

## John 10:1-21

### II. Jesus Reveals Himself to the World (1:19-12:50)

O. The Sixth Discourse – The Light of the World (8:12-59)

P. The Sixth Sign – Healing the Man Born Blind (9:1-41)

Q. The Seventh Discourse – The Good Shepherd (10:1-21)

This morning, we come to one of the most comforting, personal, and intentional chapters in the Word of God. It's not uncommon for the Word to refer to God as our Shepherd (e.g., Psalm 23), and what a beautiful picture that is. He meets our needs (Ps 23:1); He gives us rest (v. 2); He restores us (v. 3); He leads us down paths we should go (v. 3); He calms our fears (v. 4); He provides for us (v. 5). No doubt we could draw even more from David's pen! In a way, John 10 is an extension of Psalm 23; except, instead of David speaking to God, now we have God in the flesh speaking to us!<sup>1</sup>

He tells the crowd that continues to be gathered that there are *shepherds*, and then there are *thieves and robbers*. This is no doubt a veiled attack on the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders. They are trying to find a way into the pasture to disrupt and steal the sheep; yet Jesus notes that they won't ultimately be successful. This truth is so veiled, however, that *they did not understand the things which He spoke to them* (v. 6)!

Yet, it's worth noting some of the language Jesus uses in these first six verses. *The shepherd of the sheep. . . calls his own sheep by name and leads them out* (vv. 2-3). *And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them* (v. 4). This will come out all the more in vv. 11-16, but note how personal and intentional the language is! While Jesus primarily has the Jews in mind at this point, it won't be long in this passage before He includes us Gentiles, as well. We belong to Him!

Seeing as though the Jews were puzzled by His statement, Jesus begins *again* in v. 7, reiterating what He said before about *thieves and robbers* (v. 8). But note the difference this time in what the Shepherd provides. In referring to Himself as *the door of the sheep* (v. 7), Jesus says: *If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture* (v. 9) and *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly* (v. 10).

Jesus is the way into the pasture (cf. 14:6). The only way to be counted among His sheep and to receive all the benefits of His ministry is to enter through Him. Again, think of the context and purpose of the entire Gospel. John wrote all of this with the specific purpose that *you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name* (20:31). John's inclusion of this discourse is in line with His purpose. Do you want to *have life in His name*? Well, you must *enter by* Him in order to *find pasture*! As a result, we can *have life. . . abundantly, or to the full*, as the NIV translates it. The Greek dictionary defines this word as "being extraordinary in amount." Such is the life we have in Jesus!

If the *I am* statement of v. 7 is the third *I am* statement of John, we now come across the fourth in vv. 11 and 14. Jesus says: *I am the good shepherd*. I personally find it hard to imagine that Jesus wouldn't have had Psalm 23 in the back of His mind when making this statement. If *the LORD* was David's *shepherd* in Psalm 23, Jesus is not-so-subtly hinting to the Jews present that He was, in fact, Yahweh in the flesh.

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<sup>1</sup>Ezekiel 34 would also serve as an excellent backdrop this account. Israel had a lot of worthless shepherds, but God would provide a shepherd of *My servant David* (v. 23).

There may be *hirelings* and *wolves* along the way, those who were tasked with watching over the sheep and failed, or those who came in trying to attack the sheep, but the Good Shepherd is neither of those things. The Good Shepherd:

- *gives His life for the sheep* (v. 11)
- *owns the sheep* (v. 12)
- *doesn't leave his flock unprotected* (v. 12)
- *cares about the sheep* (v. 13)
- *knows, and is known by, His sheep* (v. 14, note the personal nature in place there: *My sheep*. . . *My own*. In fact, note the relationship He compares it to in v. 15: *As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.*)

But then, Jesus says something to these Jews that is of great relevance to us Gentiles today: *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* (v. 16). That day in Jerusalem, Jesus was addressing the Jews, those physical descendants of Abraham, through whom God had made that great covenant of Genesis 12 and 15. They are, in a covenantal sense, *of this fold*. Yet, there is another group of individuals that are not descended from Abraham that must be brought into the fold: His sheep from the Gentiles.<sup>2</sup>

This is a difficult passage for those that wish to say that the Church is the “true Israel.” According to Jesus, the Church is *not of this fold* of Jews. They are two distinct groups. One is ethnically Jewish, the other is the Body of Christ comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. On the day when He brings the two together, *there will be one flock and one shepherd*. Note the future tense! The Church did not exist until the Day of Pentecost! The covenants God had promised to Abraham and his physical descendants must be fulfilled in and through His physical descendants!

Jesus ends His teaching in vv. 17-18 by returning to the truth in v. 15. Jesus will lay down His life for the sheep. The hirelings will flee; it isn't worth their while to sacrifice for someone else's sheep. Yet, because we are Jesus' flock, Jesus will willingly lay down His life for the sake of the flock (v. 18, *of myself*). Judas may have betrayed Him, the Jews may have chosen Barabbas, the Romans may have sanctioned the crucifixion, but make no mistake about it: Jesus, as the sovereign Lord of all creation, chose to *lay it down of Myself*. In the same breath, Jesus also hints of what would happen next: *I have the power to take it [that is, His life] again* (v. 18). Inasmuch as He would submit Himself to crucifixion, He will also assert and exalt Himself in the resurrection, all for our sake, the sake of His sheep.

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<sup>2</sup>I'll just stick this in a footnote here: If He has *his own sheep* (vv. 3-4), the implication is that there are other sheep that are not His. These other sheep would not *hear his voice* (v. 3) and would not *be brought out* (v. 4). It seems logical to conclude, then, that the Lord did not *lay down His life* for those sheep (vv. 15, 17).