

John, Part 42: "The Good Shepherd"

John 10:1 ESV "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. **2** But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. **3** To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. **5** A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." **6** This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. **7** So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. **8** All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. **9** I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

- I. Jesus Christ ended chapter 9 by confronting the Pharisees about their spiritual blindness. He told them that their guilt didn't **arise** from their blindness, but from the fact that they **claimed** they could clearly see. Now he will show the insidious nature of their influence over the people; and how life-giving and magnificent he is by comparison. He will use agricultural language that any Jew in the first century would have understood (better than most 21st Century Americans will).
 - A. His analogy throughout chapter 10 will center on sheep and shepherding. This is not a new theme in scripture. Most of us are familiar with the 23rd Psalm, which begins, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want."
 1. Additionally, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah (all Old Testament prophets) use the images of sheep and shepherds as well.
 2. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and David - the pillars of the Jewish nation and religion were all shepherds by trade.
 - B. Jerusalem in Jesus time was filled with sheepfolds; walled areas where Shepherds traveling in the city could leave their sheep while they conducted business, visited friends, etc. They served the same function as a livery stable in the old western movies, only for sheep instead of horses.
 - C. A shepherd would leave his sheep in the care of a gatekeeper, who would watch over the flock until the man returned. When he did, he would call to his sheep, and they would come to him, no matter how many other sheep from different flocks were in the fold at the time.
 1. Even though they are often known for their epic stupidity, sheep are animals that bond deeply with their owners like few others. They will respond only to their shepherd's voice, and scatter (because of their legendary timidity) from the voice of someone else.
 2. So even if three or four entire flocks were mixed together in one sheepfold, when the shepherd arrived, he would call or whistle to his sheep, and his sheep would respond to his call, while the others ignored him.
- II. In Christ's analogy in John 10. He is imagining that the sheepfold represents the "keeping place" of the covenant people of God. He makes clear that he alone is the entry point into that covenant. **John 10:7, 9 ESV** "I am the door of the sheep". **He**

alone is the entrance into the covenant. This is Jesus' third of 7 seven "I AM" statements in the book of John ("I am the Bread of Life", "I am the Light of the World"; now "I am the door of the sheep".)

- A. When Jesus says he is the door, it is a devastating blow to a "coexist bumper sticker" philosophy that says that "all paths lead to the same place".
 - 1. I do, however, agree that **all** religious paths lead to the same place -to hell; whether it's a Jewish road, a buddhist road, a mormon road, a catholic road, a pagan road, secularist road, etc...or even an evangelical road.
 - 2. To know for sure that you are in covenant with the true, living, and only God, you **must** go through believing faith in Jesus Christ that gives birth to a personal relationship that is so much more than just a religious observance!
- B. Because of this, Jesus begins chapter 10 by indicting the religious leaders as "thieves and robbers" because of the fact that they enter the sheepfold (the covenant) by climbing in "another way". There are two things to notice here:
 - 1. First: their alternate route into the sheepfold (the covenant) is through religious exertion, and self-righteousness. They are not entering the covenant by simple belief in Christ (the door). Chapters 7-9 make that clear.
 - 2. Second, when Christ says they climb in another way, I picture them scrambling over the wall of the sheepfold, under cover of darkness, with malicious intent.
 - a) No one will ever climb over your fence or through your bedroom window who is supposed to be there. Those who do that are there to damage something or take something that does not belong to them. But when the true shepherd of the sheep shows up, he goes right through the door, with nothing to hide.
 - b) Those with the right to enter have a key, or the welcoming invitation of the owner of the house. Christ says, "**he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.**"
- C. But notice something else: when the Bible says that they climb in "by another way", it literally means "from a different place of origin, quarter or district." **John 3:31 ESV He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.**
 - 1. The Pharisees had no spiritual commission from the Father, nor the authority that goes with such a commission. Yet Jesus had both, we will see next week that his authoritative power confirmed his commission!
 - 2. But the Jews were both intimidated by, and jealous of what Jesus clearly had. The "Light of the World" was shining on them and exposing their lack.
- III. Jesus also makes several affirmations about the nature of his true sheep. First, "**The sheep hear his voice**". Jesus makes it clear that when he calls, those appointed to his flock hear him. In this context, he is not speaking primarily of prophetic insight into the mysteries of God's will, but rather a call to a life completely centered on him. He says when he calls they always hear and obey.

