

**Jesus Christ — the Good Shepherd**  
**John 10:1-21**

A few years ago I was running some errands one afternoon when I noticed that one tire was almost completely flat. I slowly made my way to a tire store. There was a long line and wait (with mild irritation). Finally, I spoke to an employee: “I see my car parked over there...has the tire been repaired?”

“Let me check...you’re good to go,” he said as he handed me the keys.

“I think we need to settle up, first. I haven’t paid yet.”

“It’s all taken care of...next time you need some tires, think about us.”

It was only about \$10, but I felt like I’d hit the lottery! I had a need (admittedly, a pretty small one), and it was just nice to have someone extend a little extra kindness.

As you come to worship this morning, you probably have a need too. It may be that you are processing an illness of someone close to you, or perhaps even yourself. Perhaps the harshness of death has invaded your life this week, or sin (yours or someone else’s) has intruded and produced its deadly “fruit” in your life. Perhaps there is a significant decision or event that awaits you this week, and the uncertainty of it has created no small stress in your life. Maybe there is no major issue, but the tyranny of multiple daily distresses is just *wearing you out*.

You are needy. And you need a little extra kindness this morning. In fact, the people of God *are* needy (that Scripture uses the image of sheep for us may not be the most flattering illustration!).

Beginning next week, we are going to look at an OT book that is all about Jesus Christ — Zechariah. In preparation for that time, I want to paint a NT picture of Jesus Christ first. Who is this Man, and what was His role? John’s gospel pictures Christ as Healer, Teacher, the Water of life, the Bread of life, the True Vine, the Way, the Truth, the Resurrection and the Life. But another image dominates as well.

In John 10 Jesus reveals Himself as the Good Shepherd. It speaks of His character, His work, and His person. This is your leader when you are lost. This is your guide when you are weary. This is your Savior.

**FOLLOW CHRIST IN THE SAME WAY THAT DEPENDENT SHEEP FOLLOW A FAITHFUL SHEPHERD.**

How is Jesus the Shepherd of His sheep? John provides five attributes of Jesus as Shepherd.

1. Jesus is the **TRUE** Shepherd (vv. 1-6)
2. Jesus is the **EXCLUSIVE** Shepherd (vv. 7-10)
3. Jesus is the **SACRIFICING** Shepherd (vv. 11-16)
4. Jesus is the **SUBMISSIVE** Shepherd (vv. 17-18)
5. Jesus is the **DIVIDING** Shepherd (vv. 19-21)

## 1. Jesus is the TRUE Shepherd (vv. 1-6)

- To understand this parable, you must understand two things:
  - ✓ While the imagery of shepherds was not uncommon — even among secular leaders (Hammurabi) — shepherds were not well-regarded. They were thought to be perpetually unclean, in lowest social level — with tax-collectors, prostitutes, and tanners — they were generally uneducated and so despised and mistrusted they were not allowed to give testimony in court.
  - ✓ There is a Biblical background to the false shepherds & hirelings; this idea of deceptive and unfaithful shepherds also has a biblical (and historical) basis (Zech. 11:4-6; Ezk. 34:1-15).
  - ✓ The Pharisees were of the same spiritual depth and background as the priests of the prophet's days (In. 9:39-41).
- With those two things in mind, Jesus notes the qualities of the true **shepherd** (v. 2) —
  - ✓ He comes into the sheepfold (walled enclosure or cave for night protection) by the **door** (entrance), not over the wall to steal and do violence (as **thieves and robbers**).
  - ✓ The **doorkeeper** (v. 3) opened the door for Him (authenticating His validity as shepherd). The doorkeeper is *not* the shepherd; he is a hired “porter” who has overnight care of the sheep.
  - ✓ In v. 4 the shepherd puts out the sheep — everyday occurrence of putting them out to pasture. There were dangers in the fold at night; there are new dangers ahead of them in the day pasture. So...
    - He **goes ahead of them** — showing them the pathway (the only one) to follow. He is providing visible, directive leadership. “This is the way to God. This is the way to safety” (Ps. 23:2).
    - The **sheep follow Him** — and they follow by listening to **His voice** (obeying Him; 14:15, 21, 24).
    - They *love* to follow Him (and absolutely no one else **strangers**; cf. double negative **not** in v. 5).
  - ✓ He **calls His sheep by name**. He knows their identity (unlike thieves) — He knows them (personally and individually) — they **are His**. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Messianic Shepherd (Ezk. 34:11-16)...

- **Is. 40:11** *Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.*
- **Ezek. 37:24** *“My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them.*
- **Mic. 5:4** *And He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth.*
- **Mic. 7:14** *Shepherd Your people with Your scepter, The flock of Your possession Which dwells by itself in the woodland, In the midst of a fruitful field. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead As in the days of old.*

- There are shepherds in Israel who were there for selfish purposes (v. 1). They were not shepherds.

