

- ***READ John 10:7-11*** While we haven't yet read through the synoptic Gospels at this point in this year's daily Bible reading, you might have noticed as you have been reading through John's Gospel that there is something missing from this account of the Gospel that is very much present in the other three Gospels...parables. One possible reason for this difference is that John's Gospel has a different focus. While the other Gospels focused on teach about Jesus, they also gave a lot of attention towards learning about the kingdom that was coming. This is likely why we have parables from the synoptics that begin with *"the kingdom of heaven is like..."* And then continues with descriptions such as *"a pearl (Matthew 13:45,46), a mustard seed (Matthew 13:31), leaven (Matthew 13:33), or a treasure hidden in the field. (Matthew 13:44)"* We find no such thing in the Gospel of John.
- What we do find however, are allegories given by Jesus to help people understand a truth through a specific illustration. We saw this last week when we discussed Jesus claiming to be the *"bread of life"* and the *"light of the world."* We saw Jesus placing much greater importance on our searching for that which will help us live forever over that which will only leave us hungry again. Jesus claimed that He was that which would help us live forever. We also discovered that through our submitting to Jesus as the light, we could see clearly in this dark world. He is that light that illumines this world.
- In the same way, here in **John 10:1-18**, we see Jesus again sharing an allegory with those who were gathered together at the temple in Jerusalem to help them understand truths through illustration. What was Jesus hoping for the listeners and for us as readers to understand about this world, Himself, and us as people? Let's consider those things this morning as we look deeper into Jesus's claims that He is the door and the good shepherd.

I. We live in a dangerous world full of predators.

A. Jesus mentions two specific dangers to the sheep in verses 1-12.

1. He first mentions that there would be those who come in and try to steal the sheep from their shepherds. He says that those people, these strangers are thieves and robbers. **(10:1,5)** These people had not good intentions for the sheep, but they only came in *"to steal and kill and destroy."* **(10:10)**
2. He then mentions that there would also be dangers from wolves who might come in and snatch up and scatter the sheep. **(10:12)** Like the stranger, we know that wolves only come upon sheep for a quick and easy meal. Sheep have no natural defenses and without a shepherd, they are hopelessly vulnerable. Dangers lurk all around the sheep, and those dangers are even present in our lives.

B. The world we live in is filled with dangers fueled by Satan.

1. Reading through these first few verses of chapter 10, we might pause and wonder why it is that Jesus seems to have randomly shifted His attention and the attention of the people towards sheep and shepherding, but this was in no way a random happening. The truth is that Jesus is seeking to warn the people about the dangers that were lurking around and seeking to destroy them. The ultimate source of these dangers was Satan, but what type of minions had he put out after the people?
2. To answer this question, we only have to look at the pretext of **John 10**. Back in **John 7**, we find Jesus coming into Jerusalem for the Feasts of Booths (Tabernacles). As was His custom, He went up into the temple and began to teach. At least two times throughout His teachings over the next three chapters worth of John's Gospel (**chapters 7, 8, & 9**) we see people becoming upset by His teaching and seeking to end Him. Who were these conspiring murderers? Of course, they were the Jewish leaders in the form of the Pharisees. They hated Jesus for His teachings and continually tried to discredit Him or intimidate the people into not believing or following after Him and His teachings.

3. For these efforts, Jesus deems them as being children of Satan (**John 8:39-47**) and those who are blind. (**John 9:39-41**) These people wanted to be the leaders of Jerusalem, but Jesus is identifying them as those who instead intended to harm and destroy the people. In **John 10**, Jesus is setting Himself up as a true shepherd against the evil and fake shepherds of the Pharisees and the other religious leaders who were children of Satan and blind. These men were being fully exposed by Jesus which is why the words of Jesus here in **John 10** again led the people to seek to seize and take hold of Jesus. (**John 10:39**)
4. The existence of fake shepherds didn't end with the Pharisees, unfortunately. Even still today we have many who seek to lead those who will listen away from God. False teachers abound, and they seek to teach a gospel of health and prosperity instead of repentance and discipleship. Others propagate a faith that denies Jesus as the Son of God. Even beyond the religious aspect, we have people in positions of leadership and influence who seek to lead those under them in the ways of immorality and ungodliness. All around us in this world danger lurks, and just as Jesus sought to show the people that He was the door and good shepherd, so we learn the same is true even for us today. But still...what does it mean that Jesus is the door and good shepherd? What does he do in these positions? What is He hoping to accomplish as these things?

