

GOOD NEWS FOR SHEEP

Walking with Jesus in John's Gospel

February 25, 2024

*"I am the good shepherd;
I know my sheep and my sheep know me . . .
and I lay down my life for the sheep."
John 10:14-15*

Jesus knows sheep

"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. ³ The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." ⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."

John 10

1. Jesus' "figure of speech" continues his reflection on the fifth sign in John's gospel. This is another example of an unfortunate chapter division in our English texts. The Pharisees are still in the background trying to trap Jesus, especially after Jesus turns to the first person in 10:5-7.
2. The "I am" passages largely begin here (the exception is the "Bread of Life" in John 6) reflecting that John is particularly focusing on how Jesus is revealing his Messianic character, illustrating authentic (and inauthentic) faith, and calling disciples (sheep!) to follow him.
3. Jesus assumes we know the long biblical history of God's and his shepherds:
good shepherds: 2 Samuel 5:2, 7:7; Psalm 23, 28, 78:71-72, 80:1; Isaiah 40:11, 44:28; Jeremiah 3:15; Ezekiel 34:23, 37:24, Micah 2:12-13, 5:4
bad shepherds: Ezekiel 34; Isaiah 56:9-12; Jeremiah 2:26-28, 23:1-4; 25:34-38, 50:6
Zechariah 5:1-4, 10:3-12, 11:16-17; and Amos 3:12 for the ineffectual shepherd
4. The Good Shepherd is easy to identify, but Jesus makes us work a little to identify the "thief and robber," the "watchman," the "hired hand," and the "wolves."

A warning for thieves, hired hands and unfaithful under-shepherds

1. The sheep should be able to recognize the thief

“I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. ³ The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”

John 10:1-5

2. The hired hand does not protect the flock from the world (he cares more for his own safety)

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.”

John 10

What sheep learn about the Good Shepherd (even more next week!)

1. The sheep are known (and know!)

² “The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. ³ The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”

John 10:2-5

2. The Good Shepherd has in mind the best interest of the sheep

⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

John 10

3. If there’s _____ Shepherd, there can be only _____ flock

¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”

John 10

4. Jesus begins to point to his death and resurrection

¹⁷ *“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”*

John 10

Going back to John’s three questions

Question 1: What is Jesus revealing about the kind of Messiah he will be?

Question 2: What is Jesus revealing about authentic or inauthentic faith?

Question 3: What is Jesus teaching his followers about walking in the light?

1. This Shepherd-Messiah will give his life for his sheep

⁷ *He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.*

Isaiah 53 (see 1 John 3:16)

2. Jesus is revealing that he is the only, the unique, gate

⁷ *Therefore Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.”*

John 10:7-9 (see Matthew 7:13-14 and M’Cheyne’s articles)

3. Walking in the light was always designed to work best with a “shepherd”

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

1 Peter 5



created by BibleProject

Resources for further study

The Bible Project team does a great job of introducing John's themes even if it might be too busy at <https://bibleproject.com/downloads/posters/>

Doug has referenced these commentaries:

Hendricksen's *New Testament Commentary* (Baker, 1953)

D.A. Carson has a great commentary (Eerdmans, 1991)

Merrill Tenny's commentary in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 1981)

Gary Manning argues that the "thief" is not Satan but human bad shepherds, especially the Pharisees in this story at <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2016/misinterpreting-the-thief-john-10-10>

Spurgeon has a sermon on "The Sheep and their Shepherd" at

<https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/0995.htm>

Robert Murray M'Cheyne has a wonderful commentary on this text at <https://www.monergism.com/christ-door-church> and <https://www.monergism.com/hireling-and-true-shepherd>

Martin Luther has a helpful commentary on this text at <https://www.monergism.com/christ%E2%80%99s-office-and-kingdom-or-how-christ-true-shepherd-john-10-11-16>

Sproul has helpful words for under-shepherds at <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/what-does-it-mean-be-shepherd-over-flock>

Doug likes Terry Johnson comments at <https://www.reformation21.org/blog/the-good-shepherd>

Bob Deffinbaugh has a good sermon series on the Gospel of John at <https://bible.org/series/you-might-believe-study-gospel-john>