



The Good Shepherd (John 10:1-21)

Many people paint a very different picture of the Gospel than Jesus and His disciples did. So how can we make sure that these blind guides don't lead us away from the Good Shepherd?

Catch the Context

John 9:39-41 (CSB) ³⁹ Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, in order **that those who do not see will see** and **those who do see will become blind.**" ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things and asked him, "We aren't blind too, are we?" ⁴¹ "If you were blind," Jesus told them, "you wouldn't have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' **your sin remains.**

The Pharisees, trusted spiritual leaders who were to shepherd the people, were so blind that they didn't even recognize the Messiah standing in front of their faces. Jesus demonstrates the difference between the *GOOD SHEPHERD* and these blind shepherds who are attempting to lead the people *AWAY* from Him. Jesus uses an illustration many in His day would have been familiar with.

2 kinds of sheep pens:

- 1) While staying overnight in the countryside, shepherds either constructed a **sheep pen** or used one that already existed, a pen with only 1 entrance and exit.
- 2) When the shepherds brought their sheep back home, they often kept sheep in a communal corral with a paid gatekeeper until the shepherd returned for his flock.¹ This is likely what Jesus is referring to.

John 10:1-4 (CSB) ¹ "Truly I tell you, anyone who doesn't enter the sheep pen by the gate but climbs in some other way is a thief and a robber. ² The one who enters by the gate is **the shepherd of the sheep.** ³ The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. **The sheep follow him because they know his voice.** ⁵ They will never follow a stranger; instead they will run away from him, because they don't know the voice of strangers. ⁶ Jesus gave them this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

Only a **thief** would attempt to bypass the presence of the gatekeeper. The shepherd would be recognized by the gatekeeper, and make his way in to get his sheep. His sheep **know his voice**. They *GET UP* and follow their shepherd who **calls his own sheep by name and leads them out**.

BIG TRUTH: Sheep Trust their Shepherd.

But the sheep will run from **the voice of strangers** (which includes a **thief** in verse 1). The OT Scripture often has God's people being called "*the sheep of His pasture*" (Ps. 100:3), but **the people did not understand what he was telling them**, so Jesus clarifies his story.

John 10:7 ⁷ Jesus said again, "Truly I tell you, **I am the gate** for the sheep.

Jesus might now be referring to the sheep pen out in the wilderness, with only 1 entrance & exit. The shepherd either closed this area with dry thorn bushes or would himself serve as the gate to guard the opening.²

☀ An Arab shepherd explained, "*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.*"³

This is what Jesus means in saying "**I am the gate for the sheep.**" It is by Him that a person enters the kingdom, finds freedom & fulfillment, and is protected from predators. **Is it any wonder why...sheep trust their shepherd?**

- Not all who claim to be shepherds ARE trustworthy. Jesus points to the critical contrast between Him and the blind Pharisees who are attempting to betray and butcher God's sheep.

❖ See **Ezekiel 34**: God judging shepherds who don't care about His sheep.

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *John: That You May Believe, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 265.

² Gary M. Burge, *John, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 289.

³ G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to John* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, n.d.), 177.

John 10:8-10 ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn't listen to them. ⁹ **I am the gate.** If anyone **enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture.** ¹⁰ A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. **I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.**

Thieves and Robbers Many Christians have memorized John 10:10 and think it's contrasting Jesus to the Devil, but Jesus has been contrasting Himself, not to the devil, but to the Pharisees (blind guides and didn't care about the 'sheep'). They and those like them are pictured as "*the thief who comes to steal kill and destroy*". The **thieves and robbers** are those who have attempted to steal the sheep from the GOOD SHEPHERD. Instead of leading these sheep to find good pasture, they **steal** these sheep in order to **kill and destroy** them.

I am the Gate Jesus is *the only entrance* into the kingdom, the One through whom sheep are protected (**saved**), provided for (**find pasture**), and fulfilled with **life...in abundance!** The Greek term (*perisson*) refers to "considerably more than what one would expect or anticipate...more than enough."⁴ Christians experience more forgiveness, more purpose, & deeper friendships than what they expected; **life in abundance!** It's those sheep who pass through **the Gate** who come to see who good shepherd that Jesus really is.

