

## The Good Shepherd – John 10:1-10

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Sheep*

1. God often uses earthly relationships as portraits of our relationship to Him.
2. One of the most poignant is the shepherd & his sheep.
3. Before he was king of Israel, David had tended his father's flock.
4. It was this experience that moved him to write the beloved Psalm 23; "The Lord is my Shepherd."
5. Many other Psalms, as well as the prophets, used this image of the flock to capture God's heart for His people.
6. It's a fitting picture because sheep are inordinately foolish creatures.
  - a. Left to themselves, they would quickly get into trouble or would starve to death.
  - b. Their welfare is dependent on their shepherd.
  - c. Even then, with a really great shepherd leading the flock, there's always 1 or 2 sheep that're rebels & do everything they can to resist the shepherd's loving care.

#### B. *The Good Shepherd*

1. One day as Jesus was teaching, He pointed to the OT picture of Israel as the Flock of God & made the bold claim that **He** was their Shepherd.

### II. TEXT

#### A. *Vs. 1-3a*

**1 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.**

1. If the sheep aren't grazing in open pasture, they're secured in a pen, called a "fold."
2. Sheepfolds were often *small caves* which are found in large numbers throughout Israel.
  - a. Limestone is the most common bedrock of Israel.
  - b. It erodes into all kinds of interesting shapes & most caves are made out of.
  - c. Besides caves, sheepfolds were made of a circle of stones piled 3 to 4 ft. high.
    - 1) They were 20-25 ft. across with a 4' wide opening that served as a gate.
    - 2) On top of this stone wall were piled thorn bushes to keep predators from jumping over.
3. Once the sheep were safely gathered in the fold, the shepherd would sit or lie across the opening.
  - a. As the one given charge of the flock, he was their authority.
  - b. They came in & went out by his lead.
  - c. And no one else was allowed into the fold without his consent.
4. The people of Jesus' day were familiar with this pastoral image, so He used it to speak of His role as their Messiah.

5. Israel was the flock of God. Their covenant with Him was the sheepfold.
  - a. The Messiah was their Shepherd.
  - b. And the **door** to the sheepfold was the **many prophecies** that had been given pointing out Who He was.
  - c. God gave His people a **screening process** to determine Who their True Shepherd was.
  - d. He would come through the door prepared for Him by the Prophets.
6. Dr. Peter Stoner was Chairman of the Department of Mathematics at Pasadena City College some years ago.
  - a. Through statistical analysis, he calculated that the probability of one man fulfilling just 8 of the OT prophecies regarding the Messiah was 1 in  $10^{17}$ .
  - b. Now, that # is so big it's difficult to get our minds around it.
  - c. The chance of winning the CA lottery are 1 in 15 million, or 1 in  $1.5 \times 10^6$
  - d. It is 3 times more likely for a person driving ten miles to buy a Lotto ticket to be killed in a car accident than to win the jackpot!
  - e. Yet the difference between  $10^6$  – the chance of winning the lottery –  
And  $10^{17}$  – the probability of one person fulfilling 8 Messianic prophecies –  
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Is so vast it makes **winning the lottery** look like a **sure thing!**
  - f. Now, someone will object and say, “People win the lottery all the time!”
  - g. That's true; and it only goes to prove something the laws of probability say – that a thing **can occur** when the chances against it are not **overwhelming**.
  - h. But there comes a point at which the odds are **so high** against something happening by chance that it **won't**, & 1 in  $10^{17}$  is **way past** the point at which a thing could occur by chance.
  - i. To give you an idea of just how vast a number this is; cover the entire State of Texas 2 ft. deep in Silver dollars.
    - 1) Mark one of them with a Blue Sharpie and place it somewhere in the mix.
    - 2) Blindfold someone and tell them to find that one, marked coin.
    - 3) The chance of choosing the right one on the first try is 1 in  $10^{17}$ .
  - j. And that is with only **8 prophecies**. Jesus fulfilled **DOZENS!**
  - k. Dr. Stoner went on to calculate the odds of one person fulfilling 48 of the OT prophecies of the Messiah. 1 in  $10^{157}$
7. Jesus is the only One who **COULD** be the Messiah because He's the only One who fulfilled the prophecies about Him – He came by the way, the door prepared for Him.

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8. This is not to say others hadn't come **claiming** they were the Messiah.
  - a. We know there were several frauds both before & after Jesus who claimed to be Israel's deliverer.
  - b. Many of them managed to raise a following & for a time made a stir, but it never lasted because they were fakes.
9. In v. 1 Jesus says these false messiahs hadn't come through the route prescribed by God; they didn't fulfill prophecy & hadn't come to do the Messiah's mission.

