



**The Good Shepherd
Contrasts: Good vs. Hireling
The Pastoral Ministry Today
John 10:1-21**

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We are in John 10. For us a new chapter, but for Jesus, His disciples and those Pharisees still hanging out with Him, this is a continuation of the conversation that began with a man being born blind being healed and as we ended chapter 9, worshipping Jesus. We do not know where this conversation is taking place, but we do know it is still the 8th day, the special sabbath day added by the Torah to the end of the Feast of Tabernacles. This year, 2023, the Feast begins with sunset on September 29th and concludes with sunset on October 6th. The 8th day this year falls on a regular sabbath day.

In the Bible, there is a lot about sheep and shepherds. In fact, a careful study of the scriptures shows us that His people were also referred to as sheep and those who were to be leading them, shepherds.

When the Lord had Samuel anoint the next King of Israel, the Lord had him select the most unlikely candidate, a young man, who was a shepherd, by the name of David (1 Samuel 16:12).



This imagery was further locked down when David was made King

2 Samuel 5:2

“In the past, when Saul was our king, you were the real leader in Israel. The LORD said to you, ‘You will shepherd my people Israel; you will rule over Israel.’” (NET 2nd ed.)

David made mistakes, but he is a type of Christ.

Isaiah later would prophesy about the coming King and again, this picture of a shepherd.

Isaiah 40:10–11

“Look, the sovereign LORD comes as a victorious warrior; his military power establishes his rule. Look, his reward is with him; his prize goes before him. Like a shepherd he tends his flock; he gathers up the lambs with his arm; he carries them close to his heart; he leads the ewes along.” (NET 2nd ed.)

The term, shepherd, became one commonly used by prophets as a metaphor for leadership of the nation. The one leading the nation, or an element of the nation was referred to as a shepherd.

Many began to reflect a problem with their leaders.

Jeremiah 10:21

“For the shepherds are stupid and do not inquire of the LORD; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered.” (ESV)

The leadership problem is serious, so serious that the Lord ultimately informs, through Jeremiah, that He will take over personally and raise up shepherds Himself. He will personally regather His people at the end of the age and then set leadership over them who will truly care for them as a shepherd would.

Jeremiah 23:1–4

““Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” declares the LORD. 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. Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD.” (ESV)

In Zechariah, the Lord laments the condition His people have been left in.

Zechariah 10:2b–3a

“Therefore the people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd. My anger is hot against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders; for the LORD of hosts cares for his flock.” (ESV)

As a continuation of His conversation with the Pharisees, and a completion of His answer to their question, Jesus makes reference to Himself as ultimate shepherd, or actually, the door of the sheep fold.

The Temple had a lot of sheep coming in everyday for the various sacrifices to be made on behalf of the people. This would mean that close to the Temple, would be a sheepfold, shepherds, and sheep.

We are not sure where this conversation is taking place, but we do know it is near the Temple and would most likely be in a place that the formerly blind man would have been comfortable hanging out in. We have already been introduced to a place right outside the Temple, with animals and the disabled who



were marginalized in the culture, would be. As we have learned, Jesus tended to talk about those things that were around Him, and Jesus has already healed someone else at this place (John 5:2-8).

We know that Bethesda was near the “sheepgate,” which is possibly to be identified with a covered portion of the pool of Siloam. We have, in any case, to think of an open fold surrounded by a wall or railing, into which, at eventide, the shepherds lead their flocks, committing them, during the night, to the care of an under-shepherd, who guards the door. In the morning they knock and the porter opens the door, which has been securely fastened, and each shepherd calls his own sheep, who know his voice and follow him. (Exell n.d., 162)

About Sheep

Sheep require 24/7 levels of care. They are incredibly stupid. Jesus refers to us as sheep. If you really understood what that means, then you would be offended. W. Philip Keller has written an amazing book called **A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23**. Reading that book is a humbling experience.

