

## **The Shepherd of Shepherds**

(John 10)

(preached 1/27/19; Pine Grove BC Sun AM)

### **Introduction**

Take your Bibles and turn with me to John 10.

We begin a new chapter this morning in John's gospel but we find ourselves in a familiar place.

Jesus has just healed a man born blind from birth..

And though he sees and believes in Christ, the Jews fail to see the glory of Christ standing right before them..

So that scene picks up in verse 10 with another Jesus' sermon..

Read along with me if you will...

John 10:1..

***1 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. 2 But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of***

*them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” 6 This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.*

*7 So Jesus said to them again, “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 hear them. 9 I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and [a]have it abundantly.*

Let us pray.

In 2018, the most common occupation in the world was working in retail sales.

As of December 2018, there were 4.1 million retail salespersons in America.

Second to retail salespeople were cashiers.

There are 3.3 million cashiers in America.

Office clerks is the 3rd most popular job.

Followed by restaurant workers in 4th and waiters and servers in 5th place.

Needless to say, millions of Americans work in stores and restaurants every day.

Way, way, way down on this list of popular American occupations is the shepherd.

At last count, there were around 1500 shepherds in America.

Needless to say, you may have ever met someone who is a shepherd in your life.

It's just not that popular of a profession today in America, yet shepherding goes all the way to Genesis 4 where Abel was described as keeper of the flocks..

And shepherds also fill much of the OT.

Abraham was a shepherd.

Moses tended to flocks in Midian for a while.

David was a shepherd who became king..

Even into the NT era, shepherding was still an important occupation..

Shepherds were given the privilege of seeing baby Jesus after this birth..

But the reality for us as Americans is that we probably know little about shepherds and sheep..

As a result, we struggle to appreciate Bible passages that use shepherding language...

Psalm 23 comes immediately to mind.

Though it is a popular chapter in the Bible.

And though it is even a chapter I memorized as a child..

It was not until I began to understand the nature of shepherding that I really saw the beauty of Psalm 23 which describes the Lord as the shepherd of believers...

The same thing could be said about John 10, which we are going to look at over the next few weeks..

Because in John 10, Jesus makes two of his important “I am” statements by describing Himself in this way:

I am the door of the sheep.

I am the good shepherd.

And these are two truths that are foundational to who Jesus is, but what he is saying in those statements may not be fully appreciated without a background on shepherding...

So we are all going to be educated about sheep and shepherds over the next few weeks in John.

Now as come to John 10, let's set the stage..

If you remember from the last few weeks, Jesus is in Jerusalem for the feast of booths.

This was the 3rd annual festival of the Jews each year.

Passover was the festival of the spring.

Pentecost was the festival of early summer.

And the feast of booths was the fall festival for the Jews.

Now Jesus never missed a Jewish festival that he was required by the law to attend..

So he has been in Jerusalem for this week long festival..

But it should also be noted that this is his last Jewish festival as well.

The following spring he will come to Jerusalem for the Passover but end up arrested and crucified outside of town.

In a sense, this is Jesus' final Jewish festival.

It is his last time to chance to preach to the masses.

To call them to repentance.

His next time in Jerusalem, they will be calling for his death and execution..

Now Jerusalem is an important city since it is home to the Jewish religious establishment..

Jerusalem is where Judaism was centered..

It was similar to Vatican City for Roman Catholic today.

However, it was not a city where Jesus spent much of his time.

Though he was Jewish, Jesus spent most of his ministry in outlying areas like Galilee in the north..

He also ministered in Samaria and even remote areas outside of Israel..

But Jesus has been in the city of Jerusalem for a week now, and he has used his time there wisely..

He has called himself the light of the world while preaching there.

He has called himself the living water while preaching there.

He has given sight to a blind man while spending time there.

And all of this is an effort to get those in the city to see him as the son of God..

Jesus loves this city.

He will cry over it in the months ahead because they won't listen to him and repent and be saved..

But now in chapter 10, we really come to his final message to this city.

He will be back after this, but this is essentially a final call to those in Jerusalem to come to faith in Him as the Messiah...

With that in mind, how is he going to approach his final sermon there?

Well, he is simply going to tell the people there that He is the Good Shepherd...

And for those of us who didn't grow up in a culture of sheep and shepherds, it is easy to see this as simple poetry.

But there is more to this than a pretty picture of Jesus as Shepherd that you often see in a picture on the walls of people's homes...

Jesus as the good shepherd stands in contrast to the false shepherds of Israel who ran the Jewish temple and religion..

These false shepherds known as Pharisees and Saducees and the scribes want Jesus dead.

They are not good shepherds of the Jewish people but bad shepherds, and Jesus is trying to make that clear to those listening to him..

So what has Jesus just done?

He has healed a man born blind from birth, but these false shepherds, these false teachers and leaders of Israel are not impressed with the miracle.



Instead, they find a way to stay in their unbelief, and by doing so, they lead those following them further into unbelief as well..

And that action is the motivation for Jesus to launch into this final call to the Jewish people to believe in Him as the Son of God and their Messiah.

We are going to look these first 10 verses this morning in terms of what a good shepherd does compared to bad shepherds..