- a. They'd come to the people through other avenues.
  - b. They'd come through political & armed revolution.
  - c. They'd were driven by greed & the desire for wealth.
  - d. They'd climbed in by way of the lust for power.
10. They were thieves & robbers, aiming at one thing – their own selfish ambitions & gain.
11. Of course, back of all these false messiahs was satan.
- a. He knew the real Messiah was coming so he tried to muddy the waters by throwing up a cloud of counterfeits.
  - b. It was this *parade of cheats* that *numbed* Israel to Jesus' claim; especially the rulers.
  - c. Just prior to Jesus there'd been a couple guys who'd claimed to being the Messiah who'd managed to raise enough support to attack a Roman outpost or two.
  - d. The Romans responded to such insurrection with vicious brutality & even more restrictions, so the rulers were jaded & leery of any more claimants to the office of Messiah.
  - e. Their attitude was pretty much, "We can do *without another* Messiah, thank you!"
12. The mistake the rulers made was tossing out the baby with the bathwater.
- a. A slew of fakes ought to have *warned them* to be on the look out for the real deal.
  - b. The prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel & Daniel were the pathway God had given that ought to have primed them to **KNOW** Jesus was the genuine article.
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13. Then Jesus said –
- <sup>3</sup> To him [the shepherd] the doorkeeper opens,**
- a. Usually the shepherd *himself* sat at the door.
  - b. But there were times when he would have to run an errand so he'd leave the flock in the care of another.
  - c. When he returned, the substitute recognized the shepherd as the rightful keeper of the sheep.
14. The door-keeper is a great picture of the role of local pastors & elders. And one day with the right group I'll elaborate on this.
15. For now, suffice it to say that door-keeper must always remember that it's not THEIR FLOCK – It's God's flock & they are only there to tend it for His glory.

**B. Vs. 3b-5**

1. As we read vs. 3-5, notice how often Jesus refers to the shepherd's voice.

**<sup>3</sup> To him [the shepherd] the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."**

2. The sheep develop a **strong attachment** to their shepherd.
3. They know his voice & are able to single it out of a crowd.
4. Because of the large amount of time shepherds spend with their flock, they give names to the sheep.
  - a. These names reflect some physical or behavioral trait of the sheep.
  - b. The shepherd also uses distinctive **sounds** to convey comfort or warning.
  - c. The sheep get to know their names and the unique sound of the shepherd's voice.
5. Shepherds live a lonely existence, so when they can, they find companionship by gathering at a watering hole or the market.
  - a. They let their flocks mingle as they sit and get caught up on the latest news.
  - b. When the time comes to split up, they stand on different sides of the flock & call out to their sheep.
  - c. Sure enough, the sheep move toward that familiar voice and gather round the legs of their shepherd.
6. When he moves to new pasture, he goes **before** the flock and **leads** them. He doesn't **drive** them; He goes first – they follow.
7. And they follow because they **trust** Him. He's proven himself to **be** trustworthy.
8. If another person tries to call them, the sheep won't follow. Even if the fraud uses the right names for the sheep – his voice is strange & they will run from him.
9. What Jesus says here is clear – those who belong to Him **will** follow Him; they won't go after false-shepherds.
10. There are a lot of voices clamoring for attention today.
  - a. We must listen for the Voice of our Shepherd.
  - b. Don't follow the **clever** voice
  - c. Don't go after the **funny** voice, or the **smooth** voice.
  - d. Don't be seduced by the **appealing** voice.
  - e. Give no heed to the **loudest** voice.
11. Listen for the **Master's voice**.
  - a. Learn to discern His voice from all the rest by being a student of His Word, for God never contradicts Himself.
  - b. Before taking direction for your life from the endless parade of would-be counselors out there, make sure you've been alone in the closet of prayer where God has promised to hear & speak.
  - c. Walk in the Spirit and let moment by moment surrender to the Lord tune your inner ear to the pilot of your soul.

### C. V. 6

**6 Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.**

1. They didn't understand precisely because of what Jesus says here – they weren't His sheep.
  2. They heard the words, but because they lacked faith, they were deaf to the meaning.
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3. Right now, there are people present who understand the **words** I'm saying but

- they don't get the *message*.
4. Others, most here – understand the message & are being blessed because as nutritious food gives strength & health to the body, the Word of God brings *spiritual* health & strength.
  5. If you're someone who hears the words but misses the message – you need to pay ultra close attention to what that means, to what it says about the state of your soul.

