

Bible Fellowship Teaching Plan for John 10:11-21 (June 28, 2026)
The Good Shepherd

Central Truth: Jesus is the Good Shepherd Who knows His sheep, lays down His life for them, and they know Him.

John's purpose (20:31): "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Key verse (verse 11): "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Opening Question

1. What characteristics come to mind when you hear the word "shepherd?"
2. Why do you think Jesus chose the image of a shepherd to describe Himself?

Lesson Objective: to understand how Jesus demonstrates His love and care as the Good Shepherd and evaluate their own relationship with Christ as those who hear and follow the Shepherd's voice.

Background

Jesus has just healed the man born blind (John 9) and contrasted spiritual blindness with true faith.

In John 10, Jesus explains His relationship to believers through the familiar image of a shepherd and his sheep.

- I. The Good Shepherd Gives Abundant Life (verses 10 and 11): "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."
 - A. Jesus contrasts Himself with the thief who steals, kills, and destroys.
 - B. His mission is to give life—not merely existence, but fullness of life.
 - C. Eternal life begins the moment a person trusts Christ.
 - D. This abundant life includes forgiveness, purpose, peace, fellowship with God, and an eternal inheritance.

Reflection Questions

1. How would you define the "abundant life" that Christ came to give?
2. What are some false sources of fulfillment people pursue today?
3. How is the abundant life we experience today different from the abundant life we will enjoy in heaven?

- II. The Good Shepherd Lays Down His Life for the Sheep (verses 11 and 15)
- A. Jesus is the “Good Shepherd”—the perfect and true Shepherd.
 - B. His sacrifice was the very reason He came.
 - C. He died to save His sheep from the penalty and power of sin.
 - D. Supporting Scriptures: Matthew 20:28, 1 John 3:16, Isaiah 53

Applications

1. The cross reveals both God's holiness and His love.
2. Christ's sacrifice demonstrates the value He places on His people.

Reflection Questions

1. What does Jesus' willingness to die for His sheep teach us about His love?
2. Why was Christ's death necessary for our salvation?
3. How should His sacrifice affect our daily lives?

III. The Good Shepherd Is Different from the Hired Hand (verses 12 and 13):

- A. The hired hand serves only for personal gain.
- B. When danger comes, he abandons the sheep.
- C. Jesus never abandons His sheep.
- D. The Pharisees illustrated the attitude of hired hands by caring more for their position than for the people.

Reflection Questions

1. What motivates the hired hand?
2. How does Jesus demonstrate a completely different kind of shepherding than the hired hand or the Pharisees?
3. When have you experienced Christ's faithfulness during difficult circumstances?

IV. The Good Shepherd Knows His Sheep (verses 14-15)

- A. Jesus knows every detail about His sheep.
- B. His knowledge is personal, loving, and complete.
- C. The relationship between Christ and believers mirrors the intimacy between the Father and the Son.
- D. Supporting scriptures: Psalm 139 and Psalm 69:5

Application: Nothing about us is hidden from Christ, yet He loves us completely.

Reflection Questions

1. What comfort comes from knowing that Jesus knows everything about you?
2. How is knowing Christ different from merely knowing facts about Him?
3. What can you do to deepen your relationship with the Shepherd?

V. The Good Shepherd Has Sheep from Every Nation (verse 16)

- A. Jesus came not only for Jews but for people from every nation.
- B. The gospel breaks down barriers between peoples.
- C. Christ gathers one flock under one Shepherd.
- D. Supporting scriptures: Isaiah 49:6, Ephesians 2:14-16, Revelation 7:9

Application

1. God's heart is for all people.
2. Every believer belongs to one spiritual family in Christ.

Reflection Questions

1. What does this verse teach us about God's global mission?
2. How should this truth affect our attitudes and actions people whose background is different from ours?
3. How can we help others hear the Shepherd's voice?

VI. The Good Shepherd Voluntarily Gave His Life and Took It Up Again (verses 17-18)

- A. Jesus' death was not an accident.
- B. He willingly offered Himself for our salvation.
- C. He possessed authority not only to choose His death but also to rise again.
- D. His resurrection proves His deity and guarantees our hope.

