

John 10:1-21 – The Good Shepherd

Intro:

- Many people are turned off to the Christian faith and/or participation in church by people in the church who they perceive as greedy, hypocritical, or evil.
 - o Sometimes this perception is faulty as they are reacting sinfully to a disagreement or to a teaching of Scripture that made them feel convicted (a “shoot the messenger” approach).
 - o All too often, the cause of offense truly is someone who claims to be a Christian but whose life is characterized by sinful actions & attitudes.
 - This is especially damaging when it comes from someone in a position of spiritual leadership or authority.
 - In chapter 9 we met a man who was belittled, insulted, condemned, & excommunicated by religious leaders (see verses 28-34).
 - These religious leaders claimed to know God, but by their words, actions, and attitudes they showed themselves to be spiritually blind.
- Rather than becoming bitter and rejecting anything having to do with God, this man comes to saving faith in Jesus Christ.
 - o As Jesus continues to teach in chapter 10, he is going to contrast himself with spiritual leaders (like these Pharisees) who are dangerous and up to no good.
 - o If you are hearing this this morning and have been hurt by ungodly spiritual leaders, I urge you to not let their sin turn you away from Jesus...they do not represent him.
 - o (1-2) Jesus describes such spiritual leaders as people who are as shady as someone climbing over the sheep pen wall instead of going in through the gate.
 - Jesus is going to use a series of sheep & shepherd-related illustrations to teach about himself and our relationship with him.
 - In contrast to the actions of thieves & robbers masquerading as shepherds, Jesus is the good shepherd.
 - Note: All the pictures of shepherds in today’s slideshow are from Israel (from the last 100 years, but some aspects of shepherding remain unchanged).

(2-6) Jesus Calls His Sheep

- (2-4) The picture: a sheep pen that holds sheep belonging to several different people.
 - o The hired watchman recognizes the shepherd and lets him in.
 - o He calls the sheep that belong to him; they recognize his voice and follow him.
 - o For a shepherd in Israel, sheep are not herded by dogs or driven like cattle but willingly follow only the one they recognize as their caretaker.

- The point: those who belong to Jesus respond to his call and follow him.
 - The people who respond in faith to Jesus (like the man he healed in chapter 9) show that they belong to his flock.
 - They are drawn out of their old way of life, like the sheep following their shepherd out of the big holding pen.
 - For this man (and many of the original followers of Jesus) it meant being set apart from Jewish society in general as they are called by Jesus the Messiah.
 - The response to this calling is a work of God: In John 6:37-40...44 Jesus promised that he will save those who belong to him because the Father will draw them to him.

- This should be comforting.
 - It is comforting to know that if you have trusted in Jesus as your Savior, that means God has always been working in your life for your good & his glory (Romans 8:28-30).
 - Even before you responded to his call, he was working in your life.
 - The course of your life has not been dictated by random chance but by the will of Almighty God who loves you and gave himself for you.
 - This call is more than a general offer of salvation and God happens to know who will respond.
 - He has drawn you into a personal relationship: he knows you by name.
 - He even has a special personal name just for you that will be part of the blessings and glory of living in his eternal kingdom (Revelation 2:17b).
 - It is comforting because it relieves us of shouldering responsibility that belongs to God alone.
 - When it comes to our Christian witness, it is not our responsibility to argue or badger people into being saved...only God can change hearts.
 - Our responsibility is to share the Gospel (Romans 10:9-11), because that is part of how God draws people to himself (Romans 10:13-15).
 - At the right time God will use it to draw his own to himself as he works in their heart (see Acts 13:48 & 16:14).
 - If you are hearing this today and have never trusted Jesus as your savior, I urge you to accept this invitation to forgiveness of sins and a new life.
 - You are not hearing this by accident.
 - Perhaps even now God is drawing you to faith in Jesus. Listen to the shepherd's voice.
 - Unfortunately, there are many other voices calling to us.

- (5) Those who belong to Jesus reject any competing claims that offer spiritual enlightenment, moral guidance, the good things in life, or the perfect society.
 - Like sheep who follow only their shepherd's voice, our absolute loyalty belongs to Jesus alone.

