

May 15, 2022

“The Good Shepherd”
Lesson 2 of Unit

John 10:7-18

Intro

Shepherds have not always been thought of in positive ways. An ancient Jewish commentator said, “No position in the world is so despised as that of the shepherd.” He was amazed that David would call the Lord a shepherd, as he does in Psalm 23. Ancient rabbis has a list of occupations known for thieving and cheating—shepherds were on that list. Shepherds were so poorly thought of that they could not be used in courts as a witness.

But that view changes in the New Testament. The angels announced Jesus' birth to shepherds. Jesus said He came to earth to rescue “the lost sheep of Israel” in Matt. 15:24. Early church leaders were expected to be shepherds (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). Today's passage has Jesus calling Himself “the good shepherd.”

In John 10:1-6, Jesus has made a comparison with sheep and sheepfolds, trying to explain both who He was and that He was the way into the “sheepfold”. But 10:6 says “they did not understand these things.” So Jesus makes a more direct statement, which begins this study.

Read John 10:7-18

1. vs. 7: Jesus says he is the gate for the sheep

A sheep pen usually was a small area, enclosed with stone walls and topped with thorns

The only entrance was a doorway or gate guarded by the shepherd

Some have suggested that the shepherd lay across the doorway

This is the second of Jesus' “I am the” statements

2. vs. 8: This verse explains the importance of Jesus as the door of the sheep

“All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers”

Even before Jesus, there were numerous false prophets and false messiahs

Jesus calls them “thieves and robbers”

These ones were not serving God, as a true shepherd

They were only interested in gaining for themselves

“But the sheep did not listen to them”

Sheep know the voice of their shepherd, like dogs know the voice of the owner

These “sheep” did not listen to the false prophets and false messiahs

They were listening to and obeying God

Sometimes the legitimate religious leaders of Israel were not good shepherds

Sometimes they exploited and abused the sheep under their care

See Jer. 23:1-2, Ezek. 34:1-10

Jesus uses this negative example to show what a truly good shepherd is like

He will not rob; instead he will care for the sheep

3. vs. 9: Jesus repeats his claim from vs. 7: “I am the gate”

Jesus doesn't just know where the gate is—He **is** the gate

Jesus isn't just one gate—He is **the** gate

Jesus is clearly stating that He is the only way to salvation

He says, “whoever enters through me will be saved.”

All are invited to come into the gate that leads to eternal life

This is the statement and goal of the truly Good Shepherd

He wants all the sheep to come through the gate to safety

He doesn't want any of the sheep to be lost

He finishes the verse by saying “He will come in and go out, and find pasture”

This idea speaks of the safety to be enjoyed by coming through the gate

It also speaks of the total provision given to those who enter

4. vs. 10: Jesus makes a contrast between himself and the “thief”

The thief “comes only to steal and kill and destroy”

These are the false shepherds, the ones who only serve themselves

They do not serve, but expect others to serve them

Jesus is the opposite

“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”

Thieves kill and destroy; Jesus comes to give life

This life isn't just in terms of number of days

This life is also one of high quality

“To the full”

This doesn't mean they will have an easy, affluent lifestyle

It implies a fulfilling life

This is a life fully connected with Jesus

This is a life filled with contentment, not possessions

5. vs. 11: Here is the next “I Am” statement from Jesus

“I am the good shepherd”

Jesus is both the gateway into the sheepfold and the good shepherd who cares for the sheep

David showed what a good shepherd was

He defended his sheep from vicious foes: a lion and a bear (I Sam. 17:34-37)

Jesus will also defend the sheep from foes who want to kill them: from Satan himself

“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”

Satan is the ultimate thief and killer—see John 8:44

Jesus willingly lays down his life to protect His sheep from this killer

The cross is only a few months away

Jesus foresees His destiny and accepts it

6. vs. 12: Jesus expands his analogy

“The hired hand is not the shepherd”

In vs. 10, Jesus noted the cruel intentions of the thief—to steal, kill, and destroy

Those in this category are evil, intent on harming the sheep

The hired hand isn't evil, but selfish

The hired hand thinks about saving himself, not the sheep
They aren't his sheep, so they aren't his problem
There is speculation that the "hired hand" refers to certain religious leaders
They don't actively harm the sheep, but they won't go out of their way to help them

7. vs. 13: Jesus emphasizes the point He has just made in vs. 12 by repeating the key ideas
"The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."

