

THE GOOD SHEPHERD
John 10
The Gospel of John – Week 41

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By the time of Jesus, the Jews were looking for the promised Messiah – this king who would deliver them from their enemies and set up a kingdom that would never end. The prophets said that the Messiah would be a shepherd over God's people.
 - i. **Ezekiel 34:23** "I will establish over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will shepherd them. He will tend them himself and will be their shepherd."
2. The OT also described God as the Shepherd of Israel.
 - i. **Isaiah 40:11** "He protects his flock like a shepherd; he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in the fold of his garment. He gently leads those that are nursing."
3. When Jesus came, He called Himself the good shepherd (John 10:11). This was a declaration to be both Messiah and God.
4. In John 10 we are going to see four ways that Jesus shepherds His flock. Four ways that He cares for His people.

II. 4 WAYS THAT JESUS SHEPHERDS HIS FLOCK

1. He is the gate to heaven.
 - i. John 10:1-2 "Truly I tell you, anyone who doesn't enter the sheep pen by the gate but climbs in some other way is a thief and a robber. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep."
 1. Jesus is using a metaphor, and He is going to explain it in verse 7.
 2. It is not surprising that He used the shepherd/sheep metaphor. The land of Judea was rocky, so it was most pastoral than agricultural. Farming sheep and goats was a major part of the economy. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were shepherds. Moses was a shepherd. King David was a shepherd. Shepherds were the first to hear the news when Jesus was born.
 3. In verses 1-2 Jesus is the shepherd. He is contrasting Himself with the false teachers, false prophets, and false Messiahs – such as the Pharisees – that came before Him and would come after Him. They are thieves and robbers, whereas Christ is the true shepherd.
 - ii. John 10:3 "The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out."
 1. Some people use this verse in defense of Calvinism. Calvinism teaches that God does not call all to salvation; He only calls the elect. And He does not enable all to hear and understand the gospel – only the elect. They argue that this verse supports their view. The

shepherd is Christ, and the sheep are the elect – those chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world. The shepherd does not call all the sheep to salvation – only the elect.

2. This verse has nothing to do with the Calvinist/Arminian debate; it has nothing to do with election.
 3. In the towns there were communal pens or sheepfolds in which all the shepherds in town kept their sheep when they came home at night. This was protected by a strong door, and only the gatekeeper had the key. The gatekeeper is John the Baptist. He had been preparing Israel for the coming of Christ. The gatekeeper – John the Baptist – opened the gate for Jesus. He endorsed Christ. He prepared the sheep for the shepherd. He called Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29).”
 4. The sheep are those who believed in the message of John the Baptist. They were the true believers. They were the true Israel. They repented of their sins and been baptized by John. Their hearts were prepared to receive the coming Messiah. They were already Christ’s sheep.
 5. When Jesus, the shepherd of Israel came, He called His sheep by name. He knew who the true believers were, and they recognized His voice when He arrived.
- iii. John 10:4-5 “4 When he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 They will never follow a stranger; instead they will run away from him, because they don’t know the voice of strangers.”
1. In that part of the world, the sheep are trained to know the shepherd’s voice, and they will only answer to him.
 2. H. V. Morton tells of a scene that he saw in a cave near Bethlehem. Two shepherds had sheltered their flocks in the cave during the night. How were the flocks to be sorted out? One of the shepherds stood some distance away and gave his peculiar call which only his own sheep knew, and soon his whole flock had run to him, because they knew his voice. They would have come for no one else, but they knew the call of their own shepherd (William Barclay, The Gospel of John).
 3. Christ’s sheep were those who were true believers before Christ came. They were the true Israel. They followed the teaching of John the Baptist. They were told all about the coming Messiah – the true shepherd. So, when Jesus came, they recognized Him as the shepherd, and they followed Him.
- iv. John 10:6-7 6 Jesus gave them this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them. 7 Jesus said again, “Truly I tell you, I

am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn't listen to them. 9 I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture."

