A few years ago, I was preaching a sermon series on the 23rd Psalm. One of my staff members said, “Pastor, you should use a live sheep on stage to illustrate that the Lord is my shepherd.” I thought, “What a great idea!”

Later that week, we found a lady who was willing to bring her sheep to church. I think his name was Horace. I also asked one of our church members—who grew up on a Kansas farm—to be our church shepherd for the morning. I carefully instructed him, “Take Horace outside before, after, and in between services. Give him some water and grass to keep him happy, and show him the restroom!” I said, “Make sure he stays outside so he can go potty before coming into the service. Whatever you do, don’t bring him into the church building unless he has relieved himself.”

My shepherd friend replied, “I’ll tell him.”

Horace behaved perfectly during the early service. He did exactly what I asked. He followed me around for the first five minutes, then left with no problems. Things couldn’t have gone better.

But at the second service… things didn’t go quite as smoothly.

As soon as they brought Horace onto the stage, he went into full-on diarrhea mode. And this was no small event. Justin Timberlake once sang Cry Me a River—but Horace? He must have been singing Pee and Poop Me a Lagoon.

It didn’t matter what I said for the rest of the sermon. All anyone could focus on was the mess on the floor. Even after Horace was gone, I found myself having to watch my step for the rest of the message. The smell was unbearable. I could hardly concentrate on what I was trying to say as I tiptoed across the stage.

My biggest takeaway from that morning? Sheep don’t do what they’re told. They don’t listen, and they are not teachable.

Yet the Bible calls Jesus our Shepherd, and we are His sheep. It’s interesting that God would use such an animal to describe us. He says, “We are the sheep of His pasture.”

To make matters worse, sheep wander off… and they bite. They think they’re independent, but they’re actually super high-maintenance. In fact, they’re the only animal with an entire profession dedicated to their care.

If we are truly the sheep of His pasture, then we definitely need a Shepherd.  
  
**1. Jesus Leads Me to Salvation**  
  
When he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. John 10:4 (CSB)

I love this idea of the shepherd going ahead of His flock. Actually, shepherds lead their sheep rather than driving them. If you have ever watched old westerns, you have seen Cowboys drive cattle from behind. Sheep are completely different. Shepherds go before their flocks so they can direct them and guide them. This is exactly what John 10:4 is talking about when it says, “he goes ahead of them.” He doesn’t force us, He guides us. He doesn’t drive us like a herd! He walks ahead of us and beside us showing us the way.  
  
Look at the phrase, “I am the gate.” This means salvation isn’t through religion, rituals, or good works—its through Him alone. There are not multiple gates. You don’t pick your own gate. There is only one door—Jesus.  
  
Jesus is the only way to heaven because He is the only one who lived a sinless life, paid the penalty of sin, rose from the dead, offers salvation as a free gift, and the only mediator between God and man.  
  
Think about this. Muhammad gave a list of rules to follow in hopes that Allah will save you. Buddha says meditate and free your mind from suffering. Krishna teaches there is karma from a past life, and if your work really hard you can evolve in a future life. However, Jesus says you could never earn your salvation alone. He says turn from you sins and believe in him (Romans 5:8)  
  
Jesus