

The Good Shepherd John 10:1-21

This is a beloved text about our relationship with Jesus.
He's our Shepherd. We are his sheep. [Pray]

We're familiar with the image here, but many of us have no personal experience w/ sheep, other than gluing cotton balls on a piece of construction paper as a kid!

Sheep

- The Bible uses the image of sheep more than any other animal. They're mentioned **over 202 times in Scripture**. And **lamb(s) 198** times (Logos).
- We are sheep.
- Why sheep? **Why not a fast cheetah, or a powerful lion, or a mighty eagle?**
- Because **sheep are not smart**. They're **not ferocious**. That's you. Sorry.
 - If you think you're smart, than you're just a smart sheep, and it's nothing to brag about.
 - One writer told a story of hundreds of sheep just going off a cliff, one after another! (Tim Challis)
- They're not ferocious.
 - Which is why we say, "If you can't sleep we say, count sheep."
 - **We don't say, "Count snakes." "Count lions."**
 - Because there's nothing more soothing than sheep.
- **Someone said, "Sheep are like passivist vegetarians."**
- They were very **defenseless, directionless, and dependent** on the shepherd.
- **Children** grow up and become adults and take care of themselves, but sheep are dependent for **our whole lives!**
- **So we should be grateful that we have a good Shepherd because we desperately need him!**

Shepherd. The Bible speaks of them over **100 times**.

What picture comes to mind when you think of a shepherd?

- **Pastor Shane** holding your hand as you walk through a city?!
 - We have a picture of that....
 - **Caption this: Shane Pic (we'll post on Instagram later)**

We have several things that often obscure the glory of this metaphor...

1. **Modern Art**. Maybe you first think of those pictures of European **Jesus with a perm, thin lips, flowing blond hair, hugging a cuddly little lamb.**
- The idea has been so sentimentalized that people forget that shepherds **were not effeminate.**
- The Shepherd's job was **severe, manly, tiresome and hazardous.**
- They were warriors. **David killed lions and bears!**

2. **Time.** The way they shepherded sheep in Ancient Israel is different than today.
- Today, most sheep are **herded by dogs, and are driven.**
 - But in ancient Israel, **the shepherd went before them, and led them.**
 - The image would have been familiar to Jewish readers.
 - **Gen 48:15:** Jacob blesses “the God, who has been my shepherd all my life”
 - **Ps 23** – The Lord is the ultimate provider, protector, and guide.
 - God’s people are referred as a flock (**Ps 80:1**)
 - Redemptive context, Exodus (**Ps 77:20; 78:52**)
 - God’s faithfulness when we stray (**Isa 40:11**)
 - Two Major Leaders were shepherds, and taken from caring for real sheep: **Moses and David** (cf., **Ps 78:72; Ex 3:1**)
 - **Kings** were also known as Shepherds. (We tend to think of rulers as CEO’s today, as people who sit behind desks and make demands).
 - False Shepherds are rebuked (**Ezek 34, Jer 23**)
 - The Ultimate Shepherd/King promised (**Micah 5:2, 4; Jer 23:5-6**)
 - Jesus is the **Good** (that is “True” or “Noble” or “Worthy” or “Model”) Shepherd
 - **Matt 9:** He has compassion because they are like sheep without a shepherd.
3. **Immediate Context.** Finally, we often don’t read this passage in light of chapter 9, and so we miss the reference to the Pharisees as false shepherds.
- This passage comes right after the **Pharisees** have thrown the formerly-blind-man out of the synagogue. They were **false shepherds**, whereas, Jesus the true Shepherd went and **found him**.
 - This passage isn’t a continuation of that event [some time has passed], but it is Jesus’ comment on it (Barret).
 - It’s also a transitional chapter between the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Dedication (10:22).

