

**Find Life in the Son:
The Good Shepherd
John 10:1-21**

Introduction

In the fall season of the year at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus taught in the temple area to a wide crowd of listeners. He declared that He is the Light of the World. Just as Yahweh was with the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings, Jesus is God with us, bringing the light of life to those trapped in darkness. Shortly after teaching these things, Jesus healed the man born blind, displaying that His power over our darkness is for real. His compassionate power poured out on this man who had suffered blindness all his life brought Jesus into direct conflict once again with the Pharisees. He had broken their manmade rules regarding how to keep the Sabbath Day. Never mind His compassion. Never mind His astonishing, miraculous power to save. John 9 ends with this interchange:

John 9:39-41

39 Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."

40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" **41** Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

It is in this context of confronting the Pharisees for their own blindness and sin that Jesus starts paints this beautiful portrait of Himself as the Good Shepherd in John 10. He does so in stark contrast to the false shepherds these religious leaders are. Even though we have a chapter division, there is no break in the timeline.

The OT commonly uses the term *shepherd* to refer to leaders of God's people, whether kings, prophets, or priests. God holds such persons accountable for how they care for those the Lord has committed to their care.

Jeremiah 23:1-2

¹ "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" declares the LORD. ² Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: "You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the LORD.

Ezekiel 34:2-16

² Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the

sheep? ³ You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. ⁴ The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them.

⁵ So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; ⁶ they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.

⁷ Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ⁸ As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep,

⁹ therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁰ Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

¹¹ For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will

seek them out. **12** As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. **13** And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. **14** I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. **15** I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. **16** I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

Jesus Christ, God the Son, embodies what the Lord GOD promised through Ezekiel. He is the Good Shepherd, the very opposite of these wicked shepherds who instead of caring for the flock, use the flock to feed themselves.

1 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a

robber. ² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶ This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷ So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I

must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

¹⁹ There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰ Many of them said, “He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?” ²¹ Others said, “These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

1. Leads His Sheep (1-9)
2. Gives Abundant Life to His Sheep (10-13)
3. Knows His Sheep Completely (14-16)
4. Lays Down His Life for His Sheep (15b, 17-18)

1. Leads His Sheep (1-9)

¹ “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep

follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶ This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁷ So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

The Good Shepherd is strikingly different from the false shepherds—the thieves, robbers, and hirelings who try to come into the flock a different way than through Him and who do what they do to benefit themselves not the sheep. Thieves take what is not theirs. Robbers vandalize what is not theirs. Hirelings abandon the sheep to save their own lives. They don’t care about the sheep. They just want their pay. And they’re not willing to put themselves at risk to protect the sheep from wolves.

Who are these thieves, robbers, and hirelings? Leaders like the Pharisees Jesus is talking to. They refuse to come to God through Him, and rather than taking care of the flock, they use and abuse the flock for their own benefit. Jesus healed the man born blind. They interrogate the healed man, revile

him, and cast him out of the synagogue. What was his sin? Truthfully acknowledging what Jesus had done for him. He had heard the Shepherd's voice and ended up trusting in Him and following Him.

His sheep hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. They listen to Him and follow Him. He calls them by name because each one matters to Him. He leads them into the safety of the fold, and He leads them out into good pasture. They recognize the Shepherd's voice as the One who truly cares for them. They won't listen to the voice of a stranger.

Those who aren't His sheep—the thieves and robbers—close their ears and minds and hearts to the words of Jesus. They refuse to follow Him. Instead they try to enter the fold of salvation another way—and they lead and intimidate others to do the same.

The true test of a leader, parent, teacher, pastor, or anyone else responsible to care for others, is what they make of Jesus. Do they point you to the only One who can provide entrance into heaven, or are they trying to gain a following for themselves? Are they submissive to the Good Shepherd or rebels and thieves, stealing for themselves what rightfully belongs to Him?

Who are those you lead or influence?

The Good Shepherd loves His sheep and shows it. False shepherds do what they do out of love for themselves. They end up harming the sheep. And the world is full of such toxic shepherds. You are right to recoil from them. Listen instead to the comforting promise of the Good Shepherd.

John 10:9

I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

Anyone who enters by Jesus finds Him to be the Good Shepherd who is the only truly safe place for the sheep. He leads them, giving them both protection and provision.

Have you heard the voice of Jesus calling your name? Is it personal with you? Does your heart resonate with the truthful reliability of His Words? Or are you listening to other shepherds who are lying to you for their own benefit? Are you seeking some alternative way to the safety and sustenance you desire? These fraudulent shepherds will destroy you. They will not protect you. You will not be safe. They will not feed you with truth. You will starve instead.

Applications

- What is your heart response to the voice of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels?
- Where have you seen the flock abused by false shepherds?
- How are you differentiating the voice of Jesus from the voices of false shepherds?
- In what ways are you relying on the goodness of Jesus the Good Shepherd to protect you and to provide for you?
- How does knowing He calls you by name shape your view of His heart toward you?

2. Gives Abundant Life to His Sheep (10-13)

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

Some people think that following Jesus means missing out on life and all it has to offer.

Many a sinful choice rises from thinking that somehow we will be better off to shut out the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd in order to

pursue what we think will benefit us more.
But it's a lie. The good life is the life based on following Jesus and listening to His words.

He is so committed to your well-being that He is willing to die to rescue you from the wolves. And He has done so. He offers life to you in abundance. We lost Eden when we turned away from God. The Good Shepherd comes to restore our souls, to lead us and feed us, to bring us into the life we were created to enjoy. He calls us to taste of Eden again, and promises that He will lead us into an even better paradise that will last forever.

