SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Rewilding your soul. John 10:7-11.

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Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

Our Scripture reading is found in John chapter 10, verses 7 through 11 and 17 to 18. I'll give you a second. It's going to be on the screen, I think, as well. John chapter 10, verses 7 through 11:

> *So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*
>
> *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*
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> *"For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 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."*
>
> *- John 10:7-11, 17-18*

This is God's Word. Amen? You guys can be seated.

The Rewilding of the Knepp Estate

I heard this amazing story a few years ago, and I thought it was really appropriate for our time as I was praying to come in here and share with you guys tonight.

If we haven't had a chance to meet, I get to look after the creative ministries at Champion Forest and serve with the most amazing people here. I just think this is the best church on the planet. I'm so grateful to be here, and I'm really grateful to Cal for the honor and the invitation to come and be with the hippest group on the campus here - the coolest, the most beautiful. I mean, you guys are where everybody wants to be, and I'm really grateful to be with you guys tonight.

God's already done such a special work in my own heart, and I believe He wants to say something to you specifically tonight. This is going to be great. His Word never returns void.

In 1983, Charlie Burrell inherited the Knepp family estate from his grandparents. It was a 3,500-acre farm in West Sussex, England. With this incredible estate, of course, you can imagine it came with great responsibility. Three thousand five hundred acres is a lot, but it had one big problem: the land was never really suited for modern farming.

The Knepp estate was on soil called low Weald clay. It lay on top of really rock-hard limestone. The best way

to describe it is that it's like cement in the summer, and it's like wet cement in the winter. It's very difficult to farm.

But Charlie and his wife, Isabella, gave it a go. Season after season, they built fences around the property. They cleared the land. They pushed the wildlife out. They blanketed the farm with seeds, and they would follow that by trying to reap a harvest and blasting it with chemicals and pesticides over and over, year after year, to try to grow a good crop of wheat and barley.

After 17 years, in the year 2000, they found themselves 1.5 million pounds in debt. That's about two million bucks for us, okay? They were literally going to go bankrupt. The land they'd been trying to farm for 17 years was actually worse off than it was when they started.

They couldn't continue farming the land this way. The ground was completely exhausted. They were exhausted. The soil was fried. It was overused. The plant life was obliterated, and the wildlife that had sustained the ecosystem had completely gone away. It vacated.

Three thousand five hundred beautiful acres were now desolate and barren. The birds, the butterflies, the bees - gone. The crops were dead. I want you to get a vision of this. In short, the beauty, the wonder, the life itself had left the farm.

Once Charlie and Isabella came to the end of themselves, it occurred to them that there was nothing to do but surrender their way of inhabiting the land and let it get back to what it was intended to be: wild, lush, beautiful, adventurous, abundant. They got a vision for something far more beautiful for this land than what they'd ever known before.

So what did they do? They tore down all the fences. Catch this, because it's going to matter later: they didn't just walk away, cross their fingers, and hope something good would happen. They actually became active in bringing life back to the property.

They brought in herds of longhorn cattle, beautiful Exmoor ponies, Tamworth pigs, deer, and all the like, free to roam, with all the animals doing what they were made to do. Then they let the plant life just go wild, just grow again.

They had to rewild the land. Have you ever heard that term before? Rewilding the land.

There was outrage from locals. They weren't doing things the way the community wanted them to, and how was this going to affect the economy and the ecosystem of the community? It didn't happen in days, but over time, something magical happened.

Isn't that beautiful? It's like a wild safari, right? Completely beautiful. The land went from completely exhausted, over-farmed, and toxic to exhilarated; from barren to beautiful; from failing to flourishing.

They said the turtle doves, which are beautiful birds, had nearly gone away from England. They all came to nest there again once they rewilded the land. The plant life began to grow again.

They began to run wild safaris, ecosystem trainings, workshops, host weddings, and offer camping

expeditions. They have more and more business as they go along. With each passing year, in fact, they are now reinvesting all their profits to help rewild the land and treat our planet better across the world.

I want you to catch this. They are doing this across the world now, and just a few years earlier, the land was completely barren because they were doing it the way they wanted to do it.

Farming Our Lives Our Own Way

It occurred to me that I think a lot of us are farming our lives the way Charlie farmed Knepp.

We might be the most managed and resourced generation that has ever lived. We track our sleep. We curate our feeds. We plan the next five years. We keep every option open. We've got AI in our pocket. We can ask it anything we want at any given time, and yet we are the loneliest, most anxious generation, searching for a bigger purpose.

We're fenced in. We're sprayed down with toxicity, and we are exhausted.

So here's the question: Where have we been farming the ground of our lives our own way? Where have you built fences around your safety and your comfort, or around certain areas of life that you just don't want to give up? "Not that, Lord." You don't want to give it up, and it's choking, literally choking, the land. It's choking the life out of you.