- There is a shepherd, a true shepherd who does not steal, abuse and mislead the sheep: Jesus Christ. Just as he was trustworthy for the blind man (9:1ff), so He is trustworthy for all men (unlike Pharisees).
- “Os Guinness tells a story about Ingmar Bergman, the great Swedish filmmaker who one day while listening to Stravinsky had a vision of a nineteenth century cathedral. In the vision, Bergman found himself wandering about the great building, finally coming before a picture of Christ...Realizing its importance Bergman said to the picture, ‘Speak to me! I will not leave this cathedral until you speak to me!’ Of course the picture did not speak...[that] same year Bergman produced *The Silence*, a film about characters who despair of ever finding God. That was Bergman’s interpretation of life.” [Hughes]
- But John points us to Jesus, who is the true shepherd — who speaks, hears, knows, and thus is trustworthy.

## 2. Jesus is the **EXCLUSIVE** Shepherd (vv. 7-10)

- Here Jesus changes the imagery slightly — instead of being the shepherd, He is **the door** to the fold
  - ✓ There are not multiple pathways into the fold of God — only one (cf. 14:6).
  - ✓ **if anyone enters through Me** (v. 9) = they might come through Him, they might not. Only those who come through Him have salvation. The door is open wide; not all will try it.
  - ✓ If I say to you, “Come to my home tomorrow and I will fix you dinner,” you will ask, “where do you live?” I might say, “Oh anywhere...just come to any house and I will cook for you...” That won’t work; if you want me to cook, then you need to come to my house, *exclusively*.
  - ✓ So it is with Christ; if you want what only Christ can give (forgiveness and redemption) you must go to Him — and only Him.
  - ✓ Our willingness to stomach Christ’s exclusivity does not change its reality. Jesus reiterates OT:

- *Deut. 4:39 “Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.*
- *Is. 45:5-6 “I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, [also 45:21-22; 46:9; Acts 4:12]*

- Christ is the only way, though there are pretenders (and always have been): v. 8; Zech. 10:2-3; 11:3ff.
  - ✓ Notice what all pretenders produce — progressive destruction: **steal, kill, destroy** (v. 10).
  - ✓ The other shepherds, instead of offering life, take life (**steal, kill, destroy**, v. 10) — legalism kills; self-righteousness kills; pride kills; unacknowledged and unconfessed sin kills. Every way to “life” apart from Christ kills. Everything without Christ kills. Only Christ is restful.
  - ✓ Notice also the complete resistance of the sheep to following false shepherds/teachers (v. 8).
- To say that Jesus is the only door is not only to say that He is the only way, but that as the door, He provides safety and security for the sheep.

OT scholar Sir George Adam Smith was traveling a century ago in the Middle East and fell into a conversation with a shepherd. The man showed him the fold into which the sheep were led at night. It consisted of four walls, with a way in. Sir George said to him, "That is where they go at night?" "Yes," said the shepherd, "and when they are in there, they are perfectly safe." "But there is no door," said Sir George. "I am the door," said the shepherd. He was not a Christian man; he was not speaking in the language of the New Testament. He was speaking from the Arab shepherd's standpoint. Sir George looked at him and said, "What do you mean by the door?" Said the shepherd, "When the light has gone, and all the sheep are inside, I lie in the open space, and no sheep ever goes out but across my body, and no wolf comes in unless he crosses my body; I am the door."

- Note what the good (both morally upright and pleasurable) shepherd provides: **salvation, pasture** (v. 9), **abundant life** ("over the top, more than necessary, unrestricted, full life," v. 10; cf. 1:16).
  - ✓ He does not promise an absence of hardship; life on this planet will always be hard.
  - ✓ But He does offer a new means of standing in and enduring the hardship — it is by clinging to the Savior — cf. Ps. 23:4.
- If you and I want rest, we will need to go to Christ: "You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in You." [Augustine]
- Yes, He is exclusive; yes, to follow Him is restrictive. Every dead and deadly way is excluded. Jesus is the only way to life.

### 3. Jesus is the SACRIFICING Shepherd (vv. 11-16)

- In case they missed it, in v. 11 Jesus states overtly that He (alone) is the **good Shepherd**. He is reiterating the rest of the gospels and Scripture (Mt. 9:36; 15:24; 18:12-13; Is. 40:11; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pt. 2:25).
- As the **good shepherd**, Christ voluntarily gave up His life for His sheep (cf. 19:30). SUBSTITUTE.
  - ✓ Note that He dies **for** His sheep — i.e., in place of, as a substitute.
  - ✓ He died for the sheep because they were His — He could do no less (Lk. 15:1-7f)!
  - ✓ No earthly shepherd ever voluntarily gave up his life to save the life of his sheep (if he died, so did the sheep; nor did he plan at the beginning of the night — "I will die tonight...").
  - ✓ V. 12 — no hired hand ever would do that; he'd **see** (theorize), **leave**, & RUN from wolf. (Zech. 11:17)
  - ✓ Don't ever get over the fact that you deserved to die, but Christ died in your stead (Rom. 5:8, 10; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pt. 2:24; 3:18).
  - ✓ And not only does He **die** for you, but you get all the blessings of His position:

He wore my crown, the crown of thorns; I wear his crown, the crown of glory. He wore my dress, nay, rather, he wore my nakedness when he died upon the cross; I wear his robes, the royal robes of the King of kings. He bore my shame; I bear his honour. He endured my sufferings to this end that my joy may be full, and that his joy may be fulfilled in me. He laid in the grave that I might rise from the dead and that I may dwell in him. [Spurgeon on the Christian Life, 120.]