The false shepherd is in it only for himself. If taking care of the flock means putting himself at risk, he runs and abandons the sheep. Such leaders leave their people at the mercy of the wolves.

The world is full of such hirelings who leave the sheep to the wolves, so long as they can advance their own careers. How else do you explain the willingness of city leaders, educators, and even pastors to affirm and to celebrate sexual sin contrary to the Creator's good design for family and intimacy? How else do you explain how a community like Greenville with its hundreds of churches can tolerate state-sponsored grooming of young children toward sexual exploration and deviancy and call it love and progress? In any

private setting it would be called pedophilia. But if you codify it, suddenly it's okay?

Nonetheless, many a shepherd in our nation, state, county, and churches will refuse to protect the lambs of our community, for fear of being vilified by the wolves. This very week the battle comes to a head in municipal elections and county council meetings (library board)—whether our community will leave those in charge who take pride in sin and let the wolves have their way with our children.

All this has been a long time in coming. Its path is centuries old. Many have thrown away divine truth in favor of a manmade dogma, which is fickle as the wind. They've trashed the beauty and dignity of being created in God's image in favor of self-created identities, however fictional. They have completely reversed what is right and wrong, where what is right and beneficial is vilified and what is wrong and harmful is celebrated. Over those many years many shepherds have been largely to blame. Secular leaders and spiritual leaders who care more about their own career survival than protecting the vulnerable as leaders are supposed to do. Those willing to sell the truth to gain popularity and save their own skin.

Applications

- In what ways are you pursuing the abundant life Jesus provides for His sheep?
- What other ways people try to find the abundant life are a temptation to you?
- For whose well-being are you responsible, and what are you willing to sacrifice for their benefit?

3. Knows His Sheep Completely (14-16)

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

He knows His sheep wherever they are. Even those in the most unlikely of places. Not just Jews, but Gentiles too. Every tribe and nation, people and language will be part of His flock. The gospel call is to all ethnicities, rich, poor, educated, uneducated. Jesus will not fail to bring all the sheep of His flock into safety.

His sheep are from every time and place, but they are all one flock because they follow one Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The people of Samaria who trusted Christ
when Philip preached to them
The Ethiopian eunuch on the desert road
The persecuting Saul—to become Paul
Cornelius, the God-fearing centurion
The business woman Lydia and her household
The demon-possessed slave girl
The rough Philippian jailor and his family
The Athens city council member Dionysius
The immoral pagans of Corinth, along with
Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue
Acts 18:10: “I have much people in this city.”
The young Timothy, son of a believing mother
and a pagan father.
Onesimus, the runaway slave
Members of Caesar’s household in Rome
Polycarp, disciple of John the apostle
The immoral philosophy-loving Augustine
The guilt-ridden monk Luther
The unchurched and untaught Bunyan
The corrupt and despairing slavetrader
Newton
And millions more
Including, if you will trust Him, you.

Jesus knows you better than anyone else in
the world. He knows you better than you
know yourself. He knows you with the perfect
knowledge and infinite intimacy that exists
between God the Father and God the Son.

Applications

- How can knowing Jesus knows you completely help you pray with more trust, with more regularity, and with more hope?
- How are you displaying the one-flock relationship you have with others who follow Jesus, whatever their background?
- Who are you reaching out to with the gospel, knowing that the Good Shepherd is committed to bringing them in?

4. Lays Down His Life for His Sheep (15b, 17-18)

15b and I lay down my life for the sheep.

17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. **18** No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Jesus willingly laid down His life when He went to the cross. The evil men who arrested Him, illegally tried Him, falsely accused Him, and brutally killed Him were responsible for their hatred and for His murder, but they were not in control. God was fulfilling through their evil hearts and deeds what He had determined before the foundation of the world. For the joy that was set before Him of

rescuing His sheep, Jesus willingly endured the cross and counted its shame as nothing compared to the prize of fulfilling the Father's will and saving His sheep.

The resurrection proved just how in control Jesus actually was when He was crucified. He laid down His life willingly. No mere man or group of men could take His life unless He laid it down. He laid it down to take it up again. He proved that His life power is greater than the power death itself. In rising again He declared our sin for which He died paid for. He demonstrated He can raise our dead bodies from the grave as well to enjoy an everlasting kingdom in a new heaven and new earth where righteousness has taken up permanent residence. The grave cannot destroy the eternal life He gives to all who trust in Him as their Savior, their Good Shepherd.

Psalm 23:6

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Applications

- How could frequent meditation on the truth that Jesus laid down His life willingly for you change how you view Him, yourself, and your challenges?

- How does Jesus' power take up His life again from the grave expand your view of what He can do in your own life?

Conclusion

¹⁹ There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰ Many of them said, "He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?" ²¹ Others said, "These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Listen to the words of Jesus. Observe His compassionate mighty works. Then make your choice. Either He's lying and does what He does by the power of Satan or He is in fact the Good Shepherd, the promised Savior-King, the Messiah and hope of the world.

Jesus' words and works leave you no middle ground. Demon or Lord? Deceiver or True? Destroyer or Savior?

The truth of who He is shines plain for all to see who are willing to see.

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Jesus the Good Shepherd is the good news we most need. Exactly what the prophets foretold regarding the coming Savior.

Isaiah 40:9-11

⁹ Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" ¹⁰ Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. ¹¹ He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

Applications Summary

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