- A. Second, he says, “he calls his own sheep **by name** and leads them out”. Christ’s sheep are not part of the multitudes, one of a number assigned to his flock. They are individual sheep, called by name, and led by Christ.
 - B. Next he says, “he goes **before them**, and the sheep **follow him**, for **they know his voice**”.
 - 1. Christ will always go before the sheep, and the true sheep will follow. This is a big problem in Christianity in America. We want Jesus to march in **our** parade, participate in **our** politics, bless **our** careers and relationships, but how often are we on our knees asking God for his will to be done in our nation, our careers, our families? How easy is it for us to follow him as opposed to dictating to him what we want, expecting him to comply?
 - 2. Following Jesus meant a whole lot more in the first century that it does to most of us in the 21st century! **Mark 8:34b ESV** “If anyone would come after me, let him **deny himself** and take up his cross and follow me. **35 For whoever would save his life will lose it**, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. **36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul? 38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”**
 - C. But there is a comforting side of this as well. The fact that Jesus goes before us means that, as his follower, you can’t arrive at the place where he hasn’t already been; whether suffering or success, victory or loss.
 - D. As to the point of “knowing his voice”, I believe that this scripture teaches that hearing (and by implication obeying) the voice of God is the mark of a true disciple.
 - 1. It is problematic when someone says they belong to Christ, yet have no evidence of obeying. When their life is marked by excuses as to why they don’t take the commands of Jesus seriously. His sheep obey his voice.
 - 2. True disciples recognize his voice in Scripture, by the Holy Spirit and in the congregation of the church, and respond accordingly and obediently.
 - E. **John 10:5 ESV** “A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” But followers of Christ also reject voices that are clearly not the voice of the shepherd; those calls of the culture to success and status, the call of sin to dishonestly, lust, and anger, the call of religion to climb the ladder to Heaven by our own works.
- IV. **John 10:10 ESV** The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. **11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my**

voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. **17** For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. **18** 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.” **19** There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. **20** Many of them said, “He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?” **21** Others said, “These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

- A. Jesus begins this next section by making comparisons between himself (2x “I am the Good Shepherd” - the 4th “I AM” statement in John) and the Jewish leaders (thieves, robbers, hired hands). The first thing you’ll notice in this passage is the very familiar **John 10:10 ESV** *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*
1. Like most of you, I have often heard this verse quoted, assuming that the devil was the “thief”. But there is no mention of the devil in this passage. In context, the thief refers to controlling, manipulative, religious leaders. Although we can assume they are influenced by the devil, they are **directly** being held responsible by Jesus for the quality of care given to the sheep.
 2. When Christ says that they intend to “steal, kill and destroy”, this points back to the fact that by climbing over the wall to enter the fold, they obviously do so to **consume** the sheep, not **care** for them.
- B. By contrast, Christ says that his purpose is to give his sheep abundant life. **Psalms 23:1 ESV** *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Even 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 overflows. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.* Abundant life! Jesus cares well for what he owns!
- C. Religious big shots and all the competing voices representing different world views are mere “hired hands”. Jesus is the caring owner. The Pharisees were just “guys who work here”. That showed up in other areas as well.
1. Since the Pharisees were primarily consumers of the flock, they had no “skin in the game”. They would flee at the first sign of danger, putting themselves first. But the Good Shepherd “lays down his life for the sheep.”
 - a) Jesus says the hired hands “care nothing for the sheep” But do you understand what it means when he says **“I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep”**? That means that the same tenderness, affection and intimacy that exists between Christ Jesus and the Father exists between Jesus and his church. Meditate on this!
 - b) Laying down his life for the sheep on the cross awakens us every day to the fact that the eternal God loves us with an everlasting love!