Application

1. Our salvation rests on the completed work of Christ.
2. Because He lives, believers have confidence in the face of life or death.

Reflection Questions

1. Why is it important that Jesus willingly gave His life?
2. What does His resurrection reveal about who He is?
3. How does the resurrection strengthen your faith today?

VII. Jesus' Words Demand a Decision

- A. His words divided His listeners.

- B. Some rejected Him as insane or demon-possessed.
- C. Others disagreed, saying a demon could not open the eyes of a man born blind, but they stopped short of acknowledging Him for Who He is.

Application

1. Neutrality toward Christ is impossible.
2. His claims demand a response.

Reflection Questions

1. Why do people still respond differently to Jesus today?
2. What evidence convinced you that Jesus is who He claimed to be?
3. How can we help others move from doubt to belief?

Summary: The Good Shepherd:

- Gives abundant life.
- Lays down His life for the sheep.
- Never abandons His flock.
- Knows His sheep intimately.
- Calls people from every nation.
- Rose again in victory.
- Invites every person to follow Him.

Final Reflections

- Are you listening to the Shepherd's voice?
- Are you following Him in trust and obedience?
- Do you know Him as well as He knows you?
- How can you experience more fully the abundant life He came to give?

Closing challenge: Identify one area of your life where you have been reluctant to trust Christ fully, and this week consciously place that area under the care of the Good Shepherd, believing that the One who laid down His life for you can be trusted with every part of your life.

Sunday School Lesson for June 28, 2026
John 10:11-21

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallahassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, on this last Sunday in June, we're well into our study of the deep and wondrously profound gospel according to John, whose purpose in writing this book, as he tells us in chapter twenty, verse 31, is "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

After Jesus concluded His testimony that He is the Light of the world, ending with His announcement that He had "come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind"--meaning that those who recognize and repent of their spiritual blindness will be given the light of life while those who claim they see and deny their spiritual blindness will remain blind and in their guilt--, He turns to an entirely new subject--one that His hearers should have understood quite clearly. In chapter ten, He explains how He is the Good Shepherd, how His sheep know and follow Him, and how He lays down His life for His sheep.

In the previous five chapters, Jesus has been inviting people to come to Him, to follow Him, and to abide in His word. Now, in chapter ten, the Lord Jesus introduces Himself to them as "the Good Shepherd" to show how He cares for those who come to Him and how closely they follow Him. Following Pastor Trey's sermon from the first ten verses of chapter ten, we'll hear the second part of the Lord's message about what the Good Shepherd does for those who follow Him in verses eleven through 21.

The people who were listening to Him all knew and understood what He was talking about--there's a shepherd who watches over and protects the sheep; if someone tries to get into the sheep pen by any way other than the gate that the shepherd guards, he's there with evil intentions. The sheep know and

follow the true shepherd and the shepherd knows his sheep, but the sheep won't follow a stranger; instead, they'll run away from him.

Plain and simple facts from everyday life in Israel for hundreds of years. They all knew and understood what He was saying, but they didn't know what it meant--how it applied to their lives and His role as the Messiah,--in spite of the very clear parallels to the 23rd Psalm and Ezekiel, chapter 34. Yet John writes in verse six, "This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them."

Recognizing their confusion, He continues to apply the imagery to help them understand. In stark contrast to the safety, comfort, and provision lovingly lavished on the sheep by the shepherd who is the gate--the door--and who provides that safety and security, "The thief," Jesus says in verse ten, "comes only to steal and kill and destroy." The thief makes a false door for himself, breaks in, or climbs over the wall, and poses as the protector of the sheep when, in reality, his intentions are the very opposite of the true shepherd. The thief intends to make the sheep his own, not to give them pasture but to sacrifice them to his own, selfish ends; not to deal with them graciously for their good, but to destroy them.

Then, in striking contrast to the thief, the Lord Jesus says, "But I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." This is surely one of the loftiest and most magnificent of our Lord's claims. Here He lays out His mission statement and makes it crystal clear why He came. In these words, Jesus brings together all of God's plan for our redemption, from Adam and Eve's rebellion in the Garden / through the end of time / to clearly and precisely declare why He was born in Bethlehem's manger, raised in Mary and Joseph's home, why He taught and healed and turned water into wine and fed thousands and raised the dead and allowed Himself to be crucified on Calvary's cross. "I have come so that they," meaning you and me, "might have life." To what extent or to what measure? "To the full"--above and beyond that which we could ask or even imagine.

