

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10:1-21

A. Contrast between the Good Shepherd and the false shepherds of Israel.

Summary of Preach:

- 1. Jesus is THE Good SHEPHERD which was a Messianic Title prophesied in the Old Testament. God was referred to as "The Shepherd of Israel". (see Genesis 49:24; Psalms 80:1; Psalms 118:23; Isaiah 40:11; Psalms 23). Jesus is making a statement that the Pharisees understood - Making Himself equal with God. He wasn't "a shepherd, but THE Shepherd!**
- 2. The Shepherd became "a sheep" - the sacrificial lamb (John 10:11 laying down His life.**
- 3. As His sheep, we are called to "follow Him". Listen to His voice and not follow "strangers".**

4. **Be careful of false shepherds who mislead, exploit, abuse, steal, kill and destroy. We are to flee from them.**
5. **Jesus is THE DOOR , not just “a door”. An exclusive claim to be the ONLY WAY, the ONLY TRUTH, and the ONLY LIFE. He was bringing an end to the law, to Judaism and trying to enter into a relationship with God in any other way apart from Him.**

Below is a helpful Commentary from Biblical Scholars on John 10:1-21. Enjoy!

1. (John 10:1-2) Jesus is the true, legitimate shepherd, who enters in the way that is proper and prepared.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.”

- a. **Most assuredly, I say to you**: This follows — at least thematically — in John’s gospel after the great conflict with the religious leaders regarding the man born blind. The religious leaders had shown themselves to be so

unhelpful and cruel to the man, his parents, and the common people in general that Jesus felt it necessary to talk about the contrast between His heart and work as a leader to God's people and the heart and work of many of the religious leaders of His day.

b. **He who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber:**

Political and spiritual leaders were often called *shepherds* in the ancient world (Isaiah 56:11, Jeremiah 3:15). Jesus explained that not everyone among the sheep is a true shepherd; some are like thieves and robbers. One mark of their being **a thief and a robber** is *how they gain entry among the sheep*.

i. The idea is that there is a **door**, a proper way to gain entry. Not everyone who stands among the sheep comes that way. Some climb **up some other way**.

ii. The religious leaders gained their place among God's people — the **sheep** spoken of here — through personal and political connections, through formal education, through ambition, manipulation, and corruption.

c. **He who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep:** A true shepherd comes in the legitimate and designed way: through love, calling, care, and sacrificial service.

i. God always intended that His people be led, fed, and protected by those who come in the legitimate, intended way. The **door** is there for a reason. Some will always climb over the barriers, but God has the barriers and the door there for a reason.

2. (John 10:3-6) The sheep and their shepherd.

“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

a. **To him the doorkeeper opens**: In the spiritual picture Jesus spoke of, the door for the sheep pen had a **doorkeeper** — one who watched who came in and who went out. The **doorkeeper** knows the true shepherd and appropriately grants him access.

i. In towns of that time, sheep from many flocks were kept for the night in a common sheepfold, overseen by one **doorkeeper** who regulated which shepherds brought and took which sheep.

b. **He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out**: The shepherd calls the **sheep by name**, showing that the shepherd has a personal connection with the sheep. The shepherd **leads them**, providing direction and leadership — without *driving* the sheep.

i. “As we have names for horses, dogs, cows, so the Eastern shepherds for their sheep.” (Dods)

ii. “In my youth some shepherds in the Scottish Highlands not only called their individual sheep by name, but claimed that an individual sheep would recognize its own name and respond to it.” (Bruce)

iii. “In this Gospel, Jesus calls the following ‘sheep’ by name, Philip, Mary of Magdala, Thomas, and Simon Peter; and on each occasion it is a turning-point in the disciple’s life.”

(Tasker)

iv. **And leads them out**: “It was the custom in the eastern countries for the shepherd to go at the head of his sheep, and they *followed* him from pasture to pasture.” (Clarke)

c. **For they know his voice**: In the common sheepfolds of ancient times, the shepherd merely gave his distinctive call and his sheep came out from the others, following him out of the sheepfold. Sheep are experts at discerning their shepherd’s **voice**.

i. “There is a story of a Scotch traveller who changed clothes with a Jerusalem shepherd and tried to lead the sheep: but the sheep followed the shepherd’s voice and not his clothes.”

(Dods)

ii. During World War I, some soldiers tried to steal a flock of sheep from a hillside near Jerusalem. The sleeping shepherd awoke to find his flock being driven off. He couldn’t recapture them by force, so he called out to his flock with his distinctive call. The sheep listened, and returned to their rightful owner. The soldiers couldn’t stop the sheep from returning to their shepherd’s voice.

d. **Jesus used this illustration**: This is a picture both of the work of Jesus among His sheep and of what those who seek to serve among the sheep of Jesus should focus upon. Adam Clarke described six marks of the true and legitimate minister of God in these **first six verses of John 10**:

- He has a proper entrance into the ministry.
- He sees the Holy Spirit open his way as a doorkeeper to God's sheep.
- He sees that the sheep respond to his voice in teaching and leadership.
- He is well acquainted with his flock.
- He leads the flock and does not drive them or lord it over them.
- He goes before the sheep as an example.

3. (John 10:7-10) The true shepherd protects and promotes life; the false shepherds take away life.

Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who *ever* came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it more abundantly*."

