



Pilgrim Home Baptist Church

NT 2022 Q4 • THE GOOD SHEPHERD • JOHN 10:1-10 • 10/2/2022

MAIN POINT

Jesus is the only way to salvation, and He loves and cares for His church.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What do you know about being a shepherd? How much do you know about the care of sheep? How do you suppose raising sheep differed in the first century from now?

What were the responsibilities of a first-century shepherd? In what ways does this example help us to relate to Jesus' ministry to us? What might be a similar analogy from our culture?

Sheep were a major part of the “economy” in first-century Palestine, especially for the shepherds. Sheep provided them with food, clothing, and money. Needless to say, sheep were valuable and had to be well-guarded and cared for. Shepherds in the first century stayed with their sheep. They led them out to the pasture in the day, watched over them, and then led them back to safety at night. Shepherds could call their sheep, and they would come running like a well-trained dog. Shepherds knew everything about the sheep they cared for. Jesus says here that He is a good shepherd. He cares for us and protects us, and we are valuable to Him. This illustration helps us to understand how devoted Jesus is to the care of His people.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 10:1-4.

What is the purpose of the sheep pen? If we, as believers, are in the sheep pen, what does that represent for us?

Who would the modern “thieves and robbers” be who enter “some other way”? How can they be identified?

Who is the doorkeeper in this illustration? Who might the doorkeepers in the church be?

The sheep pen is a place of safety. It was a fenced area, usually by the house, where the sheep could stay at night. Sometimes, they even used caves. The reason that they brought the sheep in at night is because predators like wolves or wild dogs or lions, tend to hunt at night. The sheep pen provided protection for them so that predators couldn't scatter them and eat them.

It is hard to say exactly what Jesus meant by the “sheep pen” other than to say it is a place of protection. If we are Christ's, then He keeps us safe from robbers and thieves and predators who would seek to do us harm. In Psalm 23, David likens the Lord to a shepherd and says of him, “Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4). The rod and staff could be weapons used to drive off predators who sought to harm the sheep. Jesus is telling us that He will care for us like a good shepherd. He will watch over our souls, and He will keep those who would spiritually harm us at bay.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 10:5-6.

Why wouldn't the sheep follow the voice of a stranger? Have you ever had a pet that would only come when you or a family member called him?

What is Jesus saying about the nature of discipleship when He says, “They will never follow a stranger”? Where can we learn to recognize the voice of Jesus?

Why do you think the people failed to understand this illustration?

If thieves and robbers weren't enough, the sheep were also in danger of those who would lead them astray. Jesus says that His sheep will hear His voice and follow Him. Shepherds were not like cowboys. Instead of driving the flock from behind, shepherds went out first and the sheep followed their shepherd as he called them. Because the shepherd is with the flock every day, they know his voice and call, and they will only respond to him.

We learn to hear the voice of Jesus over the voice of the world by studying Scripture. In the Bible, we hear the voice of the Lord, and the more we study and read it, the easier it is for us to discern

how Jesus would have us act in situations in life, and the easier it will be for us to judge right from wrong.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 10:7-10.

What does Jesus mean when He says He is the door of the sheep? Who are the thieves and robbers?

Who is the thief that “comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy”? How does Jesus provide a more abundant life? How has Jesus made your life more abundant?

Jesus is the door to salvation because “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people, and we must be saved by it” (Acts 4:12). Anyone or any religion that claims to get people into heaven except by Jesus Christ is simply a robber and a thief.

There are false teachers in the world who make a living by taking advantage of the flock of Jesus. They preach for their own profit, and they deceive people by making promises in God’s Name that God Himself never made. Jesus is not like that. Jesus came for the benefit of His people, not to rob them of their possessions. Jesus came to give us life, not to steal it from us. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). Instead of taking advantage of the sheep, Jesus lays down His own life for their benefit.

Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). Jesus did not come to take advantage of us; He came to care for us. Our heavenly Father loves us, and He takes pleasure in giving us the kingdom. We can be confident in our lives and in our salvation because Jesus, the Good Shepherd, watches over us and protects us.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How does it affect you to know that Jesus watches out for you every moment?

Have you spent enough time in God’s Word to recognize the voice of Jesus from the voice of the world? What are some ways we could learn to hear Christ more effectively?

If we realize that Satan, the great thief, has come to “steal and to kill and to destroy,” how might that move us to pray for our families and friends in our time before the Lord?