In the midst of a world that focuses on the superficial, the artificial, and the temporary, Jesus offers real life in all its fullness. The Lord Jesus wants us to know that there are two realms, two spheres, two worlds, two domains--one called "life" and one called "death." This domain of life is much more than just physical life--far more than what we can see, touch, taste, smell, or hear. So when Jesus talks about life, He's not talking about life that's designated by a heartbeat. He's talking about the life of the soul, a spirit that's alive toward God and restored to the original trajectory, plan, and purpose for which we were created.

In this extraordinary life that Jesus beckons each of us to experience, it's not just biological life, neither is it what a lot of people think of when they hear "eternal life." They think, "Eternal life is the reason why Jesus came--to give us somewhere to go when we die," and they mentally check out because all they're thinking about is pie in the sky in the sweet by and by. And they disconnect the abundance of life that Jesus came to bring / from the life they're living right now because they think eternal life is in the future and they've got the present to deal with. Eternal life involves heaven--to be sure--, but it begins the very moment we entrust our lives to Christ.

Life with a capital L is not biological life, it's not limited to the life beyond, and neither is it something that we can experience apart from God. So, we see Jesus talking to the woman at the well, offering living water--that one thing that would fill the deepest longing in her heart. He offers the Bread of Life to those who will feed on Him and live forever. His whole life was focused on showing us how to receive that life, and His death and resurrection made that life available to us. That's why John wrote his gospel, so "you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." And that's not even the tip of the iceberg.

How does He make that abundant life that begins the moment we trust Christ and never ends / available to us? Verse eleven: "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." He begins with

another “I am” declaration, identifying Himself with God Who commissioned Moses at the burning bush.

The word that’s translated “good” means more than “true” and more than “good” in a qualitative sense. When we come to the word “good” in this passage, our tendency is to interpret it in a kind of sentimental, poetic way, as a word to describe our Lord’s tenderness, love, and care; but that’s not the full meaning here. In John’s gospel, the Lord Jesus says, “I am the true bread,” ‘I am the true vine,” and the meaning of the word that’s translated “good” here is very nearly the same. The true bread, the true vine, the true Shepherd--in His relation to you and me--, fulfills everything that’s represented in figures of speech and shadows by the image of a common shepherd and his sheep. That’s the picture, this is the reality.

Alexander MacLaren adds, “There is another point to be made clear, and that is, that whilst the word ‘good’ is perhaps a fair enough representation of that which is employed by our Lord, there is a special force and significance attached to the original, which is lost in our Bible. I do not know that it could have been preserved; but still it is necessary to state it. The expression here is the one that is generally rendered ‘fair,’ or ‘lovely,’ or ‘beautiful,’ and it belongs to the genius of that wonderful tongue in which the New Testament is written that it has a name for **moral purity**, considered as being lovely, the highest goodness, and the serenest beauty, which was what the old Greeks taught, howsoever little they may have practised it in their lives. And so here the thought is that the Shepherd stands before us, the realisation of [everything] which that name means, set forth in such a fashion as to be infinitely lovely and perfectly fair, and to draw the admiration of [everyone] who can appreciate that which is beautiful, and can admire that which is of good report.”

“The Good Shepherd,” he says, “exercises care, which absolves the sheep from care, and in the present case means that my only duty is meek following and quiet trust. ‘I am the Good Shepherd’--here is guidance, guardianship,

companionship, sustenance--all responsibility laid upon His broad shoulders, and all tenderness in His deep heart, and so for us simple obedience and quiet trust.”

As the Good Shepherd, He’s good in the sense of being morally excellent and perfectly qualified to fulfill God’s purpose that the sheep should be shepherded. The word speaks of a “goodness” that’s visible and obvious. As the Good Shepherd, the Lord fulfills the prophecies of Isaiah, chapter forty, verse eleven, and chapter 53, as well as Ezekiel, chapter 34 and Jeremiah 23.