Maybe you're settling for a small, controllable plot of ground.

What are the chemicals you've been allowing to saturate the soil of your life as you try to farm life your way, hoping somehow it will yield a good crop? Binging the Netflix show to numb out - more chemicals. Endless scrolling - more chemicals. Where's the crop? Porn - more chemicals. A toxic relationship - more chemicals.

All the while, life seems to be getting smaller, more fearful, tired, and purposeless.

I just want to say something here, guys. The Netflix, the scrolling, the porn, all that - that's not the real problem. They're just chemicals. The real problem lies underneath. It's this: Who do we put our trust in?

You see, if we're in this space, we don't trust anyone else with the land. We don't trust God with the land. We want control. We're scared of what happens if we let go. We haven't yet gotten a vision of something more beautiful.

You've probably heard it said, "We become like what we behold." I love this quote from C.S. Lewis:

"It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased."

Maybe we're so concerned about what people think of us that fear of rejection is holding us back. Could that be you? Build a little fence. Keep it small. Keep it safe.

I love this quote from Leonard Ravenhill: “If you have the smile of God, what does it matter to have the frown of men?”

As a recovering people pleaser and approval addict, okay, that really hits home with me.

I’m not asking you to fix anything yet. I want you to just name it. Name it. What are the fences? Hold it in your mind, because we’re going to come back to it.

Life More Abundantly

Let’s go back to our Scripture reading, John chapter 10, verses 10 and 11:

> *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*
>
> *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*
>
> — John 10:10-11

There are two characters here as Jesus is talking to the Pharisees: the thief and the shepherd. These are the religious leaders He’s talking to, who in John chapter 9, just before this, had thrown a healed man out of the synagogue.

Jesus is basically saying anyone who uses the sheep instead of feeding them is a thief. Behind every thief is the enemy of your soul.

The thief, the enemy of the sheep, comes to do what? There is an enemy. There is an enemy. He’s looking to steal your joy, to kill your future, and to destroy the abundant life the Good Shepherd is promising you.

But there’s hope, right? Let’s double-click on the original language.

In Greek, there are actually three words that all get translated into one word in English, which is “life.”

The first is bios. Say that with me: bios. That’s how you say it in Greek. It is the life of the physical body. This is everything physical.

Then there is psuche. Say psuche. That’s kind of cool. It is the life of the soul - mind, emotion, and will. This is like your personhood. This is the essence of who you are: your mind, your will, and your emotions.

Then there’s zoe. Say zoe. Yeah, the life of God Himself. Zoe is actually the divine life. It means the uncreated, eternal essence of who God is - the divine life.

We see this back in John 1:4:

> *In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.*
>
> — John 1:4

That life, that zoe, was the light of all mankind. This is so cool.

In John 10:10, “life” is zoe, the divine life. God wants to give you the divine life. The Good Shepherd came to

give us the divine life. He's saying He has come to give it more abundantly.

So let's zoom in on "abundantly." What does that mean? Perissos is the Greek word there, which means surpassing, more than enough, so much that you can't even measure it.

The divine, eternal life of God, so much that you can't measure it. That sounds pretty amazing, doesn't it?

This is not about material wealth. This isn't abundance like, "I got my new Tesla" abundance, right? This is not about comfort. This doesn't mean easy. The Shepherd who promises abundant life, in the very next breath, says He's going to lay His life down.

This is about spiritual overflow. This is about unshakable joy and a fullness that holds you when life is excruciating. This is a joy that can't be taken even in death. So what could we possibly be afraid of?

How does He give it? Think about this. He says, "I have come to give you life, zoe, and life more abundantly."

Remember psuche? Look at verse 11 again:

> *The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*
> — John 10:11

Right there, it's psuche. It's actually the essence of who He is. He's saying, "I'm going to lay down My life for the sheep." That word is psuche.

He lays down His own soul so that He can give you and me the divine life, the life that is surpassing, the life that is eternal, the life that transcends the difficulties of this life. He laid His life down so God's life could become alive in us.

This is why He came: to give us something wild, beautiful, and radical that not even death can stop.

The thief wants to shrink your life. He wants you wracked with anxiety, distracted to the point of boredom and ultimate despair. Once he gets you completely distracted, completely isolated, and paying attention to all kinds of other things, then he wants to come to you and tell you how awful you are and how there's really no point to anything anyway.

But Jesus, the Good Shepherd, wants to rewild your soul.

I'm going to say that again: Jesus wants to rewild your soul.

I want to be careful here, because some of you hear the word "wild" and you go, "What? No rules? Do whatever you feel, right?" No, that's not it.

Look at the picture Jesus uses. He uses a sheepfold with a door, a gate. The sheep go in and out, and He is the door. He is the gate. They go in and out and find pasture. They find sustenance. They find safety. They find His presence. There's a fold, and there is freedom.

