

Christ, the Door and the Shepherd

John 10:1-18

March 8th, 2026

1. _____: Sheep, shepherds, and thieves (10:1-6)

2. _____: (10:7-18)

a. Jesus is the _____ to salvation and life. (10:7-10)

b. Jesus is the _____ who sacrifices Himself and knows His own. (10:11-18)

3. Applying the Word

a. _____ through the door, which is Christ.

b. _____ in your good Shepherd, who is Christ.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 10:1-18

1. Why are sheep and shepherds such analogies for God and His people?
2. Who do you think are represented by the “thieves and robbers” (v. 1, 8, 10), “strangers” (v. 5), “hired hands” (v. 12)? Consider the immediate context of the previous chapter and OT history.
3. What is the abundant life in v. 10? What is wrong with assuming that means we are promised an easy life or a life that is always happy and pleasant?
4. Why is it important that Jesus knows His own and His own know Him? How does that relate to the language in 10:1-5?
5. How should v. 16 motivate and encourage missions? What promises do you see in this verse that someone who serves as a missionary in a difficult context should remember?
6. How does John 10:1-18 explain the various responses to Jesus in the gospel of John, especially the immediate context of chapter 9 with the formerly blind man, his parents, the crowd, and the pharisees?
7. How do Acts 20:17, 28-32 and 1 Peter 5:1-4 use similar language as John 10 to describe the role of pastors/elders in the local church today?

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Big idea: Jesus is the door to eternal life and the shepherd who knows His people.

Intro

Few images are used in scripture as often as the image of a sheep and a shepherd.

Psalms 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Psalms 78:52 But He led forth His own people like sheep And guided them in the wilderness like a flock;

Psalms 79:13 So we Your people and the sheep of Your pasture Will give thanks to You forever;

Psalms 95:7 For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.

Isaiah 40:11 Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry *them* in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

Isaiah 53:6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way;

Matthew 9:36 Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.

Why?

Shepherding was familiar

We might use illustrations today from sports or movies, because that's what people know.

People knew shepherding. It was all around them. Even if they did not work as a shepherd, they would have been very familiar with it.

Shepherding was personal

"my shepherd" "sheep of your pasture" "we are the people of His pasture" tending the sheep with his own hands, caring them, leading them

The personal nature of shepherding provides a good parallel for God's personal care of us.

Sheep are needy

They wander, they are defenseless, they can die simply by getting stuck on their back, they are not bright

To call us sheep is accurate but not complementary

Jesus picks up this well-known imagery to teach about Himself and His people.

He knows and calls His people.

His people know and hear His voice.

1. **Illustration:** Sheep, shepherds, and thieves (10:1-6)

a. The setting is probably the same as the past several chapters

i. In Jerusalem for the feast of tabernacles and afterward for a period of time.

ii. He leaves Jerusalem in 10:40 to go to the region beyond the Jordan, so probably still in the same trip.

b. He describes the world of sheep and shepherds to imply something about Himself, but they don't get his figure of speech (v. 6). They understand the imagery but they don't understand the point.

c. The sheep fold

i. Milne –

1. “The ‘fold’ or pen was probably a large, communal enclosure where several flocks were herded for safety at night.
2. The calling of the sheep in the morning (3) would be crucial as each shepherd assembled his own flock from the larger herd in the fold.
3. During the night a guard would be hired (3, the *doorkeeper*). He would remain at the only door to the enclosure.
4. Robbers could enter only by scaling the enclosure. The guard would admit only the true shepherds by the door when they arrived in the morning.”

- ii. Built with walls on three sides and a small opening with a gate on the fourth side. The walls would be about waist high, because not much height is needed to keep sheep in. That did make it so that thieves could climb over and steal the sheep or even kill them in the pen.

d. Shepherds would call and lead their sheep

- i. Today if you see shepherds in the backcountry, they might be driving their sheep from behind with the help of a few dogs.
- ii. Mideastern shepherds led from the front and the sheep followed.
- iii. One commentator observed that its still common for middle eastern shepherds to give particular names to their sheep that are descriptive – long ears, white nose, etc.
- iv. Timothy Laniak : One of the most pressing challenges for shepherds is to provide food and water. . . . A shepherd needs to keep within a 20-mile grazing radius of an adequate water source in cold weather and within 10–12 miles in the summer. . . . Rest is not only a function of being well provided for. It is a state of security that comes from the shepherd’s protective presence. . . . Neglecting the mothers and young, or driving the flocks too hard can bring on fatalities (Gen. 33:13)

e. If a stranger tried to call them, they wouldn’t go.

- i. They don’t know the stranger and won’t listen to His voice.
- ii. They hear their shepherd and they follow their shepherd.

2. ***Explanation:*** (10:7-18)

a. Jesus is the ***door*** to salvation and life. (10:7-10)

- i. He does more than merely explain the symbolic elements. He uses the same main themes or elements of the figure of speech and further uses them in metaphorical ways. He’s not just the shepherd, He’s the door. He doesn’t just call them out, he goes in and out.
- ii. The ones before were thieves and robbers (v. 8)
 1. Not referring to faithful OT prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, or leaders like Moses and David.
 2. Rather, they are the current religious leaders, like the Pharisees in chapter 9 who kicked a recently healed man out of the synagogue rather than acknowledge that Jesus might be who He says He is because Jesus healed him on the Sabbath.
 - a. **Matthew 23:4** "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with *so much as* a finger.