This image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is very common in Christian literature and art. The earliest representations of Christ in the catacombs depict him as “the good Shepherd,” the earliest hymns of the Church proclaim His watchfulness, His tender care, and His self-sacrificing love, and you may recall those great hymns of faith like, “Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us” or “The King of Love My Shepherd Is.” This image is deeply embedded into our Christian heritage.

This Shepherd is so perfectly suited to be called the Good Shepherd as He tends His flock without any failure of protection, provision, or tenderness, to the extent that He “lays down his life for the sheep.” The Shepherd dies so that the sheep may live. Defending his sheep to the point of giving up his life for their safety was not an uncommon risk for shepherds in a day when lions and other dangerous animals preyed on weak and unprotected sheep.

This Good Shepherd would lay down His life for those sheep that are His. In Matthew, chapter twenty, verse 28, Jesus told His disciples, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” In First John, chapter three, verse sixteen, John writes, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.”

As Jesus continues to develop and demonstrate this idea of the Good Shepherd through the remainder of John’s gospel, we find that His death would not be an unexpected, disastrous termination of the saving, keeping role

of the Shepherd, but a deliberate, necessary event in His mission. The death of the Good Shepherd secures the life of the sheep, but even His death doesn't put a stop to His eternal care. Such is the goodness--the perfection--of the Good Shepherd.

But there are other shepherds who are not good--verse twelve: "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. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep." We were first introduced to the true shepherd in contrast to the thief and the robber, but now the Lord contrasts Himself with the hired hand who has no vested interest in shepherding the sheep beyond making a paycheck. This person's not a shepherd whose sense of duty would motivate him to defend the sheep, and he's not the owner to whom the sheep belong. He merely watches over them only for what **he** can get out of it. As long as there's no danger, he does his duty by the sheep for the sake of his wages.

But at the first sign of danger--when he sees the wolf coming--when the risks outweigh the benefits, he leaves the sheep behind to save his own skin. As long as watching the sheep is easy and stress-free, he's happy to do it, but when the wolf shows up, the sheep are on their own. Such was the judgment on many of Israel's leaders from the lips of the prophets.

This distinction between the hireling and the good shepherd has just been seen in the difference between the response of the Pharisees and that of Jesus to the man born blind in our study last week. The Pharisees, because they cared more for their own position and prestige, could not allow someone to violate their petty, man-made rules about the Sabbath. After all, the people existed for their benefit, not the other way around, so they persecuted the man who had been healed of his blindness because he had followed his conscience and wasn't ever going to criticize the Man Who had healed him. Jesus, by healing the man, put His own life at risk, and His defiance of the presumed

authority of the Pharisees only contributed to their determination to put Him to death.

In verse fourteen, Jesus announces two other aspects of His role of shepherd that make Him the Good shepherd: “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.” Unlike the hired hand who runs away when danger or trouble makes it difficult or inconvenient to continue watching over the sheep, the Good Shepherd knows His sheep and His sheep know Him. So complete is His knowledge of every aspect, every need, every hope, every fear of His sheep / that it perfectly mirrors His knowledge of the Father and the Father’s knowledge of Him.

We might pause here to ask, “How well does Jesus know His sheep?” even, “How well does He know me?” The word we have translated as “know” here is used in the sense of affectionate regard or love. It’s used in the New Testament to describe marital intimacy, as in Matthew, chapter one, verse 25; familiarity with household business proceedings as in Luke, chapter sixteen, verse four; and a servant’s awareness of a master’s will--Luke, chapter twelve, verses 47 and 48. The Good Shepherd who “knows” His sheep has such keen understanding of the needs, wants, cares, and character of His sheep that it’s naturally expressed in a deep interest in their welfare. So, the word “know” in verse fifteen--“The Father knows Me”-- is explained in verse seventeen by the word “love”--“For this reason the Father loves Me.”

Our Good Shepherd knows everything about me; He knows everything about you--past, present, and future. In Psalm 69, verse five, David wrote, “You know my folly, O God; my guilt is not hidden from you.” In Psalm 139, he said, “O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ... [Y]ou are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. ... Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ... If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light

become night around me, even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.”

