**March 15 Online Worship Student Ministry Resource**

Students and parents of students, feel free to use all or part of the below resource as a piece of your worship this morning.

1. **Read** John 10:1-21.
2. **Question:** Jesus identifies himself as two things in this passage: “the gate for the sheep” (v. 7) and “the good shepherd” (v.11, 14). What do these images suggest about the types of things Jesus seeks to give his sheep?
3. **Read** Ezekiel 34:7-16.

- How does this Old Testament passage shed light on what Jesus says in John 10?

1. **Read** the following excerpt from Mark Labberton’s book *Called*:

*- “When I was considering the possibility of embracing Christian faith as a young college student, what I feared most was that it would make my life smaller rather than larger—less love, less joy, less creativity, less wonder, less engagement. I had met enough Christians who were incarnational proof of this, so when I finally came to faith in Christ as a college student, it was because I discovered that Jesus saves people from the very smallness I feared. I saw that the very essence of the kingdom of God is a life bigger than I would ever find outside of it.

I understand how we have come to live in times where many reject the gospel for being too small, too parochial[[1]](#footnote-1) for the enormous challenges we face. I know very well how it is that the lives of Christians seem too constricted to have any relevance to the real world and its messy complexities, and how far removed the Christian life can appear from abundance, freedom and joy. As a study assistant to the Anglican pastor and writer John Stott during my early years as a believer, I witnessed John’s faithfulness in public and private, as a highly visible speaker and as a nearly invisible spiritual shepherd to many. What I saw served to cement my conviction about life abundant as a follower of Jesus.*

*It was on a trip to India and Bangladesh where, in a dark, dilapidated[[2]](#footnote-2) courtyard surrounded by small fire pits, blackened pots and a group of simple homes housing a handful of people, I heard the global Christian leader give one of his most memorable sermons. I saw that the abundant life I hoped for—that he and those to whom he spoke shared—was carried with them on the inside. Inside, they were not bound; they were no longer small.*

*John had been asked by a friend, a priest serving in Burma[[3]](#footnote-3), for a tender and intimate favor: John, he said, I am serving so far away from my dying mother in Madras[[4]](#footnote-4); you might be able to reach her sooner than I can. She is poor, in declining health, and her teeth are falling out one by one. Would you make a pastoral visit to her the next time you are in India?*

*And so, we set off, with scant information about location, to find his friend’s elderly mother. After hours of searching, moving self-consciously through streets of shacks and shelters so different than the more established structures we’d left only three hours before, we arrived at the door to this woman’s home. Eventually, she emerged from the shadows, frail but beaming with tearful joy. At her insistence, she knelt at John’s feet and kissed them, and then the two of them spoke through our translator for a while. At the end of our visit, she asked John to speak and to give her a blessing.*

*A small piece of carpet was honorifically placed for him in the center of the mud floor, and without anything like the kind of pulpit to which he was often accustomed, John preached on John 3:16. It was John Stott at his fullest. Filled with love for Jesus and for his fellow pastor, John spoke to the mother who had believed, in spite of her poverty, not as a stranger but as God’s own. The mother who provided such a rich inheritance to her son received the blessing of her son’s gratitude as John interceded. His words were simple and clear. His tone was compassionate and dignified. His intellectual rigor[[5]](#footnote-5) and verbal skill were fully intact. And his assurances were personal and tender. He was fully present to her and to the goodness of God. It was the sermon of his life, and it has shaped my view of following Jesus ever since.*

*That scene was a rich moment of God’s grace. A priest in Burma, a widow in India, a world-renowned British preacher and his young American intern—we were so deeply connected in the family of Christ, by Christ and in Christ that a transcendence[[6]](#footnote-6) beyond all of us and our meager circumstances took place, filling us.*

*That experience explained the abundant life to me in terms that were heart and mind shaping. It is a life I have come to recognize consistently in many other men and women I have known who follow the common call to live daily as followers of Jesus, whatever their walk of life or part of the world. This is the good news: that God so loved the world that the gift of God’s Son reorders and enlarges our hearts and our lives…The kingdom of God is always intimate but never small.”*

1. **Question:** In what ways can following Jesus seem like it makes our lives smaller?
2. **Question:** What is the “life to the full” or “abundant life” (v. 10) that Jesus describes composed of? What does this “life to the full” look like in everyday life as a middle school or high school student?
3. **Question:** What distinguishes “the good shepherd” from the “hired hand” (see vv. 11-13)? Is this meaningful to you? If so, why?
4. **Listen** to “I Shall Not Want” by Audrey Assad. Listen for connections between John 10 and the song.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRnFVMn0uZw>

1. **Summary Takeaway:** Jesus, as the good shepherd, surrenders his *life* that his followers—his sheep—might have nourishing, secured, abundant *life*.
2. **Close** by reading aloud and *together* Psalm 23 (NKJV) as a prayer.

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
**2**He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.
**3**He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name’s sake.

**4**Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

**5**You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.
**6**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord

Forever.

 *Amen.*

1. *Parochial:* very limited or narrow in scope or outlook. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Dilapidated:* reduced to or fallen into partial ruin or decay, as from age, wear, or neglect. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Burma:* also known as Myanmar. A country in Southeast Asia which borders India, among other countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Madras:* city in India. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Rigor:* the quality of being extremely thorough, exhaustive, or accurate. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Transcendence:* existence or experience beyond the normal or physical level. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)