

JESUS, OUR SHEPHERD

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25 June 2023

Key verses: John 10:1-30

Introduction

Let us remember the purpose of John's gospel:

John 20:30-31 NKJV

30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Everything that the apostle John wrote was to bring people to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ... that you may believe, and have life in His name. This is not a dead religion, but a living relationship with Jesus. Today we will be looking at John 10:1-30.

John 10:1-16 NKJV

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. 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." 6 Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

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. 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.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. 12 But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. 13 The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. 15 As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

There are many layers to this passage; it is profoundly deep and relevant.

Firstly, let's look at who Jesus was addressing here. In the previous chapter, we read about the miraculous healing of a man who was born blind. Everyone rejoiced at this miracle, except the religious leaders. They cared nothing for the man who could see for the first time in his life; all they were interested in was keeping their laws.

In John 9:16 some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." (Note, it wasn't all of the Pharisees as some believed in Him.)

But this group of Pharisees, who, even in the face of physical evidence, REFUSED to believe.

In John 5, Jesus gave them four evidences or witnesses of His deity: John the Baptist, the works He did, the Father and the Scriptures which testified of Him. He regularly engaged them with the truth. They were not ignorant, but stubborn, hard-hearted, and unrepentant.

John 5:39-40 NKJV

39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

Perhaps they could not believe that someone with such a lowly status as Jesus could be their Messiah? If He had come as royalty, with resources and worldly renown, with pomp and political power, perhaps then they would have received Him? Or if He had followed all their manmade traditions. **But He did not. He came into this world as a lowly carpenter's son, born in a stable.** His followers were not the best of the best students. And yet, He made the blind see, physically and spiritually!

Let's get back to our Scripture.

Jesus made two statements here that directly confront these religious leaders who are opposing Him.

I am the door of the sheep (v7)

I am the good shepherd (v14)

These are two of the seven "I am" statements in John's gospel that show Jesus' unique, divine identity and purpose.

1. Jesus used these illustrations to contrast Himself with the religious leaders.

About being the door, He said:

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.

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. 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.

In effect, Jesus is saying that He is the only way to eternal life. He calls the religious leaders thieves and robbers, not true shepherds. These thieves come to steal, kill and destroy, not give life. Religion and ritual without Jesus steals, kills and destroys lives.

About being the good shepherd, He said:

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. 12 But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. 13 The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

Here Jesus compares the religious leaders to a "hireling" or "hired hand" who doesn't really care about the sheep. The hireling is contrasted with the true or faithful shepherd who willingly

gives up his life for the sheep. He who is a “hireling” works for wages, which are his main consideration. His concern is not for the sheep but for himself.

The shepherds of ancient times were not usually the owners of the flock. Nevertheless, they were expected to exercise the same care and concern the owners would. This was characteristic of a true shepherd. However, some of the hirelings thought only of themselves. As a result, when a wolf appeared, which was the most common threat to sheep in that day, the hireling abandoned the flock and fled, leaving the sheep to be scattered or killed.

In referring to the Good shepherd, Jesus was pointing back to a prophecy about Him in Ezekiel 34 which these religious scholars would have been familiar with. Here God rebuked and warned those who were leading Israel, who should have been shepherds, but were feeding themselves at the expense of the people. They were corrupt, looking after their own interests, consuming for themselves what should have been used for the welfare of the people.

Ezekiel 34

*1 And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 2 “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: **“Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. 4 The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. 6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.”***

God judged the shepherds:

8 ... because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock”

God said He is the True Shepherd of His people:

*11 **“For thus says the Lord God: “Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. ... 15 I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord God. 16 “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them **in judgment.**”***

... 23 I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.

*31“You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are men, and I am **your God,**” says the Lord God.*

2. Jesus was declaring that He is the Saviour (*John’s purpose for writing this*)

John 10:9 NKJV I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

John 14:6 NKJV Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 10:11 NKJV "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

Because of His love for us, He willingly laid down His life for us, becoming a ransom for sin. So we can receive forgiveness and the gift of righteousness and be reconciled to the Father.

John 10:17-18 NKJV

17 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

Back to the Scriptures...

John 10:22-30 NKJV

22 Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. 23 And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. 24 Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

Solomon's porch was a roofed outdoor hallway lined with columns, on the east side of the temple. The walkway itself was elevated from the surrounding land, and partly walled in. The way they surrounded Him, suggests a siege. They were 'cornering' Him to interrogate Him. It was a hostile situation, which later escalated to them wanting to stone Him. They wanted to seize Him but He escaped out of their hands.

25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. 26 But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. 30 I and My Father are one."

When I read this, I just hear Jesus' love for us, His sheep!

He's showing us what eternal life is all about; an intimate relationship with the Father and Jesus.

John 17:3 NKJV And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

It's about being with Jesus by His Spirit, listening to Him and following (obeying) Him. **That's Christianity, not** any rituals and adherences **we've created** that are ticking the boxes / going through the motions, but void of the life of Christ.

Example: My son John's voice

He wants to hear our voice and see our face, in the secret place (cleft of the rock)

Song of Solomon 2:14 NKJV

*"O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
In the secret places of the cliff,
Let me see your face,
Let me hear your voice;
For your voice is sweet,
And your face is lovely."*

My testimony:

For years I was saved, but didn't have an intimate relationship with Jesus. I knew how to be a Christian, how to pray, to do evangelism, etc. but I was missing something very important. I still knew God but my relationship with Him was not one of intimacy and oneness. I didn't regularly hear His voice and experience His closeness like I do now.