The fences I'm talking about are not the Shepherd's fold. They're the ones we build to keep Him out so that we

can stay on the throne of our hearts.

If you remember the farm we talked about earlier, the one you saw pictures of, that land didn't heal itself. It healed and flourished again because life was brought back in.

The zoe life, the divine life, is not something that's just buried inside of you, waiting to become unlocked. It comes from outside you, supernaturally, from the God of the universe.

Rewilding isn't invention. It's restoration. It's what God has for His children. I like to say it's Eden, the Garden of Eden, breaking back through.

The Good Shepherd in the Garden

I bet some of you guys are in here tonight, and if you're like me when I was your age - I'm a little older now. I've been young for a long time. I have my first grandchild. Her name is Holland Paige. See me after if you'd like to see pictures. She's perfect. She looks just like her grandfather without the beard.

But if you're like me when I was your age, you're probably asking, "How can I trust Him? Really? I mean, look at all the hard things. Look at all the difficulty. Look at what I experienced when I was growing up. How can I trust Him?"

Maybe you're on the fence. Maybe you like coming to this every Tuesday night. Something keeps drawing you. You love being around all these beautiful people and singing. You sense something supernatural happening, but you've got questions.

Questions are good.

So then the question for me is, what kind of heart is actually saying, "Come, follow Me"? What kind of person is Jesus? He says He's the Good Shepherd. Where do we go in His Word to say, "Who are You really?"

I'll tell you where we go. We go to the grove. Not this Grove, but the olive grove. See what I did there? The olive grove.

You know what I'm talking about. It's one of the most famous scenes in all of Scripture, John chapter 18. This is one of my favorite scenes because we get to see who Jesus is and see His power and His love displayed.

> *After saying these things, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with his disciples and entered a grove of olive trees. Judas the betrayer knew this place, because Jesus had often gone there with his disciples. The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. Now, with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons, they arrived at the olive grove.*
>
> *Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them.*
>
> *"Who are you looking for?" he asked.*
>
> *"Jesus the Nazarene," they replied.*

> *"I am he," Jesus said. Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. As Jesus said, "I am he," they all drew back and fell to the ground!*
>
> *Once more he asked them, "Who are you looking for?"*
>
> *And again they replied, "Jesus the Nazarene."*
>
> *"I told you that I am he," Jesus said. "And since I am the one you want, let these others go." He did this to fulfill his own statement: "I did not lose a single one of those you have given me."*
>
> — John 18:1-9

Picture this, okay? I think we've got a picture of this olive grove. This is actually the Garden of Gethsemane. I was there a few years ago, walking and praying and taking the Lord's Supper with our family in that area. It was just an absolute game-changing experience.

Here are some things I want to point out, guys. One quick thing before we go deeper: our translation says "a grove of olive trees," and I picked that because this is The Grove.

I asked Cal, "Did you guys name The Grove because of the grove of olive trees?" He said, "That really wasn't the thing, but this is a cool idea, so you can use it. You can use it in the future."

But in the original language, John is actually writing the word "garden" there. It's a garden of olive trees. Hold on to that. It matters.

In your mind's eye, I want you to go there. A handful of men are in the dark with Jesus, and a contingent of soldiers arrives. What you have to understand is that this contingent - some translations say "detachment" - is literally, some scholars say, somewhere between 300 and 600 of the fighting elite.

These are Roman, battle-tested guards, and the Temple guards are alongside them. They're coming with swords and torches. They're coming to take Jesus.

This is pretty terrifying. There are probably, if you look in here, maybe 300 or 400 people. Imagine a crowd this size coming to take one guy. The fighting elite are all there.

This is where we see His power, His authority, and His heart. He stepped forward to meet them, and He tees it up beautifully. I love this.

He says, "Who are you looking for?" as if He doesn't know.

They say, "Jesus the Nazarene."

What is His reply? "I am He."

As He said this, the fighting elite were knocked flat. They drew back and fell to the ground.

How? How did this happen? Why did this happen?

Do you know that, for English readability, the translators actually added the word "He" there? What He actually says in the original language is ego eimi - "I am."

What He's saying in this moment is that He's taking on His own lips the name of God revealed to Moses in the burning bush back in Exodus. He's saying, "I am the uncreated One. I am the One who spoke the worlds into being. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I am."

This is huge.

As we already heard tonight, He says, "I am the door," right? Ego eimi, the door. "I am the Good Shepherd." Same words. The One who says, "I am the Shepherd," is the actual Great I Am.

Jesus, in this moment, is declaring He's Lord of the universe. When He declares His name, nothing can stand under the weight of it, under the glory.