**D. Vs. 7-10**

**7** Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. **8** All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. **9** I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

1. When the shepherd laid down across the opening to the sheepfold, he *became* the door.
2. Entrance into or exit out of the fold was his prerogative.
3. Jesus tells them that while Israel had been the flock of God, He's now constituting a *new flock*, entrance to which comes through Him.
4. The old covenant God made with Israel through the Law was being *superseded* by a *new* covenant based on faith in Him.

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5. You've often heard me say that a Shepherd's duty is 3-fold; To Lead, Feed & Protect the flock.
6. We find Jesus fulfilling all 3 roles here.
  - a. As the door – He *protects* the flock.
  - b. Through faith in Him we come in and go out – He *leads* us.
  - c. In Him we find pasture – He *feeds* us.
7. But all this assumes, as obedient sheep, we're staying close to and following our Shepherd.

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8. In v. 8, Jesus said His sheep don't go after false shepherds.
9. In vs. 3-5, He says the same thing again & again – His sheep know & hear His voice & aren't fooled by imposters.
10. This is a great comfort to me as an under-shepherd because I'm concerned for the integrity of the Body of Christ.
  - a. I'm concerned about the goofy stuff out there that would lead people away from the truth.
  - b. With the easy way news can get around today through the popular media, there's no end to the information at people's disposal.
  - c. So I sometimes find myself fretting over stuff that presents a danger to the flock of God.
  - d. Then I'm reminded what Jesus says here – His sheep *hear His voice* and they don't, they won't go after cheats.
11. If keeping you safe from deception meant I had to list every false teaching out there, that's all I'd ever do!
12. Thanks be to God that I don't have to do that – all I need to do is teach & encourage you *to learn Jesus' voice*.

13. Once you've learned to discern His voice, you're safe!
14. I'm just the door keeper – my job is to open you to Him.
15. And that's why my primary role as a pastor will always be to teach the Word of God.

#### COUNTERFEIT

**10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.**

16. The shepherd's aim is to Lead, Feed, & Protect.
17. The thief's aim is to Steal, Kill, & Destroy.
18. Remember that next time those strange voices call you.
  - a. Behind the smooth voice is a gaping & hungry mouth waiting to devour.
  - b. Back of the appealing words is a well worn trap waiting for another victim.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. Thriving Sheep

1. And while the enemy wants to wipe you out, Jesus wants to bring you *ever increasing life!*
2. Jesus died so you'd survive judgment, but He rose so you'd **THRIVE** in this life & the one to come.
3. Christian – are you thriving or just surviving?
  - a. You've counted on the cross as the payment for your sins --
  - b. But the resurrection *should* mean *new life* to you?
  - c. Here's what this means *practically* –
    - 1) What about your spiritual life & experience *comes short* of the *thriving abundance* Jesus said He came to give here in v. 10?
    - 2) By faith, you can have it RIGHT NOW! Listen to 2 Cor. 5:17 . . .

**If anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**

#### Behold -

- 3) That is *exactly* what we need to be doing – **Beholding** = Looking at & considering with careful attention.
- 4) We need to SEE this as a spiritual certainty.

#### **Behold, all things have become new.**

- 5) What's new? *All* things!

#### **Behold, all things have become new.**

- 6) Jesus' doesn't bring a *reformation*. Salvation isn't a spiritual *remodel*.
- 7) It's a brand new start, from the ground up.
- 8) "Extreme Makeover" – cry; touches us deeply – what we all need!
4. What makes the life Jesus gives thriving & abundant is that it isn't just our old pre-Jesus life warmed over. It's HIS LIFE in us!
5. Get it Christian! Get it then live it!

#### B. Want To Thrive?

1. Thriving sheep are *excellent* advertisements for their shepherd.
  - a. Plump sheep with thick healthy coats, bright eyes, & quick movements,

- speak of a wise & diligent shepherd.
- b. And healthy sheep beget sheep – so where the shepherd is tending his flock well, there will be new birth.
  2. Scrawny, emaciated, flea-bitten, scraggly sheep with gaping wounds from wolf-bites show a shepherd who's neglected his flock.
  3. If the flock is maimed & limping painfully across blighted pasture, their shepherd's a bum!
  4. Now, here's the deal – Jesus IS a great shepherd and those who abide in His flock *are* healthy & happy.
  5. So, *our condition* doesn't reflect on the quality of *His care* – rather it reveals *where we've been hanging out*, who we've been following.
  6. Do you want to thrive? Jesus *wants* you to.
    - a. Thriving comes by abiding in Christ, by staying close to the Shepherd.
    - b. Listen to His voice. Follow Him.
    - c. Eat what He sets before you in His Word, in daily communication with Him, & in walking in the Spirit.