

JESUS IS THE SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP
(John 10:1-18)

Jesus is our all in all. He is everything to us. And just as all the books in the world cannot contain the things that he did, neither can all the books in the world adequately describe who he is.

Jesus is described in many ways in the Scriptures. We have seen previously in the Gospel of John that Jesus is the bread of life. Not that he is made out of barley and wheat, but he is the bread of life in a spiritual sense. If a man partakes of Christ, then that man will live. Just as a man must eat food to live physically, a man must partake of Christ to live spiritually. Christ himself is the bread of life. And Jesus said, "He that eateth of my flesh and drinketh of my blood shall live."

And we saw last week that Jesus is the light of the world. Not that he glows in the dark, but he is the light of the world in a spiritual sense. In him is all truth. All knowledge is in him whether it is earthly and scientific knowledge or spiritual knowledge. If you want to have a proper philosophy of life, then it is wise to seek counsel from Jesus. If you want to know about future things, then look to Jesus. If you want to know how a man can be saved, then it is imperative to get your information from Jesus because Jesus is the light of the world. Now a man can seek answers to all of these questions from other sources, and he might find some bits of truth here and there. But he would be better served to find ultimate answers from Jesus because Jesus is the light of the world.

And Jesus is described in many ways in the Scriptures. He is the alpha and omega, the first and the last. He is our counselor. He is our savior. He is the mighty God. He is wonderful. He is the temple. On and on we could go trying to describe Jesus Christ. In the gospel of John we have seen that he is the bread of life and the light of the world. And this morning we will see Jesus described in another very beautiful way. We will consider this morning that Jesus is our Shepherd.

I don't know if there is a more beautiful way to describe our Savior than to describe him in terms of being our Shepherd. He is our beloved and beautiful Shepherd. He is the one who we depend on daily to lead us in and out to pasture. He is the one who stands watch over our souls day and night in case the wolves would come in and tear us apart. It is his voice that we know and none other. When he speaks, oh how we love to hear his voice. It is a beautiful voice indeed. It is the voice of someone who loves us. It is a voice which delights us. It is the voice as sweet as a father and a mother and a lover. But it is also a faithful voice. It is the voice of someone whose yea is yea and whose nay is nay. It is a voice that we can count on. And it is a voice of authority. It is a

voice that commands what we should do and what we should say and how we should conduct our lives. It is a voice which directs our path in the way of righteousness. His is a voice that brings great comfort. When we hear his voice we know we are safe for the Shepherd is here with us!

This morning we come to John chapter ten. And in this passage we find that Jesus is speaking to the Jewish leadership. He is speaking to the Jews who have taken up stones to kill him.

Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple . . .

John 8:59

He is speaking to the Jews who have called him a liar. (8:13) He is speaking to those who are calling him a Sabbath breaker and a blasphemer. He is speaking to a group of Jews who have witnessed the miracle of the healing of the blind man and yet they will not acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ. He is speaking to the group of Jews who have harshly cast the healed man out of the synagogue. ((9:34) In short, he is speaking to the reprobate of Israel. He is speaking to those who are not called into the kingdom; those whose eyes are not opened; those who are not elect of God from the foundation of the world. He is speaking to those whose father is the devil. (8:44) He is speaking to the unbelieving scribes and Pharisees. He is speaking to the portion of the Jewish nation who have already determined that he is not the Son of God. They have already had their secret meetings and they have decided that Jesus is not the Christ; that he is not the Savior of the world; that he should be killed as soon as possible. He is speaking to those Jews who are accusing him of blasphemy because he claimed to be God. He is talking to those Jews who are accusing him of violating the Sabbath by doing good works of healing on that day. In short, he is talking to the reprobates within the Jewish nation.

Now you might say, "I thought the Jews were God's chosen people." Yes, the nation was chosen for certain purposes. But the indisputable truth is that there were only some within Israel who were chosen unto salvation. Isaac was, Ishmael wasn't. Jacob was, Esau wasn't. A million Israelites came out of Egypt with hopes of the Promised Land. But all of them except two died in the wilderness in unbelief. They were chosen as an earthly nation, with an earthly purpose, to be the nation through whom the Savior of the world would come, but many were not chosen unto salvation.

And in our text Jesus is speaking to some of those Jews who were never chosen unto salvation. He is speaking to reprobates; those who were not chosen unto salvation but were passed over. And this is the setting of chapter ten.

Jesus spoke much the same way in chapter six where he told them, “No man can come to me except the Father draw him.” (John 6:44) And again,

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me. And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37)

In other words, “Those of you who have stones in your hands, those of you who have determined to kill me, those of you who do not believe, there is a reason behind your unbelief. There is an explanation behind your hateful dispositions. And that reason is that you are not given to me by the Father! There is a reason why you have stones in your hands. The Father has not chosen you.

And this was infuriating to the Jews. They thought they were chosen. They thought they were the chosen race. They thought, of all nations, they were entitled to heaven and salvation. They thought they were Abraham’s children.