The Flow:

1. The Good Shepherd: Introduced and Explained (10:1-6)
2. The Good Shepherd: Interpreted and Expanded (10:7-18)
 - He shifts some of the images. He goes from “I am the good shepherd” to “I am the door” (7) and then back to “I am the good shepherd” (11)
 - In v. 11 he contrasts himself w/ the hireling instead of thieves/robbers
3. The Reactions to the Good Shepherd (10:19-21)

What I would like to do is just explore this analogy by considering 4 truths about the good shepherd. After the introduction (v. 1-6), I’ll use the three “I am” statements as the divisions for the 2, 3, and 4th truth.

4 Truths About the Good Shepherd

#1: Jesus Knows, Calls, and Leads His Sheep (10:1-6)

A. He Knows/Calls His Sheep

1-2: The contrast is between those who enter the sheepfold (v 2) and those who sneak in (v 1). Those who try to sneak in are called “thieves and robbers.”

- The specific reference is to the false religious leaders that we’ve been looking at for the past several weeks. They were just like their father the devil.

3: In ancient Israel, a group of families often shared one large central pen, often a waist-high stone pen, topped with thorny branches, and often backed up near the edge of a cliff for protection from thieves.

One small door served as the only entrance and exit.

At the end of the day, people brought their individual flocks into this central pen, and they paid a gatekeeper (**under-shepherds**) to watch them at night.

In the morning, the gatekeeper opened to the gate to those who were true shepherds, and they entered through the gate.

Calling. When the shepherds entered, they would **call** their sheep, and **even gave them names** (based on **characteristics**), and the sheep would **follow** the shepherd out.

- **You may not have any sheep, but how many of you can call your dog by name and he/she comes to you?**
- **How many have a *non-Christian dog*, that doesn’t follow the voice of the Master?**
- Today, Middle Eastern shepherds still do this. They use peculiar calls for individual sheep. The sheep recognize their voice.
- **So this is an intimate, two-way relationship.**
- The Shepherd knows the sheep, and they know him, and follow him.
- **“Zacchues” “Lazaraus”** come out! After resurrection, **“Mary”** she recognized him.

Unauthorized people enter by another way.

Ezekiel 34 and **Jeremiah 23** speak of false shepherds who brutalize the flock.

Ezekiel had been carried away along with unfaithful Israel, into Babylonian exile. Israel’s exile was a consequence of their sinfulness, and among the list of problems was that of unfaithful shepherds:

Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? ³ You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. ⁴ The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. ⁵ So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; ⁶ they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them. (Ezek 34:2b-6)

Later in the chapter, God promises to Shepherd them himself (Ezek 34:11-22), and then in **vv 23-31**, he promises to send a Shepherd, “David,” referring to Jesus.

This Good Shepherd doesn't brutalize the flock, but knows, leads, and feeds them.

See 10:27. Christ knows every believer. But Jesus gave the dreadful warning in Matt 7 about those who were false professors, “I never knew you.”

But Jesus has called his true sheep.

- There's an outer call that everyone hears, and an inner call.
- **When I was in college, he called me.**

He calls us and we know him!

- John 17:3 – this is eternal life...
- Phil 3:10 – “I want to know him”
- What a privilege to know him!

B. He Leads His Sheep (10:4-6)

10:4: The shepherd goes before his sheep them, and they follow the shepherd.

- He doesn't drive them, but leads them.
- He doesn't have a whip, but his word.
 - How does God lead us? Through His Word by His Spirit.
- This is a beautiful picture of **discipleship**.
- A disciple follows Jesus.
- **When we stray, he calls us back. He doesn't let us wander.**
- **How many of you misplaced your kid at an event?**
 - **Me at Kmart in Detroit**
 - **You don't have to see your parent, just hear their voice/your name.**
 - **Now, my boys are bigger than me, so they lose me. I'm the little guy!**

10:5: A disciple doesn't follow the voice of other strangers!

10:6: Jesus' opponents (like always) didn't get it.

- **Why not? Simple: They weren't his sheep.**

#2: Jesus Provides Security and Sustenance for His Sheep (10:7-10)

“I am the Door”

7: He is now the gate/door.

- Previously, he enters the sheep pen through the gate; here, he is the gate, and the watchman has now disappeared.