Think about this. This is like the stuff of a Marvel movie, okay? They were knocked flat with His word. Marvel or DC? Marvel? I mean, I thought so, but I just wanted to make sure you guys were paying attention.

I love the fact that, as these guys are dusting themselves off, wondering what happened to them, Jesus asks them again, "Who is it that you're looking for?"

When He identifies Himself again, this is what He says: "If it's Me you're looking for, let these men go."

Do you see what happened? Remember John 10:18:

> *No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.*
> — John 10:18

This is what it looks like. Six hundred of the fighting elite are on the ground in this moment. Jesus could have very easily said, "I'm going to step over your body, walk right through, and leave this. I have total power, total authority, total victory."

But what does He do? He waits for them to get back up. He declares His name again, and He hands Himself over.

Here's what I want to say to you in this moment: Whatever is coming to accuse you, hold you captive, or take you away, nothing can stand under the weight of His name.

This is the Jesus you can put your trust in. He says, "Me for them."

John tells us why He did it: "I did not lose a single one of those whom You've given Me, Father."

That's what a shepherd does. He does not lose His sheep.

What kind of Savior wants to rewild your soul? What kind of Savior wants to give you a divine, eternal, abundant, overflowing, wild, and adventurous kind of life? What kind of Savior wants to give you a life full to the overflow, living on purpose and mission, with God's presence and His kingdom flourishing and working in you and through you?

The One who had all the power to crush them in retaliation, yet instead said, "Take Me. Let them go. Me for

them. I'll pay the price for their freedom. I'll pay the price for their freedom."

Let's go back to the scene in John 10:

> *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*
>
> *For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.*
>
> — John 10:11, 17

Look at that: "that I may take it up again."

A lot of us know heroes who have gone to war and put themselves in harm's way to lay their lives down. But friends, none of us have the ability to take our lives back up again.

> *No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.*
>
> — John 10:18

His psuche for your zoe. His life laid down for your life to come alive with a divine purpose.

This is the Good Shepherd. Behold Him. Get a vision of Him. Get a vision of the life He offers. Ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your heart so you can see that there's something far more beautiful in life with God than we could ever create on our own.

Remember that word "garden"? I used "grove" from that one translation, but it's "garden" here. John wants you to notice this because Jesus is arrested in a garden, and John tells us that in the place where He is crucified, there was what? A garden. And in the garden, a new tomb.

On Sunday morning, when Mary sees the risen Jesus - you guys know this scene - who does she think He is? The gardener. If you go back and read it, she thinks He's the gardener.

She wasn't wrong, actually.

The first garden was lost when we said, "My way," when we tried to farm life our way. Now the Son of God walks into a garden, lays His life down, and Eden starts to break back through again.

Surrendering the Fences

Once Charlie and Isabella stopped trying to do it their way and got a vision of something greater than themselves, the beauty returned and the land flourished.

So I just want to ask you - I waited until we had really taken time to unpack that moment - remember what you named earlier. What fences are you managing tonight that the Good Shepherd died to take down? What has fear stolen from you? What way of thinking do you need to change? What do you need to say no to for the greater yes to Jesus?

Francis Chan said this: "What you release to follow Jesus is often what would have destroyed you."

Maybe you've never given Jesus full control. You've never put your yes on the table.

Or maybe you did at one point, and over time, you've just been building fences, kind of doing it your way and running into dead ends. The beauty, the purpose, the adventure, and the peace kind of left the farm. You've been applying chemicals to the ground over and over, and there's just no growth, no flourishing.

Rewilding is not about striving. Hear me say that. It's actually about surrender. Not surrender to a process necessarily, but surrender to a person - the One who stepped forward in the garden for us and said, "Me for them."

We heard it in Van's story. Powerful. While he was literally fighting for his life, he heard the Good Shepherd say, "Surrender."

Jesus wants to rewild your soul. Surrender to life, to life more abundant. Zoe, zoe, the divine life.

I don't want to rush past this, so I just want to take a minute of quiet. We're almost done, just a couple more minutes.

If you would, take your hands and put them out in front of you like this, just in a posture of receiving. Take a deep breath. In the quiet, just ask Him one question: "Jesus, show me the fences. What is the fence?"

I don't want you to argue with what comes up. Just name it to Him.

Now, if you're ready, just tell Him, "It's Yours. I surrender. It's Yours. I surrender."

Good Shepherd, Great I Am, thank You for stepping forward in the garden for us. You could have walked away. You could have done so many things, but You laid Your life down so that we could have Yours, life and life more abundantly.

Jesus, we want You and nothing less. Tonight, we open our hands and take down what we've built to keep You out. We bring You our questions. We bring You our fears. We bring You our insecurities. And we say, "Holy Spirit, help us to trust."

Bring Your life into the tired ground of our lives. Jesus, rewild our souls.

It's all about You.