Sheep are herd animals, and they will follow someone, anyone who acts like they know what they are doing. That is one reason why one well trained dog can control large numbers of sheep. I have watched a pair of dogs control a herd of over 100 sheep.

While the dogs were doing their thing, the shepherd was apologizing to me for taking up the road for a couple of minutes while they crossed it. It was really something to watch.

This herd had someone caring for them because as long as they could see the shepherd, they were ok. For YAHWEH’s people though, by the later years of Zechariah, it was as if they no longer had any shepherd watching over them. The shepherds they do have are not interested in their spiritual well being, so instead they are wandering around like stupid sheep in constant peril. Ever watch sheep?

Did you know that when a sheep with a full fleece falls over onto their back, they cannot get up on their own without help. They will stay on their back until they die. When finding a cast sheep in that condition, immediate action is required. The same for us as believers, since we are also referred to as sheep.

Here is the thing, “even the largest, fattest, strongest, and sometimes healthiest sheep can become cast and be a casualty. Actually it is often the fat sheep that are the most easily cast. The way it happens is this: A heavy, fat, or long-fleeced sheep will lie down comfortably in some little hollow or depression in the ground. It may roll on its side slightly to stretch out or relax. Suddenly the center of gravity in the body shifts so that it turns on its back far enough that the feet no longer touch the ground. It may feel a sense of panic and start to paw frantically. Frequently this only makes things worse. It rolls over even further. Now it is quite impossible for it to regain its feet.” (Keller 2019)

Once a shepherd gets a cast sheep back on their feet, they must stay with that sheep until they look steady enough to stand on their own and exhibit normal behavior. It takes time to restore sheep. Sheep get up and down all the time, but when they make a mistake in how they lay down, then that is a problem.

They may choose the wrong place to lie down unless the shepherd makes certain it is a safe place. They do not like being by themselves either, when they are, they are usually in trouble.

Any of this sound familiar? Discipleship is crucial and being with other believers, key. “As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.” (Proverbs 27:17, NLT) Let’s pick up the conversation with Jesus.



John 9:40–10:6

“Those who were with Him from the Pharisees heard these things and said to Him, “We are not blind too, are we?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now that you maintain, ‘We see,’ your sin remains. Truly, truly I say to you, the one who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. But the one who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep listen to his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts all his own sheep outside, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. However, a stranger they simply will not follow, and will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus told them this figure of speech, but they did not understand what the things which He was saying to them meant.” (NASB 2020)

The Pharisees are not His sheep, not yet at least. “For [the Jews] claimed that they weren’t blind; but they would have been able to see if they had been Christ’s sheep. How is it that they were claiming the light as their own when they were raging against the Day?” (Saint Augustine 2020, 58)

As we listen in, there is a point we need to remember, Jesus will accuse the Pharisees of being bad shepherds putting them into the same category of those Zechariah 10 talked about. This is not something they want to be known for. But the reality is simple, they are false shepherds solely based on how they reacted to the blind man Jesus had just healed. Instead of celebrating with him, they tried to get him to follow them and renounce the very one who healed him.

False teachers do the same. In the past, I have had to deal with Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons trolling for new believers, yes at church, to poach and turn.

They would not enter by the door, who is Jesus himself (10:7, 9), but used wrong methods to steal the healed man who now belongs to Jesus’ flock. Moreover, they expelled him out of Jewish society without care for his welfare. Such leaders are condemned by Yahweh himself (Ezek 34:1–10) and Jesus calls them “thieves and robbers” (10:1, 8), “strangers” (10:5) and “hirelings” (10:12). (Kanagaraj 2013, 106)

Just another day of Jesus Christ, trying to build bridges with those who are busy destroying them.