1. "I am the gate." The Gospel of John has seven "I Am" statements of Jesus. "I am the bread of life." "I am the light of the world." This is the third.
2. If you want eternal life (to be saved), then you must enter through Jesus Christ.
3. There were two kinds of pens or sheepfolds back then. I mentioned one earlier. It was a communal pen inside the town. It had a strong door with a gatekeeper. Here Jesus is referring to a second type. Often the shepherds would not bring their flocks back to town at night; they would sleep out in the hillside. In this hillside there were sheepfolds which were open enclosures (no roof) surrounded by a fence. These pens had no door, so the shepherd Himself would act as the door. He would sleep across the entrance so that no one could enter the pen without going through Him, and no one could exit without going through Him. This is what Jesus is referring to. He is the door; the gate. The only way to be saved, to receive eternal life, to go to heaven is through Christ.
4. This is one of the most hated doctrines in the Bible, but there is no escaping it. It is found throughout the Bible.
 - a. John 14:6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
 - b. Acts 4:12 "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved."

v. Jesus is the gate to heaven. He is the only way in.

2. He gives abundant life.

- i. John 10:9-10 "9 I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance."
- ii. Not only does Jesus give us eternal life, but He provides abundant life.
- iii. A shepherd's job was to lead the flock to green pastures and still waters. That's what Jesus does for us. He gives us abundant life.
- iv. "He will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture."
 1. "Come in and go out" was a very common Hebrew phrase that meant total peace and security.
 2. William Barclay "To be able to come and go unmolested was the Jewish way of describing a life that is absolutely secure and safe."

When people can go in and out without fear it means their country is at peace; the forces of law and order are supreme; they enjoy perfect security.”

- v. This is what Jesus does for His sheep. He gives us abundant life.
 - 1. The Message: “more and better life than they ever dreamed of.”
 - 2. Amplified: “I came so they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full; till it overflows).”
 - 3. Living Bible: “My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.”
 - 4. NLT: “My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.”
- vi. Jesus gives His sheep an abundant life; the best life. Christianity is not an alternative lifestyle; it is the superior lifestyle.
- vii. Shepherds had a few pieces of essential equipment that they always kept with them (William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*).
 - 1. A Scrip: A small bag made of animal skin in which he carried his food.
 - 2. A Sling: A sling shot. And shepherds were very skilled. Judges 20:16 mentions “seven hundred fit young men who were left-handed among all these troops; all could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.” David was a shepherd, and he used his sling to kill the giant Goliath. He struck him right between the eyes. The sling was used for two purposes. It was used to defend the sheep against predators and thieves. But it was also used to lead the sheep. There were no sheep dogs in Palestine. If ever a sheep was wandering too far in the wrong direction, the shepherd would sling a stone right in front of its nose to warn it to turn around.
 - 3. A Rod: A shepherd’s crook. This was used to catch and pull back any sheep which was going astray. At the end of the day, as the sheep were going into the pen, the shepherd held his rod across the entrance, close to the ground. Every sheep had to pass under the rod. As each sheep passed under the rod, the shepherd would closely examine it to see if it had any cuts or injuries from the day.
 - 4. A Staff: A short wooden club which had a lump of wood at the end, often studded with nails. This was used to defend himself and his flock against animals and thieves.
- viii. This is a picture of what Jesus does for us. He defends and protects us; He gives us peace and joy; He provides for our needs; He leads and guides us along the best pathway for our life; He closely watches over us so that He can help us when we get hurt.
- ix. **Psalm 23:1-3** “The Lord is my shepherd; I have what I need. He lets me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters. He renews my life; he leads me along the right paths for his name’s sake. Even when I go

through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me.”

- x. You should desire to become a Christian not just to avoid hell, but because following Jesus is the best life. When Jesus is your shepherd, you have all that you need and so much more. Not just enough, but an abundance.

