

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Good Shepherd, Part 1

Scripture: John 10:1-10

Code: 1528

We are continuing in a study of John's gospel week by week. And I don't know how you respond to this, evidently positively, but I just love this particular book, and I guess it's because on every page just keeps presenting Jesus Christ, and I find myself knowing more about Him and consequently loving Him more each time I study it.

I've just rejoiced as I've begun to study chapter 10, and I know in the weeks to come as we deal with chapter 10 you're going to sense some of the same thrill, even this morning, I trust, that I did in understanding this concept of Christ as the Shepherd and we who know and love him as the sheep. A very, very beautiful picture. In fact, I believe this chapter has to be one of the most beautiful word pictures in all the New Testament. It has much more of a devotional flavor than it does purely doctrinal.

Chapter 10 obviously follows chapter 9 in text. It also follows chapter 9 in terms of thought. There is no break between chapter 9 and chapter 10. There's no time gap. There's no change in circumstance. There is no change in crowd. Jesus continues to speak to the very same people He was speaking to in chapter 9. This is a flowing discourse that comes right out of the real situation in chapter 9. So there's really no break. There doesn't even need to be a chapter break here, really. Verse 1 follows immediately verse 41.

And the problem of chapter 9, as we go back just to isolate one area of it, was that Jesus was attempting to deal with and to confront - this is important - the false shepherds of Israel. You see, the Pharisees and the Jewish leaders had assumed their own roles. They had not been appointed by God, but became self-appointed and self-righteous shepherds of Israel and they were false shepherds.

They didn't know God at all. They didn't care anything about the sheep. They trampled the sheep, called them accursed, and cast them out whenever they disagreed with them. They had self-appointed assumption of leadership. They lived in an ivory tower of self-glorification, and loved nothing better than to trample the people and keep them subject to their ridiculous traditions and laws.

And this care-less attitude is indicated in chapter 9 by the way they dealt with the beggar who was born blind. When Jesus had healed him, they didn't believe it. Rejected his testimony. Didn't like his

attitude. Refused to believe him. Didn't care at all that he was healed. Could have cared less about his physical circumstances. And finally wound up unsynagoguing him, throwing him out of the synagogue and the life of Israel, both socially, and economically, and religiously.

They didn't care about the man. They only cared about Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ posed a conflict to their theology. And their only determination was not to help anybody but they were determined at this point to get rid of Jesus. The man didn't even enter their thoughts, only Jesus did. They wanted to get rid of Him. He was the issue because He threatened the security of their ivory tower.

So the false teachers self-appointed, didn't care about the people, and they are false shepherds. And they would have understood this idea of a false shepherd because it's an Old Testament concept. And so in this passage Jesus moves to introduce Himself as the only true shepherd of Israel. He is the good shepherd who really loves and really cares for the sheep. And they are the false shepherds who care only for themselves.

It's an interesting thing about false shepherds. Whether they're in the Old Testament, or whether they're in the New Testament, or whether they're in the twentieth century, or wherever they are, whenever they are, they're always the same. They don't ever care about their flock, their so-called flock. All they care about is themselves.

The Old Testament and the New Testament both say clearly they're in it for the money, the power, the pride, the prestige and the self-glory, and that's it. False teachers are not in it for the sake of the people, obviously. People go into false religions, and cults, and all kinds of things like that, and isms, and various things in order to gain something that they need: Either money or ego. And Jesus contrasts these kind of shepherds who are in it for prestige, power, and prominence with the true shepherd who is none other than Himself.

Now you might ask, "Why does He use the particular analogy of a shepherd?" Well, a shepherd was so much a part of the life of Judea that they couldn't escape it. There's a main plateau in Israel that stretches about 35 miles north and south. This main plateau is approximately 14 to 17 miles wide. It does not lend itself to agriculture at all since it is rocky and stony and very difficult to grow anything there. And so consequently, a greater portion of the land became acclimated to shepherding rather than farming. And so the familiar figure of the Judean hills has always been a shepherd.

The life of a Palestinian shepherd was hard, very hard. There's very little grass, and the sheep have to move from place to place constantly to find the grass that is available. And there are no protecting walls on the plateau, and very often the sheep would drift to the edge and find themselves down in some ravine, or some little valley, and the shepherd would have to wind his way down the hillside to find the sheep, pick it up and carry it back to the plateau again.

And then there was always the problem of the danger of wild animals, particularly wolves, the problem of thieves and robbers who stole the sheep. This went on all the time. And so a shepherd had to maintain constant vigilance, fearless courage, patience, and a love for his flock.

These were the necessary characteristics of a shepherd. He had to care for them, not just stand there and watch them. And in the Old Testament, God even used this analogy. He calls Himself the “shepherd of Israel” and Israel is His flock. The psalmist said, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” The psalmist said in Psalm 77, “Thou leadest Thou people like a flock.” In Psalm 79, “We Thy people the sheep of Thy pasture will give Thee thanks forever.” In Psalm 80, “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel - ” the psalmist said “ - Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock.” Psalm 95, “He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.” God was a shepherd to Israel.