- I am the door of the sheep:** Jesus used another picture from sheep farming in His time. Out in the pasturelands for sheep, pens were made with only one entrance. The door for those sheep pens was the shepherd himself. He laid his body across the entrance, to keep the sheep in and to keep out the wolves. The shepherd was in fact the **door**.
- All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers:** *Thief* implies deception and trickery; *robber* implies violence and destruction. These take away life but Jesus gives life and He gives it **abundantly**. These are the con men and muggers of the spiritual world.

i. Alford sees the **all who have come before** basically to be those religious leaders who were actually tools in Satan's hand — as Jesus told some of these religious leaders that their father was actually the devil. “Because the Pharisees are blind leaders, they are also bogus shepherds, and come under the category of those designated in **John 10:8** *thieves and robbers.*” (Tasker)

c. **But the sheep did not hear them**: Jesus seems to say that *His* sheep are evident because they will not **hear** (follow after) the voice of the thieves and robbers who come after the sheep.

e. **I have come that they may have life, and they may have it more abundantly**: Jesus said this to contrast His shepherd-like care with unfaithful and illegitimate leaders. They come to **steal, and to kill, and to destroy**. Jesus comes to bring **life** to His people.

i. “The Greek word for ‘abundance,’ *perissos*, has a mathematical meaning and generally denotes a surplus...The abundant life is above all the contented life, in which our contentment is based upon the fact that God is equal to every emergency and is able to supply all our needs according to His riches and glory in Christ Jesus.” (Boice)

- Abundant life isn't an especially long life.
- Abundant life isn't an easy, comfortable life.
- Abundant life is a life of satisfaction and contentment in Jesus.

ii. “Life is a matter of degrees. Some have life, but it flickers like a dying candle, and is indistinct as the fire in the smoking flax; others are full of life, and are bright and vehement.” (Spurgeon)

- Someone with a lot of life has *stamina*.
- Someone with a lot of life has *increased energy*.

- Someone with a lot of life has *a large sphere of living*.
- Someone with a lot of life has *the ability to do things*.
- Someone with a lot of life has *an overflow of enjoyment*.
- Someone with a lot of life has *what it takes to win*.

iii. Abundant life sheep give honor to the shepherd. They are a credit to him.

4. (John 10:11-15) The good shepherd will lay down his life for the flock.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, *he who is not the shepherd*, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”

- I am the good shepherd**: Jesus said it so plainly there could be no mistake what He meant. He fulfills the ideal of shepherd-like care for the people of God as illustrated in the Old Testament and in that culture.
- Gives His life for the sheep**: “*He is giving his life still*. The life that is in the man Christ Jesus he is always giving for us. It is for us he lives, and because he lives we live also. He lives to plead for us. He lives to represent us in heaven. He lives to rule providence for us.” (Spurgeon)
- Sees the wolf coming**: It was assumed that wild animals (**the wolf**) or bandits (the *thieves and robbers* previously mentioned) would threaten the sheep. The question was, “How will the shepherd respond?”

- d. **The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep**: The bad shepherd (**a hireling**) will not defend the sheep and thinks the flock exists for his benefit, but the **good shepherd** lives and dies for the good of the sheep.
- The good shepherd sacrifices for the sheep (**gives His life**).
 - The good shepherd knows his sheep (**I know My sheep**). We think of sheep as being all the same. The shepherd knows they are individuals with their own personalities and characteristics.
 - The good shepherd is known by the sheep (**and am known by My own**).
 - **As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father**: The work of Jesus as the **Good Shepherd** was rooted in His close relationship with His God and Father.

5. (John 10:16) Jesus speaks of other sheep.

“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.”

- a. **Other sheep I have which are not of this fold**: These **other sheep** are Gentile believers, not of the fold of Israel. Jesus said that He **must bring** these sheep also, who would also **hear** His **voice**.

6. (John 10:17-18) Jesus claims to have power over life and death.

“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

a. **Therefore My Father loves Me**: God the Father saw the beauty of character and self-sacrifice in God the Son, and He loved the Son all the more because of it.

b. **That I may take it again... I have power to take it again**: In this sense, we can say that Jesus “raised Himself” from the dead. He had the power to lay down His life, and He had the power to take it up again.

7. (John 10:19-21) Jesus is accused of being demon-possessed and insane.

Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings. And many of them said, “He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?” Others said, “These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

a. **Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings**: Once again, Jesus is shown as the dividing line of humanity. Humanity divides between accepting or rejecting Jesus.

b. **He has a demon and is mad**: Jesus made such radical claims about Himself that people divided over Him. Some believe He was who He said He was. Others believed that anyone who claimed to be God as Jesus claimed must either have a **demon** or be **mad**.

i. William Barclay was right when wrote, “Either Jesus was a megalomaniac madman, or he was the Son of God.” By what we know of Jesus, is it fair to say that He was a madman?

- The *words* of Jesus were not the words of a madman; instead, they are supreme sanity.
- The *deeds* of Jesus were not the deeds of a megalomaniac; instead, they were utterly unselfish.
- The *effect* of Jesus wasn't the effect of a madman; instead, He has changed millions for the good.

c. **These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?** Miraculous works like opening the eyes of the blind *can* be a valid testimony, but only in concert with faithfulness to the word of God. These people were right in looking at *both* the works and the words of Jesus.