He knows everything there is to know about each and every one of us and--miracle of miracles--He still loves us in spite of what we've done or failed to do--no matter what. This intimate understanding is the basis of the magnificent relationship between the sheep and the Good Shepherd. So engaged and bound to His sheep is this Good Shepherd, that He once again tells us, “I am laying My life down for the sheep.”

But before we go there, don't miss the end of verse fourteen: “my own know me.” There's a mutual, reciprocal knowledge between Jesus and His sheep: He knows us, and we know Him. As MacLaren writes, “‘My sheep know Me’--not by force of intellect, not by understanding certain truths, all--important as that may be, but by having our hearts harmonised in Him, and our spirits put into sympathy and communion with Him.” “Between Him and [His sheep] there is a communion of love, a union of life, and a consequent reciprocal knowledge, which transcends the closest intimacies of earthly life, and finds its only analogue in that deep and mysterious oneness which subsists between the Father, who alone knoweth the Son, and the only begotten Son, who being ever in the bosom of the Father, alone knoweth Him and revealeth Him to us. ‘I know My sheep and am known of Mine; as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father. They hear My voice and follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life.’ Such are the characteristics of that relation between Christ and [believers] by which they become His sheep. ... He is speaking not of a relation which all men bear to Him by virtue of their creation, but of one which they bear to Him who believe in His name.”

Since this is so, we could well ask today, “Do you know Jesus with the same desire to understand Him and love Him as He knows you?” “I am the good shepherd,” Jesus says. “I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.”

Then, in the second half of verse fifteen, the Lord declares how He demonstrates His knowledge of His sheep--their need--our need--for forgiveness and reconciliation, and His boundless provision: “and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

As the Good Shepherd, He’s the One Who cares for His sheep even at the cost of His own life. This was certainly rare in those days. If a shepherd ever died in the line of duty caring for the sheep, it was always accidental, because if the shepherd died, the sheep would also die, and the shepherd intended to live for his sheep, not to die for them.

But for our Lord, it was His reason for coming. Not only would He care for those who are His, He even provides for their salvation by giving His life as a ransom for many. How does He give His life? Not in a great battle against Roman soldiers. Not in expending His life’s energies in feeding the hungry, comforting the sick, consoling the dying, although He did that and more. He laid down His own life--as instinctively and easily as a person might slip off an overcoat--purposefully and intentionally. His life was not taken from Him against His will, but He offered it up freely and willingly so that you and I might have the privilege of having our sins atoned for through the shed blood of God’s own Son.

But if Jesus laid down His life for the sheep, aren’t the sheep now defenseless against / and exposed to the same death Jesus died? Or is there another danger that He has saved us from by His death? The danger that threatens us is not bodily death, because nothing can deliver us from that--we will all die unless the Lord returns first. The danger, however, is something with which the death of the body is intimately connected. Bodily death is the symptom, but not the disease itself. Bodily death only reveals the presence of the disease.

A good doctor doesn’t treat symptoms but seeks to discover the source of the symptoms in order to treat the cause. So it is with physical death: it’s not

our real danger; it's the symptom of a deep disease--a real, fatal infection of the soul. Death isn't a simple relocation from one world to another, but is our transference from probation to judgment, and sin causes us to fear that moment of truth. So, physical death is inseparably connected to sin, and our conscience tells us that sin is the great cause of all our present misery.

As one commentator writes, "It is to us the symptom of the punishment of sin, but the punishment itself is not the death of the body but of the soul; the separation of the soul from all good, from all hope,--in a word, from God. This is the real danger from which Christ delivers us. Christ has tasted death for [everyone], and out of each [person's] cup has [drunk] the poison, so that now, as we in turn drink it, it is but a sleeping [potion]. There was a chemistry in His love and perfect obedience which drew the poison to His lips; and absorbing into His own system all the virulence of it, ... He overcame its effects, and rose again triumphing over its lethargic potency."