What Jesus likely has in mind is the idea that the shepherd would lead the flock out of the regular communal pen, during temperate months, into the open fields to find adequate grazing. **That would leave them camping out at night.**

So the shepherd would have to corral them into a cave, some other natural enclosure, or a temporarily built enclosure, and **he would sleep at the entrance.**

- He would **lie down at the opening of the entrance to sleep, serving as a human door.**
- No one could enter or leave except through him.
- The image here is of a threatening desert where food and water are scarce.
- The sheep are vulnerable, and predators are everywhere.
- He would literally lie down for the sheep.

The Good shepherd knows how to lead them during the day to water and pasture, and he knows how to secure them at night.

8: He makes another reference to false religious leaders that are not to be trusted (ie., Israel's false shepherds, such as wicked kings, corrupt priests, false prophets, and false messiah's).

9: He stands at the gate, and you **can't get in, unless you go through him,** and you can't **exit into the lush green pastures except through him.**

- This idea parallels John 14:6
- There's **only one way to salvation.**

And as he sheeps he lets us out to feast, and **one day he lead us to heaven itself to find never ending nourishment.**

- Psalm 23 provides the classic picture (23:1)
- (Similarly Psalm 118:20 speaks of the gate and the entry)

Salvation and spiritual nourishment and security only come through Jesus.

- **We are well-fed sheep and well-protected sheep are those who have a skilled shepherd.**

10a: In contrast, the thief comes to kill, steal and destroy.

- **This sounds like our world – three things trending on social media, kill, steal, destroy.**
- There are opponents to Jesus and his sheep. This world is filled with the works of the evil.
- False shepherds, like their father the devil (8:44) want to injure the sheep.

10b: But Jesus has come to give life to the full.

- Abundant - not material possessions. Spiritual abundance.
- Meaning. Satisfaction. Joy. Purpose. The stuff everyone really Kong's for.
- Jesus hasn't come to take your joy, but to give joy!

#3: Jesus Is Committed to His Sheep (10:11-13)

11: “I am the Good Shepherd.”

- The Good Shepherd **lays down his life for his sheep.**
 - **This is the unique mark of Jesus as shepherd.**
 - again in **verse 15, and verses 17-18.** I’ll say more about it, in a minute.
- But for now, we see that it illustrates his **commitment** to his sheep in a profound way.
- **He’s not merely willing to risk his life, but to lay down his life.**

12a: Now Jesus **contrasts** himself not with the thief but **with the hireling.**

- Sometimes people would hire someone else to shepherd their sheep.
- But **a hireling wasn’t committed to the sheep like the real shepherd.**
- **Hirelings looked at shepherding as a job only.**
 - **They were like the wicked religious leaders of Jesus’ day.**
- **How many of you know there’s a difference in a calling and a job?**
 - **My first job was keeping a basketball scorebook – that wasn’t a calling.**
 - **I won’t die for a scorebook, but I will for God’s book.**
- Consequently, **the sheep didn’t receive the same care as they did from their shepherd.**

12b-13: When danger comes, what does he do? **He runs away!**

He’s not that committed; he doesn’t care that much. It’s just a job.

- As a result, the sheep are scattered by the wolves.
- But the **real master of the flock would act differently (see 1 Sam 17:34-36)**
- The Good Shepherd is committed to his sheep; he will **be present with this sheep in danger.**
- “Though I walk through the valley.... For you are with me” (**Ps 23**)
- **Sheep are dependent on their shepherd their entire lives, and so are we.**

#4: **Jesus Died and Rose for His Sheep (10:14-18)**

Where the previous verses highlighted his commitment to live for his sheep when they were in danger (and not flee from them), now the idea of him dying for his sheep is spelled out more detail.

“I Am the Good Shepherd”

14-15a: He knows his sheep. He’s already said that, but now he says, “just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.” That is an intimate relationship.

