

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN

I Am
the Good
Shepherd

INTRODUCTION

John 10:1-21

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

—John 10:10

This verse is sandwiched right in the middle of the passage in John where Jesus is calling himself The Good Shepherd. This context, and who is speaking, is important for us to understand.

Specifically in John 10:10, we have the contrast of a thief and a good shepherd. The thief in this passage has a goal: that is to steal something and to cause harm and destruction to his victim. The thief is like the wolf in verse 12 who comes to scatter the sheep and separate or divide them from the safety of the pen. The wolf also comes to snatch the sheep away or to kill for his own pleasure. Unlike the good shepherd who protects, leads, watches over, and will even lay down His life for His sheep.

Jesus wants us to clearly see the contrast here. The thief, our enemy – Satan, comes with a purpose and plan for our lives and that is to steal, kill and destroy us. The Good Shepherd, our Saviour – Jesus, also has a purpose and a plan for our lives. He wants to give us life, abundant life.

This thief wants to steal your very life. If he could, he would separate you from the pen guarded by the Good Shepherd. If we are in Christ, the thief cannot do this. So instead he will steal what he can to make our life the opposite of abundant – scarce and unsatisfying. He will steal our joy, our peace, our trust in the Lord. He'll steal our focus so we take our eyes off Jesus and put them on the circumstances we find ourselves in so that we become discouraged and defeated.

In contrast, the Good Shepherd has come to give us life. And not just life, but abundant life. Life that is present in great quantity, more than adequate, abounding, richly supplied, more than enough. A life that is FULL.

Jesus is the only one that can provide a life that is abundant and full. Verse 15 shows us just how good this Good Shepherd is. This Good Shepherd has sacrificed Himself for us – His sheep. And we, we can do nothing to earn that. We can accept and enjoy abundant and full lives because He laid down His for us. And by this we can and will bless our Good Shepherd and glorify God forever.¹

¹ Devotional by Ron Rudd entitled “The Thief Versus The Good Shepherd” found @ <https://fighterverses.com/blog-post/the-thief-versus-the-good-shepherd-john-1010/>

OPEN IT

1. Have you had a pet? How well did it follow your directions or commands? What do you think caused their obedience or disobedience?

READ IT

John 10:1-21

EXPLORE IT

2. What does Jesus call those who don't enter through the door?
3. What do sheep do when they hear their shepherd's voice?
4. What happens when people enter through Jesus?
5. What three things does the thief seek to do to us?
6. What does Jesus do for us as The Good Shepherd?

APPLY IT

“Old MacDonald Had a Farm”

John 10 focuses on the image of sheep, sheepfolds, and shepherds. It is a rural and Eastern image, to be sure, but it is an image that can say a great deal to us today, even in our urban, industrialized world. Paul used this image when admonishing the spiritual leaders in the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:28ff.). The truths that cluster around the image of the shepherd and the sheep are found throughout the Bible, and they are important to us today. The symbols that Jesus used help us understand who He is and what He wants to do for us.²

- 7. What do you know about sheep and shepherds? How can these metaphors help us to have a deeper understanding of the words of Jesus?**

God pictures his care of his people through the image of a shepherd and his sheep (Ps 23:1-4). In Psalm 80:1 God is called the “Shepherd of Israel.” In Isaiah 40:11 God promises to bring his people back from exile in Babylon like a shepherd gathering his lambs in his arms. God wanted his people to understand his grace, his mercy, and his love.³

- 8. What role do shepherds play when it comes to caring for the animals in their flock? What similarities do they have with how Jesus cares for His flock?**

² Wiersbe, Warren W.. The BE Series Bundle: The Gospels: Be Loyal, Be Diligent, Be Compassionate, Be Courageous, Be Alive, and Be Transformed (The BE Series Commentary) . David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

³ Carter, Matt; Wredberg, Josh. Exalting Jesus in John (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

“Simon Says”

One of the ways God cared for Israel was by appointing human shepherds, leaders who were supposed to serve as God’s representatives, demonstrating God’s care for his flock. But those who were supposed to lead the Israelites—who were in positions of religious influence and who were to be God’s representatives to his people—were not caring for the sheep. They were hurting the sheep.