He continues: "It was not mere bodily death, then, which our Lord endured. That was not the wolf which the Good Shepherd saved us from. It was death with the sting of sin in it. It is this fact which shows us, from one point of view, the place of Christ's death in the work of atonement. Death sets the seal on [our] spiritual condition. It utters the final word The biblical view of death is that it marks the transition from a state of probation to a state of retribution. 'It is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment.' There is no coming back again to make another preparation for judgment. We cannot have two lives, one after the flesh, and another after the spirit, but one life, one death, one judgment. Bodily death therefore thus becomes not only the evidence of spiritual death, but its seal. But this, falling upon Christ, fell harmless. ... Plunge iron and wood into water: the one sinks, the other rises immediately, cannot be kept under, has a native buoyancy of its own that brings it to the surface, immerse it as often as we please. And Christ is as the wood ..., that not only floats itself, but brings to the surface the heaviest weight"--even His own sheep." As a result, it's only through the

death of the Good Shepherd that the sheep can be delivered from the sting of sin and its resulting death themselves to experience life as it was intended to be--a life Jesus made possible as He laid down His life for the sheep.

The mention of the death of the Good Shepherd gives Jesus the opportunity--almost parenthetically--to elaborate who the sheep are for whom He will lay down His life. In verse sixteen, He says, "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." "**This** fold," of course, is made up of those Jews who had believed Him to be the Messiah. The other sheep are, as Paul writes in Romans, chapter nine, verse four, those who don't have the privileges of "the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises" that the Jews enjoyed. However, they would be redeemed out of every kindred, language, people, and nation as they hear and respond in loving obedience to the voice of the Good Shepherd, in fulfillment of what the Lord had said through the prophet Isaiah in chapter 49, verse six: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

The Lord Jesus can already claim them as His because, as He said in chapter six, verse 37, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out." And in verse 65 of that same chapter, Jesus said, "[N]o one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

By the way, these "other sheep" are not members of the ten lost tribes of Israel or the descendants of a mythical man named Nephi who supposedly sailed to South America around 600 B.C. as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints teaches as part of their basic doctrine.

Back in chapter seven, verse 35, the Jews had mockingly asked if Jesus would go and teach the Gentiles. He now declares that, even among those

whom the Jews despised, He has sheep for whom He would lay down His life that He might draw all people to Himself as we'll soon hear Him say in chapter twelve, verse 32. Later, the apostle Paul will be rejected by the Jews in Corinth--one of the most depraved cities of the world--, but he would be assured by the Lord Himself in a dream as the Lord told him, "I have many in this city who are my people."

With this inclusion of believers "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" as we find in several places in The Revelation, there will be one flock and one Shepherd. The "dividing wall of hostility" that Paul speaks of in Ephesians, chapter two, verse fourteen has now been broken down "by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he"--Christ-- "might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both"--meaning Jews and Gentiles--"to God in one body through the cross."

From this side of the cross and two thousand years of history later, we easily accept this reality of one flock, but those in His audience here in chapter ten wouldn't have been so receptive to the idea, and we see this in the book of Acts and Paul's letters where Jewish believers--even some of the disciples--struggled with accepting Gentiles who trusted Christ, which is perhaps why Jesus declares it almost parenthetically as we said earlier, / in spite of His visits and healing miracles among non-Jews and His declarations, for example, that He is the Light of the World. Alexander MacLaren chose this text to speak from at a meeting of the British Baptist Missionary Society that you can find online, and I highly commend it to you. The title of his sermon was "Christ and the Heathen World."

There's one other subtlety to mention here. Jesus didn't say there would be one fold; He said there would be one flock, which is different. In one flock there may be many folds, all of them useful and each of them with advantages of its own, but the flock is one, for there is only one Shepherd. And then, though there may be various expressions of faith with different labels, we're all

part of that one flock, as long as each individual has “put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. [For] here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all” as Paul writes in Colossians, chapter three, verses ten and eleven.

With verse seventeen, Jesus returns to speaking about the Good Shepherd: “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again,” adding in verse eighteen, “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.” The Father’s love for the Son is affirmed by Jesus’ willingness to be the Good Shepherd Who lays down His life for His sheep.