- In contrast to the hirelings, as the **good shepherd** (v. 14), Jesus **knows** His sheep, and **lays down His life** (v. 15) because they know Him in the **same way** as the **Father** (v. 15) and He know each other.
  - ✓ As an overflow of His love for the Father, Christ graciously brought His sheep into that loving relationship — His followers enjoy the love of the Father too!
  - ✓ The Father is pleased with us because of Christ (Mt. 3:17).
  - ✓ And then He necessarily (**must**) brings others into that same fellowship (v. 16). And we are the **other sheep** (17:20-24). He dies for those who do not know Him, who are outside Him, to whom He has no obligation (cf. Eph. 2:12-13) — He does so to demonstrate the greatness of His love and glory.

#### 4. Jesus is the **SUBMISSIVE Shepherd** (vv. 17-18)

- It feels odd for us to think of the submission of Christ — a member of the Trinitarian Godhead. God submits to no one. But Christ submitted to the eternal purposes of God to redeem men. From the beginning (Lk. 2:49) to end of His life (Jn. 14:31), Christ submitted to will of Father (Heb. 5:8).
- That submission gave evidence to a unique love between the Father and the Son (v. 17).
- Is it loving for the Father to send the Son to the cross? Yes. It is love because He sought the Son's greatest good and honor, something that could be best accomplished through death and resurrection (**because**).
- Yet the submission of Christ was not begrudging — it was joyful & voluntary (v. 18).
  - ✓ Christ was authoritative over His life (2:19; Rom. 8:11).
  - ✓ Christ came to earth as the fulfillment of God's plan for the redemption of God's people so that God will be eternally glorified and enjoyed as the supreme One of the universe.
  - ✓ He submitted so that we might be redeemed as the fulfillment of God's eternal purposes.

#### 5. Jesus is the **DIVIDING Shepherd** (vv. 19-21)

- As often happened a **division** arose because of Christ (v. 19) — a schism (e.g., 7:43; 8:59; 9:16).
- Jesus Christ divides people who might otherwise be unified —

**Matt. 10:34-39** *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it."*

- He divides, not only because of what people think about Him, but He divides because of what He thinks about people (**Mt. 25:31-34, 41**). The Shepherd is also the Judge.
- Don't misunderstand the picture of Jesus as the shepherd. Don't think of Him only as carrying wounded lambs on His shoulders. He does that. But as shepherd He will also divide those who believe in Him from those who do not believe.
  - ✓ Some of you are here as His sheep — the promise of eternal life is sure; this passage has been about how He does and will care for you.
  - ✓ Some of you are here as goats — you just are not part of the flock of God. You're an imposter trying to get in, but He sees through you to the true character of your unbelieving heart. You are not and cannot be part of His flock. Unless you change.
    - You are a sinner. Desperate, terrible, uncaring, and dead (Scripture says).
    - You cannot save yourself.
    - But, as this passage says, Christ came, and intentionally, willfully, joyfully gave His life for His sheep. He was and is the perfect God-man — sinless and under *no* condemnation.
    - He looked, as a shepherd, at your pitiable condition, and said, "I will die for that one..."
    - He died, accepting all of God's wrath for sin so that God was fully satisfied.
    - You can now live, not because you are good and deserving, but because Jesus Christ is good and deserving and He took your sin and gives you His righteousness so you can see and be with God eternally — so you can know the Father as He does. Cf. **Ps. 23:3, 6**.
    - Unless you believe & love that, you will be one of the goats, condemned to be away from Him.
- Jesus Christ is the shepherd, yes. He is good. He is sacrificing and submissive. But His exclusivity also means that He is a dividing shepherd. Not all will believe. Only those who believe will live.

**CONCLUSION:** Listen to what Charles Spurgeon says about our Shepherd:

There is more in Jesus, the good Shepherd, than you can pack away in a shepherd. He is the good, the great, the chief Shepherd; but he is much more. Emblems to set him forth may be multiplied as the drops of the morning, but the whole multitude will fail to reflect all his brightness. Creation is too small a frame in which to hang his likeness. Human thought is too contracted, human speech too feeble, to set him forth to the full....He is inconceivably above our conceptions, unutterably above our utterances. [Quoted in Hughes, 269.]

I don't know *why* you need this Shepherd today. But I know you need Him. And He is ever-present for you and He is infinitely powerful for you in your exact circumstance. Go to Him for your comfort, your protection, and your peace.

**BENEDICTION:** **Hebrews 13:20-21**