“No,” says Jesus.” You have stones in your hands because you are not chosen!”

And now when we come to chapter ten Jesus will tell them again. “You have stones in your hands because you are not my sheep.”

But ye believe not, because ye are not my sheep, as I said unto you.

John 10:26

Now they had stones in their hands because they were wicked. Their heart was far from God. They were children of Adam. They were born with treacherous hearts. The Bible says they were conceived in iniquity. Wickedness was ingrained in them. They were liars and adulterers by nature. And this certainly is the reason why they picked up stones to cast at Jesus.

But Jesus takes a slightly different perspective on things and he says,

But ye believe not, because ye are not my sheep, as I said unto you.

John 10:26

In other words, there is only one group of people who will acknowledge him as the Christ and that is the sheep. All others will ultimately reject and despise him.

Now one thing is clear from our text. And that is, Jesus has some sheep. But, these Jews were not them. There are sheep in the world, but they do not all come from Israel. Some sheep come from Israel, but some come from another sheep pen. And Jesus is the Shepherd of all those sheep and he has come to find his sheep and to save them.

You see, God the Father has given his Son some sheep.

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me . . .

John 6:37

And the Son has come to seek and to save and to keep those whom the Father has given him. It is the great earthly mission of Jesus to save blessed group of sheep who have been entrusted into his care. It is his greatest mission. It is the reason for his incarnation. It is the only reason for his incarnation. It was not necessary for Jesus to become a man to judge sinners. But it was necessary for Jesus to become a man to save his sheep. And Jesus has come to this world to find them and to save them and to keep them in his protective hands forever.

Now our text for this morning describes Jesus in two different ways. First he is described as the Shepherd of the sheep in verses one through six. Then, he is described as the door of the sheep pen. (7-10) And we will consider first that he is the Shepherd of the Sheep.

Jesus is the Shepherd of the Sheep (vs.1-6)

Read verses 1-6.

In this first illustration, we find that Jesus is the only authorized Shepherd of the sheep. There are others who claim to be the Shepherd, but they are all unauthorized. There is only one who has absolute and final authority over the sheep and that is Jesus.

We see first a description of those who are not the Shepherd, but who are unauthorized to attend to the sheep.

Read verse 1.

You will notice first that these fakes enter the sheep pen by some way other than the gate. They may dig under the fence or they may climb over it. In the illustration it appears that they climb “up” by some other way. But the point is that they do not come through the gate.

Example: If someone comes into your house to steal your goods, he usually does not enter by the front door. The front door is for authorized users only. But he comes in through the window or by some back way because he is not authorized to come in.

And so it is with false Shepherds. They do not use the gate because they are not authorized to lead the sheep.

Those who would seek to lead the sheep astray have no authority over the sheep. They gain access to the sheep by false pretenses. They come in pretending to be the Shepherd, but they are not the Shepherd. They may come in preaching a form of

the truth, but in the end it is not the truth. They come in at first with flattering words and then we find that they are destructive words. And these are not the true Shepherd.

It is interesting that these pseudo Shepherds are called thieves and robbers. It is because they ultimately have designs to do harm to the sheep. They are not interested in the sheep. They are interested in personal gain. And so, they are thieves and robbers.

Perhaps, in the immediate context, the thieves and robbers are the Jewish leaders who have led the people astray. In particular and primarily, Jesus is referring to the scribes and Pharisees to whom he is speaking. These blind guides have climbed the walls of the Jewish sheep pen and they have entered the sheep pen and they are seeking to lead the sheep astray and to scatter them.

Now we have seen that these scribes and Pharisees are reprobates. They are not given by the Father to Christ. They are not the sheep. But they perceive themselves to be shepherds of the sheep. They are seeking to lead the sheep down the road of the law and down the road of tradition. And they are false shepherds. And they enter the sheep pen not by the gate of grace but by another way, by the dictates of the Law. They do not come in by the terms of the New Covenant, but they cling to that Old Covenant which was ready to pass away. And by doing so, they prove that they have no authority over the sheep whatsoever.

But look, there is an authorized Shepherd! (v.2) And his name is Jesus. (v.11) And you will notice that the true Shepherd enters by the door. He is not afraid to come in by the front door because he is authorized to come in. You will notice in the figure, that when Jesus comes to the door, the porter lets him right in! Why so? It is because the sheep are given unto him. They are his. The sheep belong to him and so he is authorized to come right in.

And notice that when he comes in the door, the sheep hear his voice. (v.3) As soon as Jesus speaks, the sheep hear him and there is excitement in the air because the Shepherd has come to tend to his sheep. And when he speaks, there is a rumbling among the sheep because they hear his voice. And they are overjoyed because the Shepherd is here!