No one could take His life by force, and He has demonstrated that on several occasions already--passing through the crowd in Nazareth that was trying to throw Him over the cliff--Luke, chapter four, verse thirty--, and leaving the temple as the crowd was picking up stones to stone Him--John, chapter eight, verse 59, for example. Then, having warned His disciples on numerous occasions about what would happen to Him, He voluntarily went up to Jerusalem where He knew who would betray Him; that He would be arrested, and, when Peter struck the high priest’s servant with his sword, Jesus told him to put it away, adding, “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels”--Matthew, chapter 26, verse 53; and that He would stand before Pilate, telling him--John, chapter nineteen, verse eleven--, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.” Our Lord’s arrival as a babe in a manger was voluntary. His death was voluntary. He chose the time and mode of his death. **He** did. And He chose the most painful, lingering, shameful manner of death / then known to man, to demonstrate His love for you and me.

And when He **died**, it was His choice. Luke records the Lord's words when He said--chapter 23, verse 46--,"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last." Matthew tells us in chapter 27, verse fifty that He "yielded up his spirit." Here in verse eighteen, Jesus affirmed that He would choose to die, by using the personal pronoun and the reflexive pronoun when He says, "I lay it down of Myself."

But laying down His life wouldn't be the end of the story. Our Good Shepherd has the authority to lay down His life, and He also has the authority to take it up again. Only God can do that. Any other dead person has no ability to raise himself or herself from the grave. Only God can do that. He dies, not to remain dead forever, leaving the sheep without a shepherd, but He dies in order to live again, to resume His life to continue pursuing the goal for which He had laid down His life in the first place: to make it possible for us to be forgiven of our sin and join Him in heaven with our own resurrected bodies, and, in so doing, He would be the "firstborn from the dead" as Paul writes in Colossians, chapter one, verse eighteen.

Then, in a moment of reflection, it seems as though His words are hitting home in such a way that some of the Pharisees are beginning to wonder if they haven't missed something--that maybe this healing of the man born blind is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 35, verses five and six: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy." Jesus had opened the eyes of a man who was not blinded by some accident or disease, but a man who had been blind since birth. They certainly knew about other miracles where the ears of the deaf had been unstopped, the lame leapt like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sang for joy. Some of them, at least, were beginning to see the light, and the truth was beginning to set them free.

So, John tells us in verse nineteen that "There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, 'He has a demon, and is

insane; why listen to him?’ Others said, ‘These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’”

John begins his note here by saying there was a division among the Jews “again.” Two of the previous incidents that John wrote about are found in chapter seven. The first is in verse twelve as the Jews who had come to the Feast of Tabernacles were wondering if Jesus would be there: “And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, ‘He is a good man, ‘others said, ‘No, he is leading the people astray.’” The second is found in verse forty, where some of the people in Jesus’ audience said, “This really is the Prophet,” and others said, “This is the Christ.” “But some said, ‘Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?’” They each had his or her own prioritized checklist so that, for some, words of divine authority were the primary requirement while, for others, fulfillment of prophecy concerning His birthplace was first on the list--and they didn’t get that one right.

Now, the debate is between those who think He’s possessed by a demon and those who seem at least somewhat persuaded by His miracles. Those who think He’s possessed by a demon have come to this conclusion based on what Jesus has said about such things as laying down His life and taking it up again, that where He’s going they can’t come; they must eat His flesh and drink His blood--all the things that minds darkened by sin can’t understand because they’re spiritually discerned.

But those in this latter group aren’t much better off. Even though they think no one possessed by a demon could speak with the compelling insight and divine authority they’ve heard from His lips, they’re not willing to commit themselves because they only say what He cannot be. They do not see or they will not admit what He must be.

Chapter ten continues as John describes yet another confrontation with the Pharisees at the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem. When Jesus told the people, “I and the Father are one,” they took up stones to stone Him, yet He continued to explain to them Who He was and why He had come. By the end of the chapter, John tells us that “many believed in Him,” but the greatest miracle was yet to come. That miracle would become the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back for the Pharisees and would set in motion the fulfillment of Jesus’ words that, as the Good Shepherd, He would lay down His life for the sheep.

Thank you for being a part of our brief overview of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus seen through John’s eyes that’s meant to lead you to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing in Him, you might experience the fullness of life that can only come in Him.

Next week, we continue on to chapter eleven and the story surrounding the seventh sign recorded by John--the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Following Trey’s sermon on Jesus’ delay in coming to Bethany, we’ll follow the Lord as He encounters Lazarus’ sisters and calls Lazarus from the tomb in verses seventeen through 44.

As always, as it’s still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

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