

The Good Shepherd: Sheep need a shepherd because they are helpless on their own. Prone to wander, susceptible to predators, and helpless. Christ addresses the spiritually blind in John 10 by drawing from an image as old as the psalms, and one very familiar to a group in Israel used to flocks and shepherds. Christ represents himself as a good shepherd, different from the rest, with authority as well as sacrificial love. Today, as we read Christ's address to the sheep, do not miss the things he wants to offer them and the doors he wants to open.

Prepare Your Heart: I encourage you to read and pray through Psalm 23. Take a moment to underline each action verb. Circle the ways or actions of the shepherd that mean the most to you. Thank God for this care and kindness.

*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell
in the house of the LORD forever.*

John 10:1-6 ¹“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ²But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

- 1) Verse one gives an illustration of a “thief” or “robber.” Are there other things in your life right now that are distracting you from the Lord, or robbing you of your time with him?

- 2) Verse three says, “the sheep hear his voice.” How does this relate to John 8:47? What do the people hear? Who follows?

- 3) In this illustration, the sheep follow the shepherd because they know him. What does it mean to know God? How can we recognize God’s voice over a stranger’s?

John 10:7-21 ⁷So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may 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 I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

¹⁹There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰Many of them said, “He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?” ²¹Others said, “These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

- 4) This week, we discussed the “I Am” statements of Jesus, and its significance to the Jews (Exodus 3, Yahweh, etc.). Look again at verses 7-21. Underline the “I Am” statements. Why would these claims have been so radical?

- 5) What does Jesus mean when he says he is “the door?” (You may want to look ahead to John 14:6).

6) What does the thief come to do, and who is the thief? Think of the answers you gave for question one. Does your perspective of them become more serious when you read verse 10?

7) Jesus said that he came not only so that we may live, but that we might live life “abundantly.” What does “an abundant life” mean? Look at the definition below, and circle the definitions you think apply in this passage:

a·bun·dance /ə' bændəns/

- the state or condition of having a copious quantity of something; plentifulness.
- plentifulness of the good things of life; prosperity.
- Wealth, affluence

In your own words, what does the “abundant life” mean? What does it look like?

8) Look at verses 11-15. What is the difference between the hired hand and the good Shepherd? What are the different words that could replace “good” in the name “good shepherd”?

9) What action does Christ repeat that the good shepherd will do? Why is it repeated?

10) Read verse 16. Who are the other sheep? What does it mean to be “one flock”?

11) What does it mean that Christ will lay down his life and “take it up again?” What gives him the power to do it?

12) Go back and read John 5:19-27 again. What similarities does that passage have with this one about the “good shepherd?”

13) When the time for the cross comes, we will see that Christ is arrested, beaten, tortured, and killed. But here, we read: *“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.”* What does it mean to you today that Christ willingly lays his life down for you?

Reflect:

14) Paul Tripp writes: “It’s important to realize that you can search for life in only two places. Either you have found life to the fullest vertically, or you are shopping for it horizontally. This is a major piece of what Paul is writing about in Romans 1:25 when he says: ‘They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.’ What is that lie? It was the lie that was first told in the garden of Eden - the false promise that life, heart-satisfying life, could be found somewhere outside the Creator. It is the lie of lies, the cruelest lie ever told.”

- a. What “lie” are you believing now about what will give you life? What “thief” is robbing you?
- b. How is God calling you to live an abundant life today?

15) Who is a friend or relative that you could pray for today, that they might walk through the door? (verse 9)

16) Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and cares for his sheep. Psalm 23 says we don’t have to want for anything. In what ways has God been caring for you, even during this trying time?

17) Finish the statement: Knowing that God is _____ shows me that I am _____. Explain.

I encourage you to end your time praying through Psalm 23 again, or by using these songs that draw from that psalm to praise Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

“Good to Me” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKosVfAEUPE>

“The House of God Forever” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtDXHgTi-5s>