Jesus makes a point of telling the pharisees that they are not providing adequate care to the sheep, Israel. “Jesus is telling them that He came in by the door. He goes on to say that anyone who doesn’t come by the door, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. This is a tremendous claim that He is making here. He came in by the door. He came in legally. That is, He came in fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament.” (McGee 1997, 429)

They are familiar with the concept of a doorkeeper. Several flocks would be under the care of one doorkeeper. When the shepherd properly identified himself to the doorkeeper, then he would call for his sheep, who knew his voice. Out they would come to be with him since they were his and they knew he would care for them.

Here is the thing, as believers, we too should be familiar with the voice of our Master. When He calls, we should simply follow Him where He wants to take us next. He has everything already taken care of for us, like a good shepherd would. Our trust should be as complete in Him as sheep would trust their shepherd.

If we know His voice, in other words have spent time with Him in prayer and in the word, then when we hear some other voice, we immediately know that is not the voice of our shepherd.



You do not learn error by studying error, you learn error by knowing the truth so well that it is His voice only that you hear, and error is not that voice. When He comes for us in the rapture, He will call for us and I believe that in His shout of “come up here,” will be our name.

He knows each of us, He knows our name, we are His sheep and as such, I believe you will hear Him call your name in His shout when the Father tells Him to get them.

1 Thessalonians 4:15–17

“For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.” (ESV)

Of course, the Pharisees who are trying to trap Him are not believers, so they do not get the figure of speech being used here by the Lord.

Jesus is our shepherd. He is the one we are following, and it is His voice we so deeply want to follow and hear. “He is the owner who delights in His flock. For Him there is no greater reward, no deeper satisfaction, than that of seeing His sheep contented, well fed, safe, and flourishing under His care. This is indeed His very “life.” He gives all He has to it. He literally lays Himself out for those who are His.” (Keller 2019)

John 10:7–10

“So Jesus said to them again, “Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All those who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly.” (NASB 2020)

There is only one way to get to the rich grazing area, and that is through the Shepherd. He is not only the one who takes care of us, but He is the door, the only way to get there.

When a Shepherd would need to rest, they would place the sheep into a sheepfold and if there was no under shepherd to guard the entrance, the shepherd would then lie down in the entrance and become the door, the path in and out. That way He is with His sheep and protects who has access to them since to get to the sheep, anyone would have to go through the shepherd first.

Jesus is our creator.

Colossians 1:16

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.” (ESV)

His ownership of the flock is clear because He personally paid the price for the flock that is His doing so on the cross. Then He rose from the dead in order to provide primo pastorage for His flock forever. In fact, He is preparing a place for all of us who are His right now. He is indeed the door. Any other voice, Buddha, Confucius, politics, money, sex; all of those voices are thieves and robbers. We are listening for and to His voice.

The thief, Satan, and all of his lies are those other voices. All of them.



John 10:10

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly.” (NASB 2020)

As we follow our Shepherd, He protects us and guides us making sure we are fed and get plenty of water. Satan though will flash something in front of us implying we can get something now, rather than waiting for our Shepherd to give it to us when it is in our best interests.

Why? Satan wants us ineffective. He is a liar and a heartless owner who does not care for those following him at all. They look over the fence from time to time and see His sheep but then Satan lies to them giving them something shiny to look at.

Satan’s lies are meant to convince us that we are much better off on our own than following our Shepherd. But sheep, when they are on their own, usually are in trouble. Our Shepherd wants us to feed on His word, but Satan would prefer us to slowly starve to death. Maybe a little milk every now and then, but nothing substantial.

Those so-called false shepherds who are serving up his ideas, are more interested in fleecing the flock than they are in feeding the flock. Peter warned us about that.

2 Peter 2:1–3

“But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves. Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered. In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed.” (NLT)

The Pharisees that Jesus is talking to are those thieves and robbers He is warning about.

Did you see the progression Jesus refers to, the thief, the false teacher, the deconstructing progressive false pastor comes to steal, kill and destroy. First they want to steal your joy and steal your resources as well. Money, relationships, family, the word, your faith. They want you totally cut off and dependent on them. Cults do this through love bombing making it seem like they are the only ones who truly care for you.

