

John 10:1-21

Teaching Points

What is the sheepfold? It's the place where the sheep live safely under the care of the shepherd. Throughout these verses in our study, we will see how Jesus employs this imagery to speak of Himself and His sheep. He also describes the enemies of His sheep.

Thieves, Robbers, and Differing Voices

Verses 1-6 contrast the false shepherds with the true shepherd. False shepherds are dangerous—they are thieves and robbers. They have their own best interest in mind, not that of the sheep. You can tell because they don't access the sheepfold through the gate by the doorkeeper. They go in "some other way." But the true shepherd enters by the door, knows his sheep by name, and leads them out to pasture. And the sheep know the voice of the true shepherd.

Discussion Question: What helpful background information do you find for this teaching of Jesus when you read Ezekiel 34:1-10?

Thoughts: God pronounces a "woe" upon false shepherds. Those entrusted with leading and caring for God's people were instead "feeding" themselves on His flock. Verse 10 is clear: God is against them and they will give an account to God for their selfish ambition. Jesus is picking up this imagery in His own day.

Jesus is the Door

In verses 7-10 we find another one of the "I am" statements of Jesus (v.9). Jesus was just speaking about the door of the sheepfold. Now, He says that He is "the door." The purpose of Jesus' coming is to give abundant life (v.10). That is the very opposite of those false shepherds, who are thieves that only come to steal, to kill, and to destroy.

Discussion Questions: In what way is Jesus the door? What happens to those who enter by Him?

Thoughts: The door is access to the sheepfold. Some shepherds would sleep in the gate entrance to protect the sheep. But Jesus says, "I am the gate." He is the very entry way into the people of God. As John 14:6 says, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the only way to the Father. Those who come to Him "will be saved."

Jesus is the Good Shepherd

Here is another reference to the deity of Jesus by way of the "I am" statements in verses 11 and 14. Jesus explicitly refers to Himself a couple of times in verses 11-16 as "the good shepherd."

Throughout this passage, Jesus demonstrates a clear connection between Himself and His sheep. There is nothing “haphazard” about the way He calls His people to Himself. The people of Christ “hear His voice” as He “calls His own sheep by name and leads them out” (v.3). He calls and He leads and they hear and they follow. They “know His voice” (v.4) while rejecting the voice of the “stranger” (v.5). Entrance into the sheepfold by the Good Shepherd brings salvation and safety and peace (v.9). He gives His life for the sheep (v.12). To sum up, He knows His sheep and His sheep know Him (v.14). There’s more...He has other sheep that He “must bring”—they too will hear His voice and there will be one flock with one Shepherd (v.16).

Discussion Questions: Where did Christ get His illustration? Why does He use this shepherd/sheep metaphor?

Thoughts: *See how much Christ consistently identified Himself with Old Testament Scripture. Look again at Ezekiel 34. Read verses 11-16 and 23-24. All the things Yahweh promises to do for His people with His own hand, the Lord Jesus says He Himself will do. He is not leaving it to someone else—the Lord Himself will do the saving and feeding of His people. The “David” spoken of is the Messiah promised in 2 Samuel 7—the One who is David’s Son and David’s Lord. And, throughout this teaching in John 10, you cannot help but to think of the beautiful picture of the Lord as our Shepherd from Psalm 23!*

Discussion Question: How can Jesus be certain that there will be other sheep who will hear His voice and who will come?

Thoughts: Read John 6:39-40. Jesus knows that His Father is giving Him people whom He will redeem and He will raise up on the last day. He is the Lord who fulfills explicit prophetic Scriptures as the Good Shepherd. He is in on the plan. He knows Who He is and He knows exactly what has to be done and He knows who will hear His voice. His heart is set on redeeming His people.

Prayer Focus

Praise God for the Good Shepherd. Find rest for your soul in Him. You are safe in Him. Praise God for that. You have heard the voice of the Good Shepherd and are now at peace in the sheepfold.