3. He lays down His life for His sheep.

- i. **John 10:11-18** 11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand, since he is not the shepherd and doesn’t own the sheep, leaves them and runs away when he sees a wolf coming. The wolf then snatches and scatters them. 13 This happens because he is a hired hand and doesn’t care about 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. I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 But I have other sheep that are not from this sheep pen; I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”
- ii. This is the fourth of Jesus’ famous “I am” statements in the Gospel of John. So, two of the seven are found in chapter ten.
- iii. Again, the fact that Jesus called Himself the good shepherd is significant because it was a declaration to be God and Messiah. Remember, the OT referred to God as the shepherd of Israel; and it referred to the Messiah as the shepherd of Israel.
- iv. The word “good” is significant. The Greek language has two different words for good. *Agathos* refers to moral goodness. That is not the word Jesus used here, even though He is morally good; the Bible says that He is perfect. He never sinned. But the word Jesus used here is *kalos*. It means beautiful, magnificent, winsome, attractive, lovely, excellent on all levels. Again, this points to the abundant life that Jesus leads us to. Jesus is generous, and compassionate, and kind, and loving, and patient, and forgiving. He always does what is best for us. He is good.
- v. The thing that makes Him so good is that He lays down His life for the sheep. Jesus died on the cross for our sins so that we could be forgiven and reconciled to God.
- vi. Jesus contrasts Himself as the good shepherd with a shepherd who was a hired hand. There were two types of shepherds in ancient Palestine. One was just a hireling. This was just someone who was taking care of the sheep for a paycheck. He had no special love or investment in the sheep. In the end, he was just there for to make a buck. But then there was the good

shepherd. These were usually young men and women who were shepherding their father's flock from the time they could walk. The sheep belonged to their family. So, they really cared about the sheep. These good shepherds sometimes had to risk their lives for the sheep, and sometimes pay the ultimate sacrifice; and a good shepherd wouldn't hesitate. This is something a hireling would not do.

- vii. In ancient Palestine, the sheep were not used for meat; they were mostly used for wool. So the sheep stayed with the family for years. The shepherd came to know each sheep by name, and cared deeply for each sheep. They were his pets; his friends. This shepherd who had been caring for them for his whole life was willing to die for his sheep. This is a picture of Jesus. He deeply cares for us and knows us by name. He was willing to die on the cross for our sins.
- viii. **John 15:13** “No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.”
- ix. Jesus also goes to great length in this passage to explain that His life was not stolen from Him; He was not forced to die on the cross; He did not have to die on the cross; He willingly chose to lay down His life for us. This is more evidence of His great love for us. He chose the nails for you and for me.

4. **He holds us securely in His hand.**

- i. John 10:19-22 19 Again the Jews were divided because of these words.
20 Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and he’s crazy. Why do you listen to him?” 21 Others were saying, “These aren’t the words of someone who is demon-possessed. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”
22 Then the Festival of Dedication took place in Jerusalem, and it was winter.
 - 1. The Festival of Dedication is also called Hanukkah. It is still universally celebrated by Jews to this day. It held on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev, which corresponds to our month of December. This is why Jews celebrate Hanukkah about the same time that we celebrate Christmas every year. This is the only major Jewish festival that isn’t commanded in the Bible. In fact, this is the only reference in the entire Bible to it. Hanukkah is a celebration of something that happened during the intertestamental period – the period of four hundred years between the Old Testament and the New Testament. During that time, Alexander the Great conquered the world. When he died, his kingdom was divided among his generals, who established their own empires in different parts of the world. The Ptolemies controlled the area around Egypt. The Seleucids controlled the area around Israel. This was also called the Syrian empire. The king of Syria, Antiochus Epiphanes, was having some trouble with the Jews. So, in 170 B.C., he attacked Jerusalem, killing 80,000 Jews and

selling many into slavery. A bunch of money was stolen from the temple. And he outlawed the Jewish religion and tried to force Greek culture and religion on the Jews. It was against the law to own a copy of the Old Testament, or to circumcise your child, or to observe the Sabbath. Antiochus set up a statue of the Greek god Zeus in the temple. The temple chambers were turned into brothels. And he used the altar of burnt offering to sacrifice a pig to the pagan gods. This resulted in a Jewish rebellion, led by a Jewish priest and his sons Judas, Jonathan, and Simon. It is called the Maccabean Revolt. They were able to win back their freedom, cleanse and rebuilt the temple. Hanukkah is a celebration of event. It is a celebration of religious liberty.