Once there, the next step of the enemy is to not just steal your faith, but to kill your faith once and for all. This is why we seem to see a never-ending line of notable Christians who have turned from the faith.

Odds are, they were never believers to begin with, but the enemy comes to steal, kill and destroy. So, if the enemy can get you into their camp before you are grounded in the word, they might get you to reject Christ altogether.

This is why cults and progressive churches prey on new believers. It is almost like they know the parable of the four soils and play to that intentionally through their lies.

For example, progressive Christians view the Bible as primarily a human book and emphasize personal conscience and practices rather than certainty and beliefs. They are also very open to redefining, reinterpreting, or even rejecting essential doctrines of the faith like the Virgin Birth, the deity of Jesus, and his bodily resurrection. (Childers 2020, 8)



2 Peter 2:20–22

“If people have escaped from the corrupting forces of the world through their knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and then are again caught and conquered by them, such people are in a worse state at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been much better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than to know it and then turn away from the sacred command that was given them. What happened to them shows that the proverbs are true: “A dog goes back to what it has vomited” and “A pig that has been washed goes back to roll in the mud.”” (GNB)

The final goal of the enemy is to destroy your faith and destroy you.

Rather than care for the sheep, the Pharisees have marginalized the sheep. Rather than provide care for the blind man and rejoice with him, they have belittled him and cast him out.

There are those who were called by God in the past and did indeed take care of the sheep, but those who are leading now in Jerusalem, simply wanted the flock's money, the power, and the prestige. Shiny things. Jesus is the door, He is the good shepherd, He stated clearly “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6b, NASB 2020)

False teachers, shepherds who are nothing more than thieves, belittle the Bible and all that it teaches. They are the ones who will say portions of it are no longer for today. Or worse yet, that it is nothing more than a philosophy book. In reality, woke is the myth in that it is nothing more than the humanist dream of utopia remixed.

Jesus, our good shepherd, desires for us to not just have life, but to have it abundantly. He wants us to have life to the full. The enemy will attack, and yes bad things do happen to good people because we are all subject to the results of what took place back in Genesis 3.

No one else enables us to be saved and enter in good pasture. Only Jesus. The door is exclusive, if you have not gone through the door, then you are on the outside looking in. You can see the good pasture and the flock in it, but you are outside. But if we enter through that exclusive door, then we will be able to go in and out and have all of our needs met. “There is nothing cramping or restricting about life for those who enter his fold.” (Morris 1995, 452)

Jesus comes to bring life to the sheep and abundant life means eternal life. And here is the thing, that begins the moment we enter through the door, Jesus Christ, into the salvation only He provides. It is a full life in the here and now.

In order to make it clear, Jesus will once again place a stamp on what He has just said by making another “I am” statement.

Once again, He will make it crystal clear to all that He is God, He is Messiah and only He is the source of salvation and life.

John 10:11–15

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters the flock. He flees because he is a hired hand and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and 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.” (NASB 2020)

Jesus is the “I am” and as such He is the good shepherd. And He is no ordinary shepherd.



A shepherd may risk his life for the sheep, David did more than once. Speaking to Saul, the King.

1 Samuel 17:34–35

“But David told him: Your Majesty, I take care of my father’s sheep. And when one of them is dragged off by a lion or a bear, I go after it and beat the wild animal until it lets the sheep go. If the wild animal turns and attacks me, I grab it by the throat and kill it.” (CEV)

Jesus though, says He will lay down His life for the sheep. Not that He is willing to do so, but that He will do so. Isaiah prophesied this.

Isaiah 53:12

“Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.” (ESV)

The good shepherd “pours out his soul (note τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ both here in 10:11 and also in Is. 53:12, the LXX translation) unto death.” He gives himself! The idea is not that this shepherd gives merely his natural life. No, ψυχή which rests on an Aramaic original (whether oral or written) is the full equivalent of the self, the person. (Hendriksen and Kistemaker 1953-2001, 110)

Jesus gave everything on the cross for us. His death meant life for the flock. That is not how it normally would work. Normally, the death of the shepherd puts the flock at hazard, not here.

