

Gospel of John Chapter 10A

Throughout the Bible the Lord Jesus is given many different titles: Here is a sampling:

- Rev.22:13, He is the “*Alpha and the Omega*”
- Hebrews 3:1, He is called “*the Apostle* (Sent by Father) *and High Priest* (offering sacrifices for men) *of our profession*,”
- John 6:35, He is called “*the Bread of Life*.” (By partaking through faith in him we gain life)
- Isaiah 9:6, He is *Eternal Father, the Prince of Peace, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God*.
- 1 Corinthians 10:4, He is “*the Rock*.”

But the most endearing title and one of my personal favorites is found right here in John chapter 10, Jesus is “**The Good Shepherd**.”

- This title expresses tender care, faithful provision, gentle leadership, diligent oversight and courageous protection in a hostile world.

The O.T is literally **FULL of images of God** as a **good shepherd**, Psalm 23, “The Lord is my Shepherd, Isaiah 40:11, “He tends his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young”

- One of the O.T. prophecies, often read at Christmas, because it speaks of the place where Jesus would be born, also foretells his role as the good shepherd.

Micah 5: 2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. **VS. 4** And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

- IN the N.T. the Apostle **Peter applies** this idea of shepherding in a personal way for those of us who once lived in rebellion, we were wayward wandering sheep until he found us: 1 Peter 2: 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

As we open the Gospel of John chapter 10 this morning **I would like to remind you of the scene from last week**. Understand this there is NO gap, NO break, NO change of scene from chapter 9. The Lord Continues to address the same crowd made up of Pharisees, disciples and curious observers following the healing of the man who was born blind:

You will remember that **Jesus revealed himself as** “The Son of Man” the Messiah in ch 9.

John 9: 35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” 36 He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”

37 Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.”

38 He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

- This healing and the conversation that followed **rekindled the Pharisees fiery hatred of Jesus**.
 - Once again Jesus did his wondrous work of healing on the Sabbath day. He made a paste of mud which **directly confronted the traditions of the Pharisees**. (NO healing on the Sabbath and definitely no mixing mud)

Utilizing **a comparison** between spiritual sight and spiritual blindness in chapter 9 Jesus **confronted the blindness of the Pharisee’s souls**.

- **Here in Chapter 10** Jesus utilizes a **different comparison**. It is a contrast between the **Good Shepherd** and the self-appointed corrupt shepherds (leaders) of the nation Israel.

- All of the people who heard Jesus' words would have been familiar with the vocation of shepherding. They knew what a sheep fold was and they understood the threats that were present from thieves and robbers who sought to fleece and butcher helpless sheep.

Looking historically at the nation of Israel, you find that they were plagued with bad shepherds and God often confronted them through the mouth of his prophets:

Ezekiel 34:1 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? 3 You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. 4 The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them.

- In Ezekiel's day (like Jesus' day) the leadership of Israel lived off of the fat of God's sheep, fleecing them when they should have been feeding them.
- God was angered; he confronted the corrupt leaders through the prophets and foretold the day when HE would care for his flock Himself.

Ezekiel 34:10 Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

11 "For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.

Ezekiel 34: 22 I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. 23 And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.

Here in John 10 Jesus confronts the blind leaders of Israel who lived in their religious ivory towers all the while keeping the sheep in the bondage of religious traditions.

Here is how we are going to break down the text this morning:

1. Review the historic / cultural background (because none of us make a living tending sheep)
2. Recognize (identify) the players in the narrative.
3. Reveal the spiritual realities in the text and how they apply to US.

1. Review the historic / cultural background:

At the very beginning of Verse 1 we are alerted to the seriousness of what Jesus is about to say. He opens, 'Truly, Truly, I say to you.' This declares the importance of what is to follow.

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. 2 But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

At the center of the rural villages in Israel was the "common sheep fold." In the evenings when the shepherds would bring their flocks to the village all of the sheep were kept in one pen. Multiple flocks would stay the night together in one common fold.

A faithful gatekeeper would stand guard at night so the shepherds could rest. That porter would only grant entrance to the shepherds. No one else was permitted to enter the fold.

Anyone who climbed into the fold avoiding the gate and the gatekeeper would be thief or robber bent on stealing the wool or butchering the sheep.

The Good Shepherd is permitted to enter the fold. He calls those who are his own by name (dasher, dancer, comet, cupid..) The Good Shepherd leads his sheep out of the fold. The sheep follow him because they know his voice.

John 10:3 To him (To the Shepherd) the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

Philip Keller writes: "the relationship which rapidly develops between Shepherd and sheep under his care is to a definite degree dependent upon the use of the shepherds voice. Sheep quickly become accustomed to their owners particular voice. They are acquainted with its unique tone. They know it's particular sounds and inflections. They can distinguish it from that of any other person.

If a stranger should come among them, they would not recognize nor respond to his voice in the same way they would to that of the shepherd. Even if the visitor should use the same words and phrases as that of their rightful owner they would not react in the same way. It is a case of becoming actually conditioned to the familiar nuances and personal accent of their shepherds call.