Ah, but the Shepherd does more than just speak. He calls the sheep by name. (v.3) Each sheep has a name; not just a number; not just a brand; but a name! And when Jesus comes into the sheep pen, he begins to call each one by name. John and Susie and Billy and Betty; Jack and Bernice and Dana; Joe and Marie; Jeannine and Marian and on and on. Jesus knows each one by name. And of course this is a family kind of knowing. It is not a mere knowledge, for Jesus knows all men in this way. But it is a loving knowledge. It is a possessive knowledge.

How is it that Jesus knows each one of his sheep in this way? It is because they have been given to him by the Father. Each one is a precious gift from the Father to the Son and Jesus knows each one. He is eternally interested in each sheep. He has promised never to lose one of his sheep. And so, he calls them all by name.

But now, I want you to see that the Shepherd, that is, Jesus, has work to do on behalf of the sheep. You will notice that he leads his own sheep out of the pen. In this particular illustration, there are many sheep in the pen, but Jesus comes and leads his own sheep out.

There were many people in the sheep pen of Israel. But Jesus came and led his own sheep out. Jesus came to the nation and he lifted up his voice. And when he spoke, his own sheep heard his voice and he led his own sheep out of spiritual darkness.

Example of sheep being sheared: I am told that in sheep country, the shepherds often take their sheep to the shearers to be shorn. And the shearers come at a certain time of the year and all the shepherds bring their sheep. And all the sheep from the various shepherds are mingled together and they all go through the trailer to be shorn. And when they are shorn they are all kept in a large sheep pen. And you would think that these sheep would never be sorted out. But amazingly, each shepherd would call for his sheep and only his own sheep would come to him. And he would lead them out of the common pen and back home. Each sheep knows the voice of his own shepherd.

And so it is that Jesus came to the nation of Israel and he called out his own sheep from among the common group and Jesus led them out of the common sheep pen which was Israel and Judaism. He led them out of the darkness into light. He led them out of the old covenant and into the new. He led them out of Judaism into Christianity. He led them out of works and into grace! And he led them out of that old sheep pen which had held them for so long. But he only led his own sheep out. (v.3)

But after he led them out of that old sheep pen, he didn't abandon them. He led them on to a new destination. And it says that they followed him.

And this is the way it is with his sheep. After he leads them out of darkness into light, they then follow him wherever he goes. And he leads them on. This is the nature of sheep. Wherever the Shepherd goes, they follow him. And Jesus forevermore leads his sheep.

David wrote a famous Psalm using this same illustration of the Shepherd leading his sheep.

Read Psalm 23.

The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. (provision)

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. (There is plenty to eat and there is a comfortable bed)

He leadeth me beside still waters. (Peacefulness and thirst quenching)

I will fear no evil. (Confidence and protection)

Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. (Discipline and protection)

Thou prepares a table before *me in the presence of mine enemies.* (provision and victory)

Thou anointest mine head. (soothe my wounds)

My cup runneth over. (Extreme and ultimate joy)

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. (Grace during this life)

I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. (Eternal safety in the next life)

Jesus in the door of the sheep

In the first figure, Jesus was the Shepherd. But in this figure, Jesus is the door of the sheep pen. You might remember that in the first illustration, there was a large, common sheep pen and in this pen there were many sheep and some of the sheep did not belong to Jesus and some of them were his. And Jesus came to that sheep pen and called out for his own sheep. And he led them out of that pen.

Now in this second illustration, there is another sheep pen. But you will notice that in this illustration, Jesus is ushering his sheep into this pen. Whereas in the first illustration he was taking them out of the pen, now he is leading his sheep into a pen.

I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

John 10:9

1. There is one way to be saved and that way is by Jesus Christ. No other way will do. The way of religion will not do. The way of works will not do. The way of Muhammad will not do. The way of Bhuddah will not do. But the way of Christ will do.

Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me.”

There is only one true Shepherd and that shepherd is Christ.

2. There is only one group of people who will hear him when he calls and those are his sheep. You see, God disposes his own sheep to hear the voice of the Shepherd. He gives them ears and they hear. We call this regeneration. God does a miraculous work in the hearts of the sheep and when the Shepherd appears, they hear him and they rejoice to hear him and they follow him.

3. There is a mutual love between Jesus and his sheep. (v.14)

This is the nature of Christ’s kingdom. It is a kingdom of mutual love. He loves his sheep and they love him.

4. Jesus calls his sheep from two folds.

We have seen that Jesus first came to the Jewish sheep pen and he called out his own sheep from the nation of Israel. But we also see from our text that Jesus has sheep in another sheep fold. (v.16) This is the Gentile fold. And Jesus also calls his sheep from the Gentiles and his own sheep from the Gentile fold hear his voice and follow him.

5. Jesus puts all of his sheep (Jewish and Gentile) into one fold. (v.16)

There is neither Jew nor Greek.

The wall of partition is broken down.

And all of God’s own sheep shall be gathered into one sheep pen and they shall be with the true Shepherd forever.

6. The great Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (v. 15)