John 10:11-15 ¹¹ **"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.** ¹² The hired hand, since he is not the shepherd and doesn't own the sheep, leaves them and runs away when he sees a wolf coming. The wolf then snatches and scatters them. ¹³ This happens because he is a hired hand and doesn't care about 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. **I lay down my life for the sheep.**

Jesus again contrasts Himself to the wicked shepherds who RUN from the wolf rather than RISK his own life for the sheep. But **the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.** God comforts his people after He criticizes wicked shepherds who haven't taken care of His flock.

Ezekiel 34:22-23 (CSB) ²² **I will save my flock.** They will no longer be prey, and I will judge between one sheep and another. ²³ **I will establish over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will shepherd them. He will tend them himself and will be their shepherd.**

Note: King David died about 400 years before this was written. This is referring to the Messiah who would be born in David's family and forever reign over David's kingdom. This is why Jesus is often called "**Son of David**" (Mat 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9; Mk 10:47-48, 12:35; Lk 18:38-39, 20:41).

Other Sheep?

John 10:16 ¹⁶ But I have **other sheep** that are not from this sheep pen; I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. Then there will be **one flock, one shepherd.**

Remember that the original audience **was actually hearing the voice of Jesus as He tells them to follow Him.** But Jesus did not come just to be the shepherd of Jews, but also to be the shepherd of Gentiles. And even though these Gentiles would never meet Jesus face to face, **they will listen to His voice.**

The apostle Peter writes to both Jewish & Gentile Christians who never met Jesus. Instead, they heard the voice of Jesus through the voice of His disciples, who were faithful to develop disciples of all kinds of people - Jew & Gentile (also see Eph. 2:11-16).

1 Peter 1:8-9 (CSB) ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Even though we have never seen Jesus, we can KNOW Him - through what His disciples spoke & wrote of Him. The 2 separate groups - Jews & Gentile - would be united as **one flock.**

John 10:17-18 ¹⁷ This is why the Father loves me, because I **lay down my life so that I may take it up again.** ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

Those listening that day could not have known what was looming on the horizon. Even the disciples of Jesus struggled to understand what Jesus meant until AFTER it occurred. Like a shepherd who gave his own life to protect the sheep, Jesus would **lay down his life**, the substitute sacrifice for the sins of many. But that would not be the end of the story. He would **take it up again** - raise from the dead!

♣ The resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of Christianity. *If He rose from the dead, we can trust what He said.*

John 10:19-20 ¹⁹ Again the Jews were divided because of these words. ²⁰ Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and he's crazy. Why do you listen to him?" ²¹ Others were saying, "These aren't the words of someone who is demon-possessed. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Some people called Jesus "**crazy**" and "**demon-possessed**" - as others came to His defense...And in the end, His sheep did what sheep do.

BIG TRUTH: Sheep Trust their Shepherd.

They hear His voice, respond to His call, and follow Him.

FEET2FAITH

1. **Thank the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for his sheep.** When's the last time you really said, "THANK YOU for laying down your life for me!?"
2. **Seek the Good Shepherd by listening to His voice in Scripture.** That is how we judge whether or not other 'voices' are from God or not.
➔ **Question:** How much time do you read a newspaper, watch the news, or flip through social media... compared to how much you open the Scriptures & pray to seek the Shepherd?

* **Want to talk further?** Please contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon! Or call our **deacons & wives:** Tom & Martha Waddail, Steve & Debbie Bass, Freddy & Joyce Howard, Jere & Darlene Burnette, Alan & Christy Androski, Willy & Melissa Gamalero.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the background of the sheep pen & the relationship between sheep and shepherd help give you more insight into this passage?
2. Read back through the entire passage and be prepared to write down and share the answer to this question: *What are the differences between the thieves & robbers, hired hand, and the Good Shepherd?*
3. **Read Ezekiel 34:1-24.** How were God's criticisms of these 'shepherds' similar to Jesus' time, and how was God's promise in vv. 23-24 fully fulfilled through the life of Jesus?
4. What insights, questions, or concerns did today's teaching bring to light?
5. What Scriptures are you planning on reading this week to fulfill the **FEET2FAITH** challenge? What Scriptures have you been reading lately - what have you learned and what questions have arisen?
6. Pray for one another this week. Consider texting or calling same sex believers to pray & share together this week.