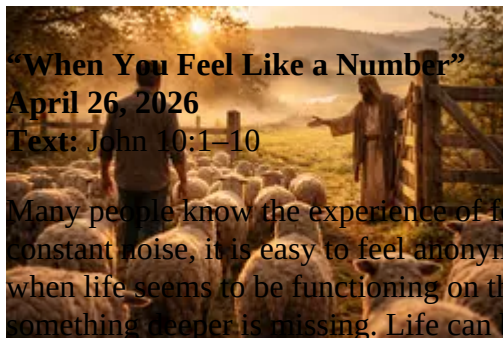




“When You Feel Like a Number”

April 26, 2026

Text: John 10:1–10

Many people know the experience of feeling like a number. In a world of systems, institutions, and constant noise, it is easy to feel anonymous, overlooked, or reduced to a line in a database. Even when life seems to be functioning on the surface, many people quietly carry the sense that something deeper is missing. Life can begin to feel thin rather than abundant.

In John 10, Jesus speaks directly into that experience by using the image of a shepherd and a sheepfold. His listeners would have understood this picture immediately. Sheep survive not because of strong fences but because they recognize the voice of their shepherd. The shepherd calls the sheep by name, and they follow because they know who is speaking.

This image reveals something profound about the life God intends. In the kingdom of God, people are not anonymous. They are known. The shepherd calls each sheep by name, leads them into pasture, and guards them at the gate. Their lives have direction, meaning, and protection because they belong to the shepherd.

Yet Jesus also warns that not every voice leads to life. “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” Many voices promise fulfillment, security, or identity, but they ultimately leave people feeling more anxious, more pressured, and more spiritually depleted. When we seek life through the wrong voices or the wrong gates, we end up feeling unseen and misled.

Against that backdrop, Jesus makes two extraordinary claims. He says, “I am the gate,” and “I am the good shepherd.” True life is not found by forcing our way through other entrances or chasing every voice that calls to us. Abundant life comes through Christ, who knows us, calls us, and leads us.

The good news of the gospel is not that we perfectly learn to follow the right voice. The good news is that the Shepherd remains faithful. Jesus continues to call us by name, guiding us toward the life he promises: a life that is secure, purposeful, and abundant in his care.