The emphasis is on his being a hired hand

He is a worker doing a job for pay

He does not care for the sheep; he only cares for his safety and his pay

Shepherding would have been well understood by people of Jesus' day

Still he emphasizes this point to show the difference

He is the good shepherd who lays down his life, not a hired hand who runs away

8. vs. 14: Jesus is essentially calling for the hearers to make a choice

Is Jesus a hired hand or the good shepherd?

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—"

Jesus knows those who are His sheep

Likewise, those truly of His flock will follow Him

It would be interesting to know how many of the crowd followed and how many left Him

To "know" Jesus (or anyone) is more than just knowing who they are

To know in the Bible speaks of an active involvement in another's life

A very close association

Paul speaks of this in Phil. 3:8-11—here are verses 10-11:

"that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, in order that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead."

Jesus knows us this closely

Our goal is to be conformed to the image of Christ, and know Him closely as well

9. vs. 15: This verse shows that Jesus knows exactly what He is about to do and why

"...just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father—"

God's plan for Jesus on earth is known to Jesus

Going to the cross isn't a surprise to Him

He has already told his disciples this (Mark 8:31 and 9:31)

"I lay down my life for the sheep"

Jesus knows why He is going to the cross

He is laying down His life to save the people—His sheep

10. vs. 16: Jesus has been talking to Jews, but here he includes another element they weren't expecting

"I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also"

Jesus is referring to Gentiles

They haven't been part of God's people in the past, but they will be now

Jesus says, "They too will listen to my voice"

Jesus makes clear here that there is to be one people under Him, the one shepherd
In John 12:32, Jesus says, “I will draw all men to myself”
The Great Commission says to preach the gospel “to all nations” (Matt. 28:19)
Rev. 7:9 says heaven will have people “from every nation, tribe, people, and language”

11. vs. 17: Jesus makes two points here, one that seems obvious and one seemingly impossible

The obvious is that the Father loves Him

The Father has always loved the Son

One specific reason is given here: that He willingly lays down His life

The seemingly impossible is “I lay down my life—only to take it up again”

This is not something that is humanly possible

When we die, our physical bodies can’t be brought back to life by human means

This resurrection will show at least two things:

1) That Jesus’ crucifixion wasn’t the result of unfortunate circumstances

It was planned

2) Jesus is God, for only God can raise the dead back to life

12. vs. 18: Jesus heads off the idea of His being a victim with this verse

“No one takes it (my life) from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.”

Jesus is not a victim of the Jewish leaders who call for His crucifixion

It wasn’t Pilate who has the final say in Jesus’ earthly life

He willingly let them crucify Him for the sake of His sheep

As Jesus was in control of his death, He is also in control of His life

“I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.”

The Father has command this, and Jesus obeys the Father’s will

Application: A shepherd does many things for the sheep. He protects them, rescues them when they’re lost, provides the pasture and water for them, and leads them personally. (Shepherds in Palestine don’t use dogs to drive the herd; they walk at the front and lead the sheep.) Jesus is the good shepherd, who does all these things for us—protects, rescues, provides, and leads.

Sheep are frequently considered dumb and helpless. So when we are called sheep, it isn’t a compliment! But note that the sheep in this passage can distinguish the sound of the shepherd’s voice. The sheep respond to his voice when he calls. So we, in our weaknesses, must hear the voice of Jesus and respond to Him above all the other voices that call to us.

Prayer: Father God, thank you for sending Jesus to be our good shepherd. Help us to hear His voice and to follow His leading. In Jesus’ name, Amen.