Now that we understand the cultural / historic background; Let's Identify the players:

- **Jesus** is the good shepherd, - John 10:11 *I am the good shepherd*
- **The gatekeeper is the Father.** He sent the Son, He opens the way for the Good Shepherd (Christ) to enter the sheepfold. (Father – **Plan**, Son – **Procured**, Spirit – **Applies** the work of salvation to the saints.)
- **The sheepfold** in this context is **the nation of Israel,**
- **The thieves and robbers** (those who hop the fence) are the corrupt leaders of Israel (Pharisees) They avoid the Gatekeeper because they are bent on fleecing the flock, using God's sheep for their own personal gain.

Jesus enters the fold (comes to Israel) He calls the sheep who are his own.

The man who was blind from birth would be a good example of one who was called out from the fold who now follow the Good Shepherd.

- **Leading them OUT, he goes before them.** He is the author and finisher of our faith. He clears the way, prepares the field and leads his sheep.

Having understood the simile of the sheepfold, knowing the players, we can now reflect upon the spiritual realities contained in this teaching?

First, We learn that the Good Shepherd knows his sheep. This truth is implied in verse 3 ("he calls his own sheep by name"). It is stated even more explicitly in verse 14 ("I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and they know me").

- **The word** that John uses here is (**GINOSKO**) To know experientially, to be acquainted with, This speaks of intimate relationship.
- The word is used in the O.T. (Septuagint) of the intimacy between husband and wife. Clearly speaks of the LOVE the shepherd has for his sheep. He knows us!

2 Timothy 2:19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

- Context of Timothy: In the normal course of life in the flock of God you encounter both sheep and wolves. **It can be confusing.**
- There are Sheep at various stages of maturity, and mixed in with the sheep there are a **few goats that enjoy butting heads.**
- Paul says: **THIS is our confidence**, it stands like a seal etched on the foundation of the church, *“The Lord knows those who are His!”* **He is able to sort them out.**

1 Corinthians 8: 3 *But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.*

- The **sheep love GOD** because **HE FIRST loved them.**
- Here is an important point, something to take note of: **The Lord’s sheep are known by him** and **determined to be His BEFORE he actually CALLS them.**
- He knew (loved) the blind man, the woman at the well, and you before he called you.
- Paul tells the believers in Ephesus that God actually chose them in Christ BEFORE the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1: 3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,* 4 *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

- God’s sovereign choice and foreknowledge of His sheep is confirmed for us in Paul’s letter to the Roman believers.

Romans 8:29 29 *For those whom he foreknew (PROGINOSKO) he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* 30 *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

- In a wonderful way the sheep are known and set apart long before they actually hear his voice calling them.

Moreover, as we continue on in John 10 we find that these sheep have been given to Christ by the Father (v. 29, *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.*),

It is for these sheep uniquely that the Good Shepherd gives his life (vs. 15 *just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.*).

- How beautiful is the sovereign Grace that Jesus communicates with regard to his sheep!
- God has given particular sheep to Christ. Jesus knows them, intimately. He dies for them in order that they will never be separated but will be with him forever in glory.

Second, John 10 teaches us that having known the sheep, Jesus calls them.

- This is a **very personal call**, not some arbitrary decree by a distant deity. The call of Christ is a very tender and intimate summons to leave the common fold and follow Him. He calls his own sheep by name. Somehow, knowing his voice and being called by their own name, they follow him.

We saw this in the ministry of Jesus as he walked the earth: He **entered the fold of Israel** and **called his own sheep by name**:

Matthew 9: 9 *As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.*

Luke 19: 5 *And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.”*

HOW DID GOD CALL YOU? The letter to the Thessalonians speaks of the Call of God that comes through the Gospel:

2 Thessalonians 2:13 *But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.* 14 *To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

- **When I was 16 years old** the Lord called me to himself **as I sat in a youth meeting.**
 - He **opened my eyes** to see the **ugliness of my sin** and **at the same time** he **embraced me** in his **wonderful grace.** **It was there that I was born from above.**

A good example of sheep **knowing the voice** of the Shepherd is found in **John 20.**

Mary Magdalene visited the tomb, early in the morning. She found the stone rolled away, and the body of the Lord missing. Dejected, she stood there weeping. Suddenly **she saw a man** standing by her, but **she didn't know it was the Lord.** He spoke to her, but she supposed that he was a gardener. **And then he called her by name.**

Just one word from him—'**Mary**'! He *called His sheep by name* she knew his voice!"

Finally, **John tells us** that **having known** his own sheep and **having called** them, the Lord Jesus **leads them out.**

- **In this context** the Good Shepherd leads his sheep **out of the fold of Israel** into **his own great flock.** You might say that this is the church universal.
- **The church is the gathering of those who have been called out** from among **the mass of humanity.** Hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd they follow him

John 10:16 *And 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.*

- Here The Lord tells that **he will be gathering sheep from among the Gentiles** as well as **from the nation of Israel.**

Psalms 23:1 *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.* (contentment, peace, satisfaction)

2 *He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.* (rest, nourishment)

3 *He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.* (restoration of a loving relationship with God, moral transformation, and a new direction for my life)

4 *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.* (internal discipline of the Spirit, that assures my salvation and calms all of my fears)

5 *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.* (I feed upon His Word in this present life, this gives me victory over my enemies and heals all of my wounds)

6 *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

(My confidence is that HE will keep me secure in this present life and I will dwell with him throughout eternity)