- Any time you find yourself giving any other person, organization, or ideology unquestioning allegiance that should set off alarms in your mind.
 - E.g. Beware of automatically accepting, supporting, justifying, and defending something just because it came out of your favorite political party.
 - E.g. Beware of adopting a belief or action purely because you think it would benefit the US or whatever other national, ethnic, or economic group you identify with.
- Beware of any preacher, teacher, pundit, or celebrity who offers spiritual or moral guidance for life that does not point you to Jesus and align with his Word.
 - That is not someone you should be allowing influence in your life.
 - Those who follow Jesus must not follow those who do not walk in his footsteps.
- (6) There will be people who don't understand or accept this, like the religious leaders Jesus is speaking to in this passage.
 - Unquestioningly following Jesus and his Word may get you labeled naïve, foolish, narrow-minded, hateful, etc.
 - *Sheep* or *sheeple* (sheep + people) is generally considered an insult, implying a person who unquestioningly follows someone else's lead.
 - As long as that "someone else" is Jesus, I will gladly accept that insult as a compliment.

(7-10) Jesus Is the Door for His Sheep

- The picture: When caring for his individual flock, the shepherd guarded the entryway to the pen (often by sleeping in front of it). He controlled who was in and who was out.
 - He was the one who let in only the sheep who were part of his flock.
 - He took care of them while keeping out all others that might try to harm them.
 - He led them to places where they could find plenty of food and be healthy & content.
- The point: Jesus is the only way to be part of God's family & live the full life that we were created to live (cf. John 1:11-13, 14:6).
- Anyone else claiming to offer a different way to "the good life" or "the ideal society" is a thief and a killer.
 - Thief: they try to steal God's glory (and often get rich off their followers).
 - Killer: their path ultimately leads to eternal death rather than eternal life. Even if they are sincere, they are sincerely & destructively wrong (cf. Proverbs 14:12).
 - Lying, deadly paths can take a variety of forms.
 - Other paths to salvation/heaven/a blessed afterlife.
 - Belief in reincarnation

- Rituals/sacraments
 - Church attendance/membership
 - Just trying really hard to do more good than bad.
- Other means of pursuing inner peace, protection, spiritual guidance, or enlightenment
 - Transcendental meditation
 - Mind-altering drugs
 - Fortunetelling (tarot, astrology, palm reading...)
 - Good luck charms
 - Protective crystals
 - Talking to spirits (seances, Ouija boards, channeling...)
- A worldview that rejects the eternal: The only focus is on the here and now.
 - Perhaps pursuing hedonistic pleasure (if it feels good, do it).
 - Perhaps focusing exclusively on social causes & political activism with no concern for what comes after this life on earth.
- We who belong to Jesus must not try to “supplement” our spirituality with the ways of those whom Jesus describes as *thieves & robbers* who come to *kill & destroy*.
 - Remember (v.5), the sheep will **never** follow anyone but the shepherd (phrased in the strongest possible negation).
 - People who do not themselves follow the good shepherd are not equipped to help you follow him.
- Only in Jesus can we have the full life that God wants us to have.
 - We won’t necessarily have “the good life” by the world’s definition (in spite of what you hear from prosperity gospel preachers) – We have something better.
 - In this world we have:
 - Our Heavenly Father who loves us and works all things for our good
 - Peace & joy no matter what is going on
 - The indwelling Holy Spirit who gives us comfort, understanding of God’s Word, and the ability to do what is truly pleasing to God.
 - An assurance of the world to come (cf. John 6:40).
 - In the world to come “life to the full” is experienced in all its glory. We have (paraphrasing Randy Alcorn):
 - Perfect resurrected bodies...
 - ...to live in a perfect resurrected/remade universe...
 - ...in the very presence of our resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...
 - ...for eternity with no pain, sorrow, sickness, death, or any of the other things that sin brought in the world.
 - In the third shepherd illustration, Jesus tells us how he provides this for us.