- b. **Matthew 23:6** "They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues
 - 3. We would also think of the words from Ezekiel about the shepherds of Israel.
 - a. **Ezekiel 34:2-4** "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? ³"You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat *sheep* without feeding the flock. ⁴"Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them.
 - b. **Ezekiel 34:23** "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.
 - i. The chastisement of the false shepherds sets the stage for God's one shepherd in the line of David, Jesus the Messiah.
 - 4. The true sheep did not hear them though – they did not follow them, they were not deceived.
- iii. He's the door –
 - 1. The metaphor bounces around
 - 2. We enter through Him to be saved
 - a. He isn't merely the model sheep that teaches the other sheep how to live
 - b. He is the door – the gate – the entrance – to salvation
 - c.
 - 3. We follow Him to abundant life
 - a. Abundant, excessive, to the full
 - b. Life now is increasingly lived as we were designed, rather than contrary to God's design – although still marred by sin.
 - i. If we read this and think, "abundant life = non-stop adventure and happiness" you'll be disappointed. You'll have to leave out lots of the Bible to come to that conclusion.
 - ii. 1/3 of the psalms are lament, 10/11 disciples died at the hands of adversaries, the 11th was exiled while an old man, Paul was imprisoned twice.
 - iii. Each Sunday we gather we try to include at least one song that someone who just received a cancer diagnosis or lost someone they loved could sing, because each Sunday its likely we have that in our midst.
 - iv. But we have context for our suffering, comfort by His presence, hope for the future, meaning in our lives, joy in the Lord. We get God's instruction on marriage, parenting, finances, relationships, anger,

anxiety, communication and the work of the Spirit so we want to follow it.

- c. Life with Christ on the new earth, no more weighed down by our own sin.
- b. Jesus is the **shepherd** who sacrifices Himself and knows His own. (10:11-18)
- i. He lays down His life for the sheep (10:11-13)
 1. A hired hand who is there to receive a paycheck, doesn't really care about the sheep. But the shepherd does and he is willing to lay down his life to defend them.
 2. He has authority to lay it down and take it up (10:17-18)
 - a. Trinitarian interaction where the Son submits to the Father, but in the context of love.
 - b. But the Son lays His life down on His own initiative and authority.
 - i. Not merely because it is commanded but willingly.
 - c. He lays His life down at the cross, but it doesn't end there.
 - i. John Piper "The story doesn't end with a mangled shepherd lying dead among three dead wolves, and sheep scattered thirsting and starving in the desert."
 - ii. He knows His own and they know Him (10:14-15)
 1. You are known, identified, understood. You may fall through the cracks at church, as much as we try to avoid that. Others might not know you, but Jesus knows You. And He called you by name and you responded.
 2. In real time that might have looked like someone sharing the gospel with you and you prayed to be forgiven by Jesus. It clicked in your mind.
 - iii. His own include Gentile sheep which are not of this fold (10:16)
 1. "This fold" is the Jewish people but God's plan has always been that He would bring people to Himself from every tribe, tongue, and nation.
 - a. He told Abraham that all nations would be blessed through Him (Gen. 12 and 15)
 - b. Matthew 28:19a ⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,
 - i. This gospel is clearly targeted at a Jewish audience, showing how Jesus fulfilled the OT prophesies of the Messiah but . . .
 - ii. His genealogy will feature Israelites as well as Canaanites, Hittites, and Moabites (ch. 1)
 - iii. Heals a Greek soldier's servant and commends his faith (ch. 8)
 - iv. Much of His ministry will take place in Galilee of the Gentiles (4:15)
 - v. Culminates in the call for the gospel to go to all nations
 - c. **Revelation 7:9-10** After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white

robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands; ¹⁰ and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

2. This is the great missionary passage in John.

- a. He has other sheep – they were given from the Father to the Son as a gift, as we saw in John 6
- b. He MUST bring them and He will bring them – He will not fail.
 - i. The task of missions will not fail because Jesus promises that He will not fail.
- c. They will hear His voice
 - i. Not literally in the sense that He must appear to some other group of people outside Israel, but in the way John has used it throughout the book and within this chapter – those who “hear” are those who believe and respond to the gospel.
 - ii. **John 6:45b** Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.
 - iii. **John 8:43** "Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word.
 - iv. **John 8:47** "He who is of God hears the words of God;
 - v. His opponents “heard” His audible voice but they didn’t “hear.”

3. They will become one flock with one shepherd

- a. **Ephesians 2:13-14** But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,
- b. **Ephesians 2:19** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,
- c. Why does unity in the church matter?
 - i. It’s not just because unnecessary conflict is painful, although it is.
 - ii. It’s not just because unity is itself a witness to the community, although it is.
 - iii. It’s because God has brought us together as one flock with one shepherd.

3. Applying the Word

- a. **Enter** through the door, which is Christ.
- b. **Rest** in your good Shepherd, who is Christ.
 - i. Clement of Alexandria, 150-215 AD: “In our sickness we need a Savior, in our wanderings a guide, in our blindness someone to show us the light, in our thirst the fountain of living water that quenches forever the thirst of those who drink from it. We dead people need life, we sheep need a shepherd, we children need a teacher, the whole world needs Jesus!”
(*Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IV, page 340*)



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