The difference came when I started to spend a lot of time with Him, seeking Him and learning from Him. In that time I learned to recognise **His voice. I'm still growing in it, but loving my relationship with Him!** I love spending time with Jesus and am in love with Him!!!

He is my FIRST LOVE.

He is my Source of Life. It is a joy to serve Him, even when it's hard. He's my Shepherd.

To better understand the role of a shepherd, it will help to understand some things about sheep. Throughout the Bible, God refers to His people as His sheep or flock.

Interesting facts about sheep:

1. Sheep have no sense of direction

They will follow whoever is leading them. Even if it leads them off a cliff.

Real story: In Eastern Turkey, about 1500 unattended sheep fell off a cliff while the shepherds were eating breakfast far away from the flock.

The first 400 fell to their death in a ravine, but the remaining 1100 were saved because the first 400 broke the fall. The first 400 sheep were a big, fluffy cushion for the other sheep. *It sounds like a good commercial for toilet paper, huh?*

Apparently, this is what happened: The sheep in the back couldn't see past the sheep in front, so they were unaware of what was ahead. The sheep in front couldn't stop because the sheep in the back were pushing them forward.

2. Sheep are defenceless

Sheep cannot defend themselves very well.

They have 2 means of defence:

1. When they are frightened by noise such as running water, they will run away together. They have some kind of protection as a whole group whereas, individually, they are defenceless.
2. Sheep kick. A ewe is especially prone to kicking if she is protecting her young.

3. Sheep can't get up without help

If a sheep is turned over on its back it cannot get back on its feet. It needs the shepherd to lift it up and put it back on its feet, or it will die.

4. Sheep are emotional and recognize the **Shepherd's voice**

This is the sheep's saving grace, their one hope! They have a remarkable instinct for knowing the voice of their shepherd. Because they are emotional animals, they can detect strangers. **Amazingly, they will fear a stranger's voice and flee.**

Since they are emotional, they have the capacity for loyalty and friendship with other sheep. They can also get anxious or distressed very easily. And they feel sad when fellow sheep die.

5. Sheep are not meant to carry burdens

Unlike some other animals sheep are not built to carry heavy loads on their backs; it would crush them.

We were not meant to carry our burdens. In fact, we are to give Him our heavy load so He can **carry it for us. [and help carry one another's burdens]**

"Cast your burdens on the Lord, and He will sustain you" (Psalm 55:22).

6. Sheep will settle for less

When sheep are thirsty, they will stop at a dirty puddle right in front of them instead of going for the clean, still waters twenty feet ahead of them.

7. Sheep are valuable

Sheep were treated as a prized possession in Jesus' day. **You were counted as a wealthy man if you owned large flocks** because they provided meat, milk, and wool. And they produced offspring.

We are so valuable to Jesus, that He made the ultimate sacrifice for us so we would live with Him forever.

8. Sheep cannot care for themselves when wounded

When sheep get a wound or a bite, they can't care for themselves. Other animals lick a wound until it heals, but not sheep. They need a shepherd to tend to their injuries.

Many times there would be a salve that needed to be put on their leg and possibly binding of the wounds. A good shepherd would look after the wound constantly until it was healed completely.

"He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds" (Psalms 147:3).

9. Sheep are innocent

In Christianity, sheep symbolize gentleness, purity, and innocence. It was the lamb that was sacrificed at Passover because it represented the Lamb of God—flawless, pure, and holy. **It wasn't a goat or any other animal.**

We are to be innocent as lambs, pure and righteous, following our Shepherd. Not goats who are independent, strong-willed, and destructive.

Besides the inherent weaknesses of sheep, there were also environmental dangers and predators. Without a shepherd, they would hardly survive, just like us.

That is why Jesus was moved with compassion for the crowds when He saw them.

Matthew 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

That's when he told his disciples to pray to the Father to send out labourers into the harvest. There are so many lost and broken people in the world, who are harassed and helpless against the effects of sin, the world and the enemy. The need Jesus, our Shepherd! To save them.

The Shepherd: He watches over us, provides for us, brings us to a place of rest, heals, restores, guides, protects and comforts us.

He has given us His presence, power and promises.

The Shepherd's voice:

- Powerful: It's singular, direct, and authoritative. It's the same voice that stills the waves, silences the demons, raises the dead, and forgives sins.
- Personal: **it's intensely personal.** "He calls His own sheep by name, one by one."
- Pleasant: His voice comforts, soothes, guides, encourages and gives hope.

The voice of religion condemns and is cruel, hard and harsh.

Conclusion

God wants to shepherd His flock:

- He wants to be our Shepherd, to have an intimate relationship with us where we hear His voice and He leads us and we follow Him, where we know His care and love for us and where we come and find safety and rest. **He wants us to know for ourselves, "You are Mine and I am yours."**
- He gives us "under-shepherds" – elders, pastors and leaders who look after us.
- He requires us to shepherd those around us because the Good Shepherd lives in us.
Prodigal: older brother- should have gone out to find his brother and bring him back. May we feel His heart of compassion for those who are lost and go get them and bring them to Jesus and the Father. May we take our responsibility seriously.
Jesus is interested in the "one". Leave the 99 to find the 1.

Our response:

From its inception, the Feast of Dedication was a time and season for rededication to God.

If:-

1. **You don't know Jesus like I've spoken about today: He's not your Saviour**
2. Jesus is no longer your first love
3. You feel stirred to reach out to those who are lost

Let's respond to Him today; He sees our responses to Him.

Rededicate ourselves to Jesus as our First Love and to His purpose for our lives.