II. Jesus wants to serve as our protector as the door. (10:7-10)

A. If anyone wanted to be a part of the flock of God then they had to go through Jesus.

1. While the Pharisees and other leading Jews were spending much of their time trying to discredit Jesus and His teachings, Jesus stands before all of these people and proclaims that He is the door. He does not say that He is one of many doors or that He is a door, but He establishes that He alone is the door. If anyone wanted to be saved then they had to come and go through Jesus. Only through Him would they be able to find that which they were searching for.
2. Remember, the Pharisees within just the past couple of chapters have been trying to set Jesus up as someone who was possessed by a demon. (**8:48**) From Jesus's cleansing of the temple, to His amassing followers, to His healing people on the Sabbath, to His calling the Pharisees children of the devil, and pronouncing them blind...the Jews were sick of this man and He had become public enemy number one in their eyes. Yet, Jesus stood tall and strong, and He wasn't going to allow these people to control the narrative against Him. Where the Pharisees were trying to set Him up as the enemy, Jesus declared that the true enemy was actually those who were accusing Him in their ungodliness and unrighteousness. He had come onto the scene to become the true door to God.

B. On the other hand, Jesus stands between His sheep and those who seek to harm them.

1. This is an aspect of the text that might easily escape us because we are so unfamiliar with the whole idea of shepherding as they did back in Jesus's day. By saying that He is the door, Jesus is putting Himself not just as the point of accessibility, but He is also making a statement that He is the protector of the sheep.
2. On the slides background you will see an image of an old run down sheep pen. Most of these pens were out in the wilderness where the shepherds would be with their flocks day in and day out. They were nothing fancy, normally they were just an almost fully enclosed area made of stone. At night, the shepherd would lead the flocks into the pen as a means of protection. Dr. Lynn Anderson paints this picture for us in his book on the concept of shepherding, "They Smell Like Sheep," *"With the whole flock examined and bedded down, finally, the shepherd himself would lie down, stretching his body across the opening. So, the shepherd literally, physically became the door! His body keep the sheep in and the dangers of the night out. No*

sheep could wander into danger because the shepherd's body held them in. Wolves and robbers could enter to harm the flock only over the dead body of the shepherd." (pg.21) This image of Jesus being that door that guards the sheep will be something that we will consider more closely in just a few minutes, but suffice for us to say that Jesus claiming to be our door was not just a statement of access to God, but also a statement of Jesus not allowing the dangers of the world to come after those who were His.

III. Jesus wants to serve as our leader as our shepherd. (10:11-18)

A. The job of the shepherd is to keep his flocks safe, fed, and prosperous.

1. Earlier in His ministry (**Matthew 9:36**), Jesus looks upon the crowds and He sees them as lost and dispirited sheep who lacked a shepherd. They were a people with little to no purpose or direction. They had no true leadership from those were supposed to be caring for them, and because of this Jesus felt deep compassion for them. Seeing this people in this way motivated Jesus to do what He did, even through tribulation, so that He might become the good shepherd to those whom His Father sent Him to care for.
2. Seeing these people in their current distress, Jesus seeks to lead them to a place where they can be safe, fed, and ultimately be prosperous in all that they did. In order to achieve that property, it sometimes meant that the sheep needed to be guided in the right direction just like a literal shepherd. If food or water is in a particular direction then that is the way that the shepherd will lead them. If he sees a sheep or two get distracted and head off in the wrong direction then the shepherd will take a moment to get them straightened out. Sure the sheep might not like it, but the actions of the shepherd are motivated by his desire for his flocks to be safe, healthy, and prosperous.

B. Shepherds would go to great lengths to be sure they gave their all in leading their sheep.

1. In the most extreme cases, this might mean that the shepherd would even put himself in harm's way for the sake of the sheep. Reading further in "They Smell Like Sheep," Anderson writes, *"Some claim that, even in modern times, morning will occasionally find scattered sheep, without a shepherd. Upon investigation, a bleeding, battle-worn shepherd will often be found somewhere nearby—sometimes even a dead one. The shepherd would literally lay down his life for the sheep."* (pg.21)
2. Jesus was not different in this regard. He states plainly that as the good shepherd, **"I lay down My life for the sheep."** (10:15,17,18) This was an extreme step in shepherding that Jesus wasn't unwilling to take, but He was willing to do so because of His great love for the sheep. That's the motivation for all of this. It was the reason for His constantly enduring the foolishness of the Pharisees. It as His motivation for leaving heaven to begin with. It was His motivation for eventually giving of Himself on the cross. Jesus possessed and possesses a love that would go so far as to move Him to give up His life for others. Surely no greater love is there than that. (**John 15:13**)