- D. The second comparison Jesus makes had to do with the fact that the Jewish vision was merely national, limited to their race. All other peoples could go to hell. But Jesus spoke of “other sheep” who were not a part of the Jewish fold.
1. But these were currently wild, untamed sheep from Asia, Africa, the Americas, Europe - non-Jews! The Gentiles! He declared they would hear his voice and someday there would be but **one flock**, under **one shepherd**.
 2. **Ephesians 2:19 ESV** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are **fellow citizens** with the saints and members of the household of God, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone**
 - a) According to Psalm 2, Christ has been granted **all the nations** of the world by the Father for his inheritance. Therefore, if you think that the kingdom of God is a white, American enterprise you are sorely mistaken! It is a multi-national, multi-generational, racially diverse, non-partisan, non-denominational idea in the mind of God that transcends every ground for prejudice.
 - b) Though we come from many backgrounds, it is our one single commonality that matters...the cross of Jesus Christ and his gospel.
 3. The last comparison Christ makes in this section is one of inherent authority. The Pharisees took tremendous pride in their self-appropriated authority. We saw in the last chapter that they claimed the right to determine who could be healed on what day, and who would be admitted into the synagogue.
 - a) But Christ had over and over again ignored their self-elevating claims, and routinely healed whomever he wanted to heal, whenever he wanted to heal them. When they booted people from **their** synagogue, Christ admitted them into **his** kingdom!
 - b) But they had seen nothing of his authority yet! **John 10:17 ESV** For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. **18** 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.**
 4. God had determined that in AD 70 the Romans would overthrow Jerusalem in one of the most bloody military actions of all time. These men and their descendants would have no clue (and no say) as to the events of that time. They had no authority over their own lives, but would submit to God’s will whether they wanted to or not.
 - a) On the other hand, in the book of John alone, the Jews had try to seize and kill Jesus on multiple occasions, but every time we read that he walked away unharmed because “his hour had not yet come.” There was a much bigger destiny for which he was prepared and was protected.
 - b) But in a few days, when it would appear that they had finally succeeded in putting him to death, He would demonstrate his ultimate authority by willingly laying down his life, and taking it back up again 3 days later.

- E. So there is no real comparison between Jesus and self-appointed voices from the world (except maybe by comparing a feast of delicious apples to a bag of rotten, moldy oranges!).
1. He is the Good Shepherd; they are hired hands at best, fleeing at the first sign of trouble, making no commitment or sacrifice for the sake of the sheep.
 2. He will not stop until he has collected his rightful harvest from every race, tribe, tongue, and nation; they are satisfied to maintain a small, but tightly-controlled hive of oppressed followers.
 3. They boast of their authority, but it is only sleight-of-hand; an illusion! He is the one who has said, **Matthew 28:17 ESV** “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Now for the summary; the epilogue...
- V. **John 10:22 ESV** At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, **23** and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. **24** So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” **25** Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, **26** but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. **27** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. **30** I and the Father are one.”
- A. Some time later, during Chanukah, the Jews decide that they want a straightforward answer from Jesus. “No more guessing games, Jesus!”
1. Jesus responds by saying, “Games? Go back and read chapters 1 through 9! I told you over and over again who I was as plain as the nose on your collective face, yet you didn’t believe! I did amazing signs among you, and you didn’t believe. The problem is not that you haven’t been given direct enough information. The problem is a hearing problem! **You are not my sheep. You do not know my voice.**”
 2. Jesus is saying that even if he had said plainly right then, “Yes! I am the Christ!” they wouldn’t have acknowledged it, or responded to the clearly revealed fact of his Lordship. Hardened hearts resulted in deafened ears.
- B. They would perish in their unbelief, but Jesus emphasizes the fact that the people who are actually his sheep have a much different level of care and a greater, more secure destiny.
1. **“I give (my sheep) eternal life.”** What he gives is an unending kingdom life. It is a life where the first are last and the last are first. It is a life where suffering is transformed into blessing; where hope can be found even in the darkest of places; where joy and peace reign.
 2. **“they will never perish”** At the end of this mortal life, a pain-free, inexpressibly satisfying existence is promised along side the Savior we love. It will be a resurrection life, just like Christ’s, in which we will rule and reign with him.

3. “no one will snatch them out of my hand” Those who follow Christ are forever safe in His hand. No one can bring their fellowship with Christ to an end through persecution, criticism, condemnation, or intimidation.
- C. Christ’s sheep are a gift from his Father, and they are doubly secure. Because of this, he reiterates, “no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand”.
1. No one can snatch them from either his hand or the Father’s hand. Why? Because He and the Father are one.
 2. There’s your direct answer, Pharisees! Jesus isn’t simply stating good trinitarian doctrine, he is saying (once again) what he’s said so many times. He is not merely God’s messenger; the one the blind man who was healed called, “a prophet”. He is saying, “I am God! I am the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Door of the Sheepfold, and the Good Shepherd. I AM THAT I AM!”
- D. But will they believe? No. Jesus is on a collision course with the cross. His time will soon come and these men will murder him. The Pharisees are on a collision course with the Lake of Fire, having hardened their hearts and rejected the truth so plainly spoken.
- E. Christ’s sheep, on the other hand are on a collision course with life eternal, and no one will take it from them, or take them from God. **John 3:18 ESV Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.**
- VI. Who is here that might be hearing the voice of your Shepherd (maybe for the first time)? He is standing at the gate of the sheepfold calling you by name! He is leading you out of everything you have known before, and going before you. Won’t you come and follow? He gives eternal life and no one can snatch you out of his hand. Come and follow.