Let's get into this in verses 1-2 with this truth..

## **I. The Good Shepherd Is the Rightful Owner (1-2)**

Let's look back at verse 1 of chapter 10..

***“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.***

“Truly, truly” is a call to attention...

Today, we would say, “Listen up,” or “Pay Attention,” and the idea is simple..

Jesus has something important to say..

In light of the Pharisees rejection of the blind man being healed by Jesus,..

In light of their rejection of His sinlessness and deity,...

Jesus simply calls the crowd to order and says,..

***“he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.”***

Now we may say, what? why the change of subject?

But Jesus knows his audience well and they all know shepherding well..

And the routine of most every shepherd was the same..

He gets up early, takes his flock out of their pen, finds good grass for them to eat, and brings them back at night where they would go back into these walled enclosures..

The shepherd would head off to eat supper and get some rest, and a hired hand would simply guard these pens all night..

The big enemy is a predator like a wolf, but people were also enemies as well..

They would get into pens and steal sheep for their own use or to sell to others..

Now, sheep are defenseless creatures for the most part..

No fangs, no sharp claws, not even a scary bark, so they were easy targets for thieves and other animal predators if they weren't closely guarded at night..

So the pen or the fold provided protection at night..

Here are a few pictures of what a common sheep fold may look like..

And look, everyone in Jesus' audience on this day knew what Jesus was talking about..

Everyone has a picture in their mind when he gets the words of verse 1 out of his mouth...

So, they understood the literal meaning of what he was talking about..

It will take them a few verses to get the symbolic meaning of what he is explaining, but the whole crowd understood verse 1..

But they also understood verses 2....

***2 But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.***

At this point in the message, the crowd is following right along..

Thief and robbers come over the wall, while the true shepherd of the flock enters through the door..

Again, this is very common knowledge in cultures where shepherding is a way of life..

The rightful owner of the sheep doesn't have to sneak in, he simply walks through the door of the fold..

Just like you will head into the owner you own by the front door or side door, the true owner of a flock of sheep will enter through the only door of the fold...

And the reality is that Christ is owner of his sheep..

Now, let's take a moment to make sure we aren't twisting this passage into something it is not..

The fold here that Jesus is talking about is not the church.

Jesus is going to make a reference to the church later on in this chapter, but at this point, this is an illustration for the Jewish audience listening to Him..

And the first thing that Jesus wants to establish is that He is the rightful owner of a flock of sheep that belong to owner..

He is not a thief or robber but a shepherd who comes in the only door of the fold..

The second truth that Jesus makes known here is this..

## **II. The Good Shepherd is the Recognized Voice (3-6)**

Look at verses 3-5 again..

***3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”***

In 2018, the 2 most popular names for dogs were Max and Bella.

People love to name their pets.

I have a Rex, a Dixie, a Jackson, and a Sammy in my life.

And the joy of calling the name of your dog and watching him or her come to you is fantastic...

Shepherds often named their sheep.

You have to think that the majority of a shepherd's life was spent with these animals going to and from the pasture..

Clearly, shepherds would bond with and name these animals..

So, Jesus' words here are nothing new to those who lived in this culture.

People understood the close relationship between shepherds and sheep, so the literal meaning of what Jesus is saying is again easily understood by his audience..

Shepherds would often arrive at the fold early in the morning to lead their sheep to pasture, and the day would begin with the shepherd calling to the sheep.

Now what is interesting is this..

Often times, there would be more than one flock in a fold..

Shepherds often shared folds with one another.

But the sheep knew the sound of their master's voice, and they would come out of the fold when he called to them..

I was reading a book by a man named Phillip Keller, who was a modern day shepherd..

He was also a believer who began to see Psalm 23 and John 10 come to life before his eyes each day in his work..

Though he had a working sheep farm, he allowed visitors to come to his ranch to learn about shepherding...

He says that visitors will come up to the fence and try to call a little lamb over to pet, but all the sheep will stand just out of arm's reach to avoid being petted.

He said people will call them over, try to whistle them over, but the sheep never raise their head from the ground..

He will then walk over and simply begin talking to the visitor and every sheep will look up at once at the sound of his voice even though it is directed at a stranger..

And then if he calls them, they all come...

Every ram, every ewe, every lamb would come running to where he was..

This is the intimate connection of a shepherd and his sheep..

They know his voice, but don't miss the end of verse 4..



They not only know and recognize his voice, they follow his voice as well..

This is the mark of having Christ as your shepherd.

You not only know his voice, you listen to it and follow it in life.

But notice what verse 6 says..

***6 This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.***

As Jesus begins one of his final sermons to the folks in Jerusalem, it is no surprise that they aren't understanding the point of his teaching..

In other word, the majority of the crowd isn't recognizing the voice of the good shepherd..

Just another example that most of Jerusalem is not part of his flock.

He is calling to them, and though they understand the words he is saying, they miss the message behind the words.

I have been around the church for almost 20 years now as believer and as a pastor, and I have heard people say

all sorts of things about preachers and Sunday school teachers and sermons and lessons..

Things like,...

“I just cant’ follow that preacher.”