- **Our relationship with God is grounded in this Intra-Trinitarian relationship.**
- **The Son’s relationship with the Father is also the model of our relationship with the Father.**
- **He demonstrated his love through obedience, and so do we.**

15b: Once again he mentions **laying down his life for the sheep**, much like we read in **Ephesians 5, that Christ dies for his bride.**

This whole passage emphasizes the **doctrine of substitutionary atonement.**

- Many people hate this idea.
- One bishop in Newark, NJ says, **“I would choose to loathe rather than to worship a deity who required the sacrifice of his son.”**
- But he, like so many, miss the divine union between the Father and the Son, as we noted back in chapter 5. It wasn't divine child abuse. The Father shared in the pain of the Son. They shared in unity, heart, and action.

The word **“for”** (hyper) is important. It's a sacrificial death – **Jesus died on behalf of us, instead of us, in place of us.**

- On the one hand we say that He died for all, as the lamb of God who died generally for the sins of the world; but on the other hand, we see he died particularly for his sheep.

16: Now he expounds his shepherding care by saying that he has sheep that are not of this fold. (cf., Acts 18:10)

- If the sheep pen refers to believing Jews, then Jesus has **Gentiles** in mind here.
- When he calls them, **they will also respond to him.**
- And the Jewish believers and Gentile believers will make up **one flock.**
- This pattern of Jews first and then Gentiles reflects the rest of the NT (**Rom 1:16**)
- **Jesus' death was not just for the Jews, but for the Gentile world as well.**
- His Gentile mission was clearly prophesied about in the OT, and reflected in His Great Commission.
- **See 11:50-52**

App: Let me say this, you need a flock!

- Sheep are very vulnerable when alone. And so are you.
- Christianity is to be lived in community.
- Why don't people have a flock?
 - **Not a priority**
 - **Individualistic Western Context**
 - **Some people aren't very relational**
 - **They've been bitten by a sheep previously** (or an under-shepherd!)

Let me encourage you to make the church a priority (it will mean you are at least inconvenienced); to fight against this individualistic culture, to push through the relational awkwardness and difficulty; and remember that only Jesus is perfect – not pastors or people.

- You need a flock because **Jesus thinks you need a flock!**
- He has saved individual sheep to make them his flock! This is a privilege.

**Many people want Jesus as their shepherd
But they don't want to be part of the flock.**

17a: We must not misunderstand this. It's not that the Father refuses to loves Jesus until Jesus dies on the cross. He didn't "win" or "earn" the Father's love.

- The Father loves the shepherd from before the foundation of the world.
- But the Father has a special delight in the shepherd's sacrifice, because it expresses the Father's love for the world like nothing else.

17b: Notice the purpose of his substitutionary death: **that he might take it up again!**

- This is no ordinary shepherd.
- **His death was not an end in itself** – he died with a resurrection in mind!
- He died, in order to rise, and to then ascend and to pour out his spirit. (Jn 7:37-38).
These are inseparable events.

18: A climactic verse.

- We've been reading again and again, how they couldn't arrest or kill Jesus because his time has not yet come.
- Here he tells us that He is in charge of his death. "I have authority to lay it down and take it up again."

Of course, at one level, his enemies conspired, captured, and crucified him.

- But there's more.

Jesus **was more than a martyr.**

- His death was not an accident.
- He was not a helpless victim.
- His death **was a foreordained death.**
- It was part of the Father's plan.
- Peter preached this very thing in Acts 2:23-24; 4:27-28.
- And Jesus was obedient to the point of death, finishing his mission.

The Reaction of the Crowd (10:19-21)

19: Once again the crowd is divided.

- This is the third time now that Jesus divided the people (7:43, 9:16; 10:19).

20: Some believe he's demon possessed and insane. (the 4th time this charge is made).

21: Some are impressed by him. The point to his teaching and his miracle as reason to remain open minded to him.

But you need to more than open to him, you need to believe in him.

In summary, Jesus is to be viewed as the Door and as the Good Shepherd.

- Both images have to do with **salvation.**

- **As the door, he's the only way to salvation, and the only means by which we find nourishment.**
- **As the Shepherd, he lays down his own life for our salvation.**

He is the Good Shepherd.

- **Hear him.**
- **Come to Him.**
- **Know Him.**
- **Follow Him.**
- **There's no one like Him.**

**He abandoned his life,
that we may have abundant life.**