(11-18) Jesus Dies for His Sheep...and Returns to Life

- (11-13) The picture: A good shepherd willingly risks his life for his sheep.
 - He stands his ground and protects them in life-threatening situations, even if he is armed with just a stick, a sling, and some rocks.
 - This is in contrast to someone who is in it primarily for personal gain and abandons the sheep if things get too difficult or dangerous.

- (14-18) The point: Jesus truly cares for those who belong to him.
 - His ministry is not about gaining power, prestige, and wealth.
 - Power and prestige are what the Pharisees were all about.
 - There have always been spiritual leaders who use the ministry as a means of personal enrichment (extreme examples: \$65M jet & \$10M mansion).
 - Should the finances, fame, or adoration of the masses dry up, these kinds of leaders usually leave behind hurting, disillusioned people.
 - (14-16) As the Good Shepherd, Jesus has a personal relationship with his sheep and with his Father.
 - He came to bring those who belong to him into the loving relationship that has always existed between God the Father and God the Son.
 - That includes not just the Jewish nation who had been waiting for a Savior for centuries, but other sheep as well: the Gentiles (including us!).
 - (17-18) He didn't just risk his life for us, he willingly gave it up.
 - This is part of the loving relationship between the Father and the Son: the plan to save fallen humanity through the Son's willing self-sacrifice.
 - When wicked men killed Jesus, it was not a cosmic accident that God made good use of, but the fulfillment of God's sovereign plan as he turns even the worst sin of mankind to his glorious purpose (Acts 4:27-28, 2:22-24).
 - Jesus makes it clear that, unlike a merely human shepherd who dies defending his sheep, he will not stay dead.
 - By his own authority/power and the will of the Father he will return to life.
 - He will break the power of death over all who trust in him.
 - Proof of this authority and power is coming in the next chapter.

(19-21) Conclusion: The Crowd Is Divided

- As before, some claim Jesus is demon possessed and insane; these are the ones who do not recognize the voice of the shepherd.

- Some are interested.
 - What Jesus is saying doesn't sound like the rantings of a madman, and he seems to have tremendous power from God.
 - They have not necessarily taken the step of following the shepherd yet (like the blind man Jesus healed in chapter 9), but they are thinking about it.

- As John leaves the question hanging, it invites us to ask “What about me?”
 - What do I believe about Jesus?
 - Regardless of other religious people out there who I find offensive, hypocritical, and gross, what about Jesus and the claims and promises he has made? Do I trust him?

Applications

- Trust Jesus to forgive your sins and transform your life.
 - He is the door of the sheep: the only way to a right relationship with God.
 - He died for our sins, like a shepherd defending his sheep to the death...willingly giving himself in our place.
 - He returned to life, defeating death on our behalf.
- Follow Jesus, not the spiritual and moral guides he would describe as thieves & killers.
 - Do not let wicked shepherds turn you away from the Good Shepherd.
 - Do not become disillusioned by looking at them instead of at Jesus.
 - Do not be fooled into following their teachings and example.
 - Remember, if someone is not a true follower of the Good Shepherd, they are not equipped to help you follow in the steps of the Good Shepherd.
 - Jesus’ sheep follow him and no one else.
- Remind yourself of what it means that Jesus is your Good Shepherd.
 - This is one of those “something you should know and meditate on” rather than “something you should do” applications.
 - Meditate: to think about this truth and all that it implies
 - Good music is one way of bringing Scriptural truths to our mind in a way that is memorable and engages our emotions.
 - I have a bonus song list to help you think through some of the truths in this chapter – some things you should know if you have trusted in Jesus.
 - Know that you have been called by the Good Shepherd and drawn into a relationship with him by your Heavenly Father – *Grace Has Called My Name* (Kathryn Scott).
 - Know that Almighty God knows you by name: *He Knows My Name* (Francesca Battistelli)
 - Know that nothing can change that - more on that aspect of it next week: *I Belong* (Kathryn Scott)
 - Know that the Good Shepherd give life to the full: the life you were created to live: *This Is What I Was Made For* (Rend Collective)
 - Know that he died to do away with your sin *My Sin Is Nailed to the Cross* (Rend Collective)
 - Know that he returned to life, breaking death’s power over you *His Heart Beats* (Andrew Peterson)