- ii. **John 10:23-26** 23 Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon's Colonnade. 24 The Jews surrounded him and asked, "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.",
25 "I did tell you and you don't believe," Jesus answered them. "The works that I do in my Father's name testify about me. 26 But you don't believe because you are not of my sheep.,
 - 1. As Jesus was walking in the temple, the Jewish leaders (Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees) asked Him if He was the Messiah. Jesus said, "I have told you. My miracles make it very clear that I am the Messiah." But then Jesus said something that causes a lot of confusion in verse 26. "But you don't believe because you are not of my sheep." Again, this goes back to our discussion of Calvinism. Calvinists think Jesus is referring to the doctrine of election. The reason that the Jewish leaders did not believe in Jesus was because they were not His sheep – i.e. the elect. They were not chosen to believe. God did not choose to give them the ability to believe and to draw them to Christ. But that is not what Jesus is saying. The sheep are those who truly worshiped God and accepted the teaching of John the Baptist. They were already God's sheep. So, when Jesus came, they accepted Christ. They knew He was from God. But the Jewish leaders were not true worshipers of God. They were hypocrites. They lived for money and for human praise. So Jesus said, "The reason you do not follow me is because you did not follow my Father."
- iii. **John 10:27-29** "27 My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

1. Here Jesus gives us the doctrine of eternal security. Once saved always saved. Once you get saved, you cannot lose your salvation because Christ holds you firmly in His hand. In fact, He goes on to say that you cannot lose your salvation because the Father holds you in His hand.
 2. You should never worry about losing your salvation. The question should never be, "Have I lost my salvation?" but "Am I truly saved in the first place?"
 3. Any time someone doubts their salvation it is because they are forgetting the gospel and putting their hope in their own performance. If their obedience is good, they feel secure. If their obedience has been bad, they feel insecure. But God did not save you because of your obedience; because of your performance; because of your good works; He saved you because of what Christ has done for you. Any time you feel insecure, remember that your salvation has nothing to do with you and how deserving you are; it has everything to do with what Christ has done for you. Turn your attention and hope away from yourself onto Jesus Christ.
- iv. **John 10:30** "I and the Father are one."
1. This is one of the clearest declarations of deity in by Jesus in the Bible.
 2. How do we know that Jesus was declaring Himself to be God?
Because the next verse says they picked up stones to kill Him.
- v. **John 10: 31-36** 31 Again the Jews picked up rocks to stone him.
32 Jesus replied, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these works are you stoning me?"
33 "We aren't stoning you for a good work," the Jews answered, "but for blasphemy, because you—being a man—make yourself God."
34 Jesus answered them, "Isn't it written in your law, I said, you are gods?
35 If he called those to whom the word of God came 'gods'—and the Scripture cannot be broken—
36 do you say, 'You are blaspheming' to the one the Father set apart and sent into the world, because I said: I am the Son of God?
1. When Jesus called Himself God, the Jews picked up stones to kill Him. So, Jesus, knowing that they respected the Scriptures, used a Scriptural argument to defend Himself. He quoted from Psalm 82:6, which was a warning to wicked judges to repent. Verse 6 says, "I said, 'You are gods; you are all sons of the Most High.'" In other words, the judges were to be God's representatives to the people; they were to be like God to the people in passing judgment. So, Jesus' argument is that if it was proper for God to call wicked judges gods, then isn't it proper for Son of God to claim to be God?

- vi. **John 10:37-42** 37 If I am not doing my Father's works, don't believe me. 38 But if I am doing them and you don't believe me, believe the works. This way you will know and understand that the Father is in me and I in the Father." 39 Then they were trying again to seize him, but he escaped their grasp. 40 So he departed again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and he remained there. 41 Many came to him and said, "John never did a sign, but everything John said about this man was true." 42 And many believed in him there.

III. CONCLUSION

1. Jesus is the good shepherd.
 - i. He is the gate to heaven.
 - ii. He gives us abundant life.
 - iii. He lays down His life for us.
 - iv. He holds us securely in His hand.
2. If Christ is the shepherd, and we are His sheep, then that says something about us. Sheep are some of dumbest animals on earth. They are not smart. They are very weak and defenseless and prone to wander. And that is true about us. Apart from Christ, we are very foolish; we are very sinful and prone to wander; and we are very weak. We need a shepherd.
3. Have you decided to make Jesus your shepherd?