Instead of leading them to encounter and obey God, they were leading the people away from God and into empty religious ritual. Instead of bringing the people of God to graze in the pastures of God’s grace, the religious leaders were loading them up with the weight of religion and man-made requirements and making them plow the barren fields of legalism. Instead of guarding the flock of God, they were goading them to turn from God to their own efforts. Instead of leading them to the overflowing fountains of grace, they were leaving them distressed, diseased, and spiritually dead.⁴

9. How would you respond to someone who says “I am an adult Christian and have no need for someone to watch over me.” In other words, why does God appoint human shepherds for his people?

10. In recent days the church world has been rocked by the scandal of church leaders not only falling to sin but seemingly preying on their own sheep. How can such wounds bring greater harm to believers and what can be done so this isn’t repeated in our own church?

⁴ ibid

11. Read 1 Peter 5:1-5. In what ways do you see those verses being played out when it comes to the leadership at our church?

12. Are you called to shepherd others? Who is following your lead? How is Jesus' shepherding shaping your own?

"Sharks and Minnows"

In verse 10 Jesus sets up one final contrast between himself and the thief: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10) Who is the thief? Some would say Satan, and he is certainly included. Satan indeed comes only to steal and kill and destroy. In fact those are some of his names. He is the great deceiver who seeks to steal everything good from your life. He is the destroyer who wants only to take life or destroy life. So Satan is included here. But the thief also represents anyone or anything that seeks to pull you away from Jesus as the gateway to salvation and life.⁵

13. Who or what can the thief be that is described in verse 10, and what is his goal? How have you seen the thief kill, steal, and destroy the lives of people that you know?

⁵ Sermon by Ray Fowler found @ <http://www.rayfowler.org/sermons/john/jesus-the-good-shepherd/>

14. How do we as sheep defend against the thieves in our lives that long to hinder our walk and destroy our fellowship with the Good Shepherd?

“Follow The Leader”

Jesus is the good shepherd. We use the word “good” in several different ways.

*Sometimes we speak of something being good in a moral sense, but other times we speak about something being good in quality. For example, when we speak of a good athlete, or a good pianist, or a good teacher we don't necessarily mean they are morally good, but rather they are good in quality, they are good at what they do. The good athlete excels at their sport; the good pianist plays the piano well; the good teacher is good at teaching. That's the way the word is used here. **It's a word that means good in quality. It can even mean beautiful, handsome, or excellent. So when Jesus calls himself the good shepherd, he means that he is the most excellent shepherd; he is the pre-eminent shepherd; he is what shepherding is all about. He is the beautiful shepherd, the ideal shepherd – the perfect example of what a shepherd should be.***⁶

15. Jesus gives a contrast to hired hands and shepherds in verses 11-16. What are the differences and how do they make Jesus the pre-eminent shepherd?

⁶ Sermon by Ray Fowler found @ <http://www.rayfowler.org/sermons/john/jesus-the-good-shepherd/>

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep....I lay down my life for the sheep." (John 10:11,15) Here is something very wonderful: The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Everything Jesus endured in his passion was for you. When he gave himself into the hands of the arresting party in the Garden of Gethsemane, it was for you. When he was scourged and beaten, it was for you. And when he was condemned to death, it was for you. When he hung on that cross in agony, it was for you.

Never forget that Jesus chose to suffer and die for you. This was not imposed on him. He gave himself willingly. "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again" (10:18).⁷

16. What is Jesus referring to when he says he lays down his life for the sheep? (See John 1:29; 3:14-15) How should we respond to such a sacrifice by our Shepherd?

17. Jesus says that His sheep will hear his voice and follow him. How are you doing at following the voice of the Shepherd? What keeps us from doing this on a consistent basis?

⁷ Devotional by Colin Smith found @<https://unlockingthebible.org/2018/05/seven-ways-christ-is-the-good-shepherd/>

18. What encouragement and comfort do you get from knowing that you are being led by a shepherd who knows you by name and longs for you to live abundantly?