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified"* (Romans 8:30). You will never be in some kind of halfway-house Christianity. He will see you from the start to the finish. He protects us in this good life.

But how do we get it? We have enemies all around. There are dangers all around. Jesus provides what we need. The Pharisees were supposed to guard the people against the wolves, but when the wolves came, they went running like a hired hand. Many scholars believe the wolves are the devil and his demons, the enemies in the kingdom of darkness. It was the Pharisees' job to hold those forces at bay, but instead, the sheep were left helpless, with the devil and his kingdom ready to devour them.

A picture of humanity is the devil and the people, with no one standing between them. The devil was licking his chops, ready to pounce and destroy the people in this world—that is, until the Good Shepherd showed up. He came between the devil and us. The devil accused the people of violating God's rules, saying they needed to pay for their sin. But Jesus told him, "You're right. That's why I'm going to the cross. I will lay My life down for the sheep."

You see, the good life is good because of Good Friday. The good life is good because Jesus took the bad and the ugly, the shame and the scorn. He took all of that upon Himself. *"For our sake he (God the Father) made him (God the Son) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"* (2 Corinthians 5:21). That is the good life. We have gone from being sinners to saints. We have gone from being God's enemies to being part of His family. Jesus made this happen by His finished work on the cross. That's why He's the Good Shepherd. Nobody else would do that. Nobody else was perfect enough to do that. He stood between us and our greatest enemies—sin and death—and He conquered them once and for all. He could then say, *"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"* (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Because of this, my friends, we can have the good life. But how do we get it? As I study the Bible, I always want to look for patterns—things that are repeated—which often indicate things we're called to do. So notice that five times in our text today Jesus talks about listening to His voice. So do you want to live the good life? From what we read here that Jesus wants us to listen to His voice.

Over the course of this last week, how often did you quiet yourself enough to hear Him? Did you move away from the things of this world, even for a few minutes, to turn your attention to the things of God? I'm just saying, do you stop and say as Samuel did, "Lord, I'm listening"? It means opening up His Word and meditating on it day and night. "Lord, what do You have for me?" You will not experience the goodness of God until you're listening to the voice of God. You'll never receive what God wants to give you until you're opening your ears and heart to Him. Five times Jesus mentions listening.

Then four times in our text I see another pattern. He says, "My sheep follow Me." That means they take what they hear and put it into action. Sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd then follow him. They put feet to what they've heard. So in this past week, how much did you follow the voice of your God?

You say, "But Tim, I'm not living the good life." I know why. You're not listening and you're not following. Parents, you'll understand this. Your kids will not experience your grace and goodness if they're rebelling against you. What makes us think we can rebel against God's voice, rebelling against His Son, and still receive goodness and grace from God, being able to fellowship with Him? We won't. We never will, unless we listen and follow.

## **The good life is found by finding ways to share it.**

This leads to one final point. Jesus is telling us that this message needs to go beyond those who are hearing it now. In verse 16 He 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."* Jesus was talking to a group of Jews. He told them, "I wish I could keep speaking to you about this, but I have another flock, another group of sheep who need to hear My message." He was speaking of us, the Gentiles. He was saying, "I'm going to do much more than Abraham ever thought, because I'm going to bring into My flock both Jews and Gentiles." He was speaking of the Samaritan woman and others who would be able to hear His voice.

That then begs the question, as those who have experienced the goodness of God and the good life, shouldn't we share this with others? The third thing we need to do is find ways to share the gospel with those who are not yet in the flock of God. How do sheep share the goodness of the shepherd? As our Shepherd is feeding, nurturing and protecting us as sheep, how do we respond?

Let me tell you how not to share the goodness of your Shepherd, yet we do this all this time. We get into a group of people who don't have Him as their Shepherd, maybe around the water cooler, and someone will ask, "How's your life going?" Our response is, "Terrible." Then we begin to speak of this issue and that issue. "My marriage is falling apart. My kids are a mess. I hate life. You know that jerk boss we have. I'm unhappy." The other person responds, "Oh. You talk about the good life with your Shepherd, but I think I'd rather stick with my life." Far too often we aren't really living out the good life. We need to realize that the good life will actually be attractive to people who don't have it. There's a wasteland all around us. What people need to see in us is that we are settled and secure in the arms of the Almighty. That doesn't mean our lives are perfect or that we don't have issues or struggles, but we do have real joy, peace and patience. We have the fruit of the Spirit and it's overflowing.

If this is true, then when someone see us go through a struggle, they will ask, "How can you handle that the way you are?" Then we can tell them, "I have a Good Shepherd. He loves me, cares for me and protects me. He walks alongside me. Can I show you my Good Shepherd?"

You see, we too easily advertise, not Jesus, but the substitute for Jesus that doesn't fix our problems, doesn't address anything. It just means we have an appointment on Sunday, but then we wonder why the world doesn't want our Jesus. This doesn't accomplish anything. But if you allow the Good Shepherd to lead and guide you, if you listen to and follow His voice, this will be altogether attractive to a bunch of lost sheep looking for Someone who will love them and lay His life down for them. That's what we have in Jesus.

Do you know the Good Shepherd this morning? If you don't, He's the door. If you need help finding that door, find me, find someone next to you, and simply say, "I want to know the good life found in Jesus." We want to share that with you.

For those who have already been walking with Jesus, there's a word for us to remember. We need to listen to the voice of our Shepherd and we need to follow Him. It would do us well, each and every one of us, to take some time, and with the Holy Spirit's help, to identify where we're not listening and where we're not following. If we do this, we won't get beat up. Instead, we will once and for all experience all that God wants for us. Amen?