When Jesus talks about hired hands, I am reminded about an issue we see in some churches these days. There are those who serve as pastors who the Lord has called. You see it in the way they live and serve the flock that has been placed under their care by the Lord.

Then there are those who are simply employed in the role. Years ago, I was seeking to move into a pastoral role in an established work. I knew the Lord called me, but at the time I thought He was calling me to another work. I was a finalist for the Senior Pastor position at a Calvary Chapel in Arizona, but the Lord said no.

What I learned in the process is this. Most churches treated it as a job to be filled, not as a calling. They engaged, for the most part, in some of the most egregious hiring practices I have ever seen. Having worked in business for many years and having hired hundreds over the years, there are things you do, always, there are also best practices, and then there are those things you never do. I would say that over 90% of the churches I talked to, engaged in those things you never do.

This made it clear to me, that the statistics I had been reading about most churches no longer being Bible based, is indeed the case.

Our churches today are filled with hirelings. Those who simply have a job and are not interested in the flock at all. When you don’t keep reasonable office hours, forget that those you serve work regular jobs and many times cannot meet you in the middle of the day, and chew people out for calling you at home, then you are a hireling. When you expect those in your flock to work 40 plus hours a week and then volunteer on top of that, but you are not willing to work much more than 30 hours a week, you might be a hireling.

Jesus gave everything for us, I cannot give Him anything less.



When I was on active duty, I loved going out and visiting with the troops at all hours of the day. I would routinely go out in the early morning and visit. You learn so much about the real operation by doing that then you would ever learn by reading reports or talking to NCO's.

I did the same as a manager and would routinely visit remote locations to visit with the folks who worked there. I always learned something new.

Having reviewed numerous church operational documents, simply by applying for a position, I saw a lot of different types of operations.

When I see churches treat staff like employees and simply not require them to even be involved in the life of the church, then that is a recipe for disaster.

Conversely, when I see church documents that talk about the flock and the need to be involved with them and reflect that staff leads by being there, even in small groups, then that is something I am interested in. They are looking at calling and caring for the flock given to them by the Lord.

John 10:16–18

“And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice; and they will become one flock, with one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it back. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it back. This commandment I received from My Father.” (NASB 2020)

Yes, Jesus is referring to the gentiles, His flock will not be exclusively Jewish. No, He is not referring to North America so forget about Mormon doctrine.

Jesus then begins talking about what will be taking place in six months or so come Passover this spring. He will indeed be laying down His life. Oh, and He also says He will take it back too.

Before it takes place, Christ is telling us that what will happen on the cross will be an act of free volition.

“The fact that Christ’s death is an act of free volition must be stressed in order that when death occurs the enemies who have brought it about may have no right to boast as if this were their victory, and also in order that the disciples may have no reason to despair as if this were his defeat.” (Hendriksen and Kistemaker 1953-2001, 115) Because it is an achievement, not a defeat.

Thinking about this, the death of Jesus Christ followed by His resurrection is not anything other than one complete act of obedience to the Father. Not two separate acts.

He ties them both together here in verse 18. Of course, as soon as He finishes talking, because He did again use the “I am” statement, the Pharisees are confused. They are not believers so that is to be expected. But there are those who are still working through the healing of the man born blind too.

John 10:19–21.

“Dissension occurred again among the Jews because of these words. Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?” Others were saying, “These are not the words of one who is demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of those who are blind, can it?”” (NASB 2020)

There are those who are offended by anything Jesus says. They still are today by the way. Some had gone to attributing the works of Jesus to Satan and demons.



But then there were those who were moving towards belief.

There is no neutrality with Jesus.

Where do you stand? Is He your shepherd, or do you simply tolerate what He has to say.

Jesus has limited us to two possibilities, lunatic or Lord.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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