PRAYER

Offer a time for group members to pray aloud. Thank the Lord for being our shepherd. Thank Him for opening our ears and eyes to hear and see the good things in His Word. Ask the Lord to deliver us and our friends from those who would harm the flock of Christ. Close by asking the Father to show others that Jesus is the only way to salvation.

COMMENTARY

| JOHN 10:1-10

10:1-2. Beginning the chapter with his now famous “I tell you the truth” statement, Jesus changed the metaphor from blindness to sheep-stealing. We cannot tell whether the content of chapter 10 followed immediately on the discussion of chapter 9 or occurred on another occasion. Certainly the Lord intended his listeners to identify people of their day reflected in the metaphors of this parable. The sheep pen, for example, represents neither heaven nor the church, but probably first-century Judaism. Verse 1 speaks of the thief invading the sheep pen, not the sheep. The “watchman,” if we identify one specifically, may refer to John the Baptist, or perhaps even the Holy Spirit. Obviously, the shepherd is the Lord himself, and the thief and robber probably refers to the Pharisees against whom he had battled for several chapters.

Some interpreters place prophetic references on the various “figures of speech” as John calls them. But that is not necessary in light of the reality of the times in which Jesus spoke these words. This was a period of intense conflict in the life of our Lord. The Pharisees and their cohorts had committed themselves to exterminating this one whom they considered a “pesky prophet” from Nazareth. These first six verses emphasize security. In the ancient Middle East, one sheep pen held several flocks, so shepherd recognition was imperative. Only personal identification with a shepherd could make a sheep feel safe.

10:3. Verses 1 and 2 tell us that the shepherd knows his sheep, verse 3 that he calls them, and verses 4-6 that he leads them. Clearly the shepherd and the watchman cannot be the same since the watchman opened the door for the shepherd. But we should recognize the uniqueness of parables and not press every word for a specific meaning. The active verbs seem important in this verse—opens, listen, calls, leads. John is quite specific about the intimacy between shepherd and sheep. This shepherd does not just sound a call to the whole flock; he calls his sheep by name.

10:4-5. Not only do these sheep listen to the shepherd's voice, they know his voice. John seems to emphasize the point that they never leave the shepherd and never follow a stranger. But who is this stranger whom the sheep avoid? We do not want to put any dogmatic assignments on the particulars of this parable, but one thing is clear—the stranger is anyone other than the shepherd they know. Strangers abound in our day in a variety of religions and cults as well as the secular domain. Shouting for sheep to follow is common practice, but the Lord's true sheep pay no attention because they will never follow a stranger.

10:6. As in many of Jesus' parables, people did not understand the metaphor, at least until he explained its various components which we find later in the chapter. But one thing seems clear in this first paragraph: the sheep were dependent on their shepherd, whom they knew and trusted. Furthermore, the shepherd took full responsibility for the sheep, even though thieves and robbers constantly tried to break into the sheep pen and steal them. In this verse John uses the Greek word *paroimia* (figure of speech), his preferred substitute for *parabole*. The first never appears in the synoptic Gospels and the second never occurs in John, although he used *paroimia* again in 16:25, 29.

10:7-8. Verse 7 begins just like verse 1 in the Greek text—amen amen. Before Jesus actually identified himself as the Good Shepherd, he described his activity at the sheep gate. We know from Luke 15 that a shepherd counts his sheep and from Psalm 23 how carefully he takes care of them. First-century listeners would have been certain to link this teaching with that familiar psalm. Jesus did not merely explain the first paragraph of the chapter but actually expanded it. New features are added such as the "hired hand" (v. 12) and the adjective "good" (v. 11). Thieves we have seen earlier, but the "wolf" (v. 12) is a new character and the insertion of the teacher into the narrative in the first person—I am the gate.

10:9-10. In addition to guarding the sheep, the Good Shepherd provides for them—unlike thieves who steal and kill and destroy. Throwing aside the metaphor to reveal spiritual truth, Jesus told the sheep that he had come to give life so they might live it to the full. False shepherds intend to injure the sheep, but that is never the behavior of the true shepherd. We need to watch carefully the flow between metaphor and spiritual reality here. In verse 9 Jesus is clearly talking about people as spiritual sheep, while verse 10 falls back into the metaphor at the beginning and then talks about spiritual life.