Or “he is the worst Sunday teacher I have ever heard.”

Or “that sermon didn’t really make sense.”

And let me be the first to say that some preachers and teachers are hard to follow, and some passages in the Bible aren’t the easiest to understand..

But if the consistent comment of your life is that you don’t understand the Bible or the sermon, then your problem isn’t the words of the messenger...

Your problem is that you can’t hear the voice of the good shepherd...

Look, the Jews around Jesus in this passage knew what sheep were..

They knew what a fold was..

They knew what a shepherd was...

They just didn’t know who Jesus was..

And look if you don't know and truly believe in Jesus, you will never understand his words..

These Jews heard Jesus' words on this day, but they never understood them because they rejected him as their shepherd...

If you are sitting here and don't have a clue what I am saying and are daydreaming about your job or your hobbies or your life, the problem isn't my preaching, it is your hearing...

Those who belong to Christ know the voice of their shepherd, and He speaks 3 times a week in here through the preaching of His word..

And his voice can be heard as you read his word, but if you read the Bible and don't understand any of it, you may not be part of Christ's flock..

His sheep know his voice..

A 3rd characteristic of the good shepherd is this..

### **III. The Good Shepherd is the Real Source (7-10)**

Verse 7..

***7 So Jesus said to them again, “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 hear them. 9 I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and [a]have it abundantly.***

The ever-patient Christ continues to speak to those around Him..

He continue to try and help these lost sheep to see Him as their Shepherd..

He first calls Himself the door of the Shepherd.

In other words, he owns the flock, but he is also the only way into the flock...

He is THE way, THE truth, and THE life...

If you want in the flock of God, you must pass through the door of Christ..

But not only that, Jesus is the true Shepherd of the flock..

In verse 8, he returns to this idea of false shepherds..

You see, Israel had always had false shepherds in its history..

The nation had always had men that were supposedly leading the Jews to follow the Lord, but were actually using the Jews to get rich or gain a following..

In fact, the prophet Ezekiel described these men in Ezekiel 34..

***1 Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, 2 “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to [a]those shepherds, ‘Thus says the Lord [b]God, “Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been [c]feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds [d]feed the flock? 3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without [e]feeding the flock. 4 Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the [f]diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. 5 They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered.***

Jesus is not that kind of shepherd.

He did climb over a wall and steal the flock.

He does not lead his flock to brown fields and polluted water.

Jesus is a good shepherd..

He is the shepherd of Psalm 23..

In fact, verse 9 sounds much like Psalm 23 in that Jesus leads his flock to good pastures..

Jesus is not in the shepherding business to get rich.

He is the shepherding business because he loves the sheep.

He cares for them and provides for them..

This should have been ringing in the ears of these Jews that Jesus was speaking to..

There were victims of their false shepherds.

They were victims of a false religion run by false shepherds..

Their pastures were always brown and eaten up.

Their water was always polluted..

They were blind sheep led by blind shepherds as they walked on the edges of cliffs to barren fields..

They did not have life of abundance...

They had a life of poverty.

They had a life of want.

Yet, Jesus says that if they come to him as the good shepherd, they will experience an abundant..

Now this isn't the promise of health, wealth, and a 2 Cadillacs in the garage..

But it is a promise that becoming part of Christ's flock assures your survival in this life and the life to come..

The abundant simply means that Christ will meet your needs..

If that sounds familiar, it should..

Psalm 23:1..

***The Lord is my shepherd,  
I [a]shall not want.***

In other words, when Christ is your Shepherd, you will have everything you need..

The abundant life is not a promise of physical abundance, but it is a promise of spiritual abundance..

Those in Christ's flock never want to leave..

Now back to John 10 for a minute..

How will these Jews respond to Jesus' message?

How will they feel about Christ's calling himself the door of the sheep fold and the owner of the sheep?

Well, we will have to wait until next week to see their response..



## **Conclusion**

But I can't wait until next week to ask this?

Is Christ your shepherd?

Do you hear his voice?

Do you experience his life of blessing and abundance?

Do you believe that He is the only way into the flock of God?

Have you come way of Christ to know the Lord?

I will never forget going with a friend to the lower part of the state to see a basketball game..

The reason we went is because of a basketball player named Raymond Felton.

He played at a small school in the town of Latta SC.

When we got there, cars were everywhere.

So we jump out and head to door where there is a group of people standing inside..

WE grab the door and go to sling it open but it is locked..

So we head to the next door and there is a security guard by it, so we grab that handle thinking he is the place to enter..

The door opens but he tells us to go on around the corner.

That door was unlocked simply because the latch was broken.

He is simply standing guard so none enters..

So we walk on around the building where we find people in line waiting on the opposite side to get in..

You see, the building was packed to capacity, so the fire marshall had set up one entry to keep track of maximum capacity...

And though it was embarrassing for us to try to open the wrong doors, we understood why now..

Let me just tell you.

You won't jerk the door open to heaven..

You won't slip over the fence.

You won't sneak by the guard.

If you make it to heaven, you will go through the one door that is Christ..

He is the good Shepherd, but he is also the only door.

Repent and trust in Him today.

Let us pray.