IV. There are great blessings that come through being a sheep in the flock of Jesus. (10:10)

A. We know whom it is that we can trust.

1. Notice the way that Jesus describes the sheep in these verses. They are sheep that are able to hear and identify their shepherd, and they only respond to him. (**10:3-5,14**) There are many stories of people going over to the middle east where shepherding in this style is still practiced and there will be many different flocks in one pen. When it is time for them to all leave, the shepherds will make distinct noises and the sheep will hear that noise and go to the sound of that shepherd alone. Those sheep know their shepherds voice, and they trust him.
2. Why is this the case? It's because the shepherd has been kind and loving to the sheep. He has always put their best interest first. He isn't just some hired hand who sees danger and takes off

fearing only for his own life. **(10:12,13)** The shepherd is invested far more than that man, and he is willing to sacrifice so much more, even his own life as we've discussed. These sheep see the care of their shepherd, they see that he is always there to feed and care for them, and so they are willing to follow him wherever he leads. They are willing to hear and trust his voice.

3. What a blessing it is to know whom you can trust. How true the song we often sing, *"All the way my Savior leads me, what have I to ask beside? Can I doubt His tender mercy, who thro' life has been my Guide? Heavenly peace, divinest comfort, here by faith in Him to dwell! For I know, what-e'er before me, Jesus doeth all things well, For I know, what-e'er before me, Jesus doeth all things well....All the way my Savior leads me, cheers each winding path I tread, gives me grace for every trial, feeds me with the living bread; Tho' my weary steps may falter, and my soul athirst may be, Gushing from the Rock before me, Lo! a spring of joy I see; Gushing from the rock before me, Lo! a spring of joy I see."* (All The Way My Savior, Hymns For Worship 129) We trust Jesus and enjoy that blessing because of what we see Him doing for us every single day of our lives on this earth.

B. This is the fulfillment of Jesus's promise to give His sheep life, and that it be abundant.

1. Again, the false shepherds want to take this good promise and turn it into something concerning just life here on earth, but even the good things of this life that come through Jesus point to something greater. The blessings of this life give us the ability to praise God for His goodness, but the truly abundant life isn't found in the earthly things.
2. Instead, the truly abundant life is found in having a purpose, direction, and knowledge that we are truly loved in this life. We are given a purpose as a sheep in the flock of God, and that purpose is to glorify God in all that we do. Whether on the mountain top or in the valley, God is to be glorified in our lives always. Knowing this purpose only helps us to achieve it. We are also blessed with knowing which direction it is that we are being led in, and that direction is heaven. That perfect home of the soul is where Jesus the good shepherd is seeking to lead us. *"All the way my Savior leads me; O the fullness of His love! Perfect rest to me is promised in my Father's house above; When my spirit clothed immortal, wings its flight to realms of day, This my song thro' endless ages; Jesus led me all the way! this my song thro' endless ages; Jesus led me all the way!"* (All The Way My Savior, Hymns For Worship 129)
3. Why do we have the opportunity to experience something so grand? It is because of the never-ending love of Jesus that He shows to us as our good shepherd. What a blessing to know that if we will allow Him, then Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us. He will always be our good shepherd leading us in godly purpose and direction. His flock can always be our flock if only we will submit ourselves fully to Him. What a blessed relief that is to know.

It can be quite unfortunate to find portions of God's Word that might not resonate with us as they might have for the original readers, but I hope that cannot be said for Jesus's powerful and encouraging words of **John 10**. His claims to be the door and the good shepherd come with great significance, and it is my hope that each of us will allow for Jesus to be that door and good shepherd to us in our lives. Life is just better being a part of Jesus's people, to know that we will always be protected and cared for, and for that we ought to be eternally grateful to God.

PRAYER Our great God in heaven...we fall before Your power and majesty giving You all of the glory for the good things that we have in this life. We especially give thanks to be under the always watchful care of the door and our good shepherd, Jesus Christ. We praise Your name for the provision that we enjoy daily being one of His sheep, and we ask that You always strengthen us to remain within His fold. May we always submit to His leadership, and may Your name be ever praised in our deliverance into Your hand. We pray that you would strengthen the undershepherds of this local church. May they ever look to Your Son as their example, and may they lead us toward You always. Bless us to Your glory...we thank You and love You...in the name of Jesus, our door and good shepherd we pray...amen.