That same analogy carried itself into the New Testament and Jesus Christ calls Himself a shepherd, and His own church His flock. He is the shepherd who will risk His life to seek and to save that one lost sheep, Matthew 18. He is the shepherd who has pity upon the people because they are as sheep having no shepherd, Matthew 9. He is the shepherd who called His disciples a little flock, Luke 12. And when He, the shepherd, was smitten, you remember, He said in Mark 14, quoting the Old Testament, “When the shepherd was smitten, the sheep are scattered.” Peter says He’s the shepherd of our souls. And the writer of Hebrews says He is the Great shepherd of the sheep.

So this idea of tender care of a shepherd who tends his flock was used to describe the attitude of God toward Israel and of Jesus Christ toward His own beloved chosen ones, the church. The shepherd illustration then, so much a part of Israel, becomes the vehicle for the discourse of chapter 10. Without a break or a pause, Jesus goes right into it.

Now, His audience is a mixture. First of all, the disciples are there. Secondly, the formerly blind beggar is there. Thirdly, the Pharisees are there, antagonistic and hostile as ever. And fourthly, there was a scattering of Jews there. This we learned from chapter 9.

The Pharisees and the Jews had set themselves up as leaders of the people. They had all the answers. They were the shepherds, so Christ takes this passage to show them they are not the shepherds but that He is alone the true and good Shepherd. And all the rest are nothing but thieves and robbers.

Now Jesus speaking to them does not speak directly. He speaks to them in what verse 6 says is a parable. Now this is not actually a parable at all. The word for parable is not this word. Now the King James translators have translated it “parable” because it can’t be translated into English. It’s an untranslatable word. The word for parable is a very simple word. This is the word *paroimia*, completely different word. It does not mean the same as a parable, and I want to give you a shade of

difference just for your scholastic understanding.

A parable is like a metaphor, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man, or something like that. When the word "like" or "as" is used. That's a parable, or a metaphor. This is not that. He doesn't say, "I am like a shepherd." He says, "I am the shepherd." He doesn't say, "I am like a door." "I am the door." This is more of a simile. A paroimia is like a simile.

Now Jesus often spoke - and whether it's a parable or a paroimia is not really the key - the thing that we want to understand is this. Incidentally, there are no parables in John, none at all. And John doesn't have one here, he uses the word "paroimia." But what we do want to understand is this. Whenever Jesus speaks in a parable, metaphor; or a paroimia, simile, He does it for two reasons. He does it, number one, so that some won't understand; number two, so that some will understand. Otherwise, He would speak in simple terms, but He does this to reveal and to conceal.

And so He speaks in a paroimia here. Now what sets this up very simply is this. In 9:39-41 Jesus had told the Pharisees that they were blind, that they could not see, could not understand Him. Now that's very important. He's told them this before, hasn't He? And they illustrated it. "You don't ever get the message. You never understand. You are blind. You do not understand."

Then to illustrate that they don't understand, He speaks in a very clear and very lucid paroimia and sure enough, they don't understand. See? What He's attempting to do is illustrate to them the truth of His statement that they are blind.

Now the others who are there, the disciples and the blind beggar, evidently they understood the message. It's obvious. But the Pharisees who have been blind by their own willful unbelief, blinded judicially by God, "Let them alone," Jesus said, "They're blind leaders of the blind." They are then face to face with a living illustration that indeed they are blind. And when you get down to verse 6 it says, "They understood not." And so the paroimia is a great way to illustrate their blindness to them. And that's the purpose it serves, first of all.

The second purpose, and always the purpose of a parable or a paroimia, was to reveal the truth to those who could see. You see? When I read this passage, I understand it perfectly. When an unbeliever reads it, he doesn't understand it at all. For those who do know, this teaches some glorious truth. And before we're done this morning, if you're a Christian you're going to see a beautiful, thrilling relationship between you and Jesus Christ as a sheep to a shepherd. Just thrilling. And you understand it.

Now in this particular paroimia there's a shift of thought many times. And you have to be careful with these paroimia or parables that you don't try and push everything into a little box and make it all come out just like this, you know. These are just illustrations. They have to be used naturally and generally,

not little specifics. And, boy, some people just go to town with the parables and they've got every little thing meaning something. We have to consider them generally and in a natural flowing way.

This is not an easy passage to interpret, in spite of the lucid character of Christ's terms. There are some problems in it. I hope that by the time we're done you won't even recognize the problems, that we have covered them well enough in terms of trying to say exactly what Christ said so that you won't even notice them.

All right, two aspects, and we're going to divide the passage into two parts. We didn't bother with a printed outline this morning. It's too simple, really. The first six verses, 1-6, the shepherd to the sheep. Jesus claims to be the shepherd to the sheep, first six verses. Verses 7-10, He claims to be the door to the fold. The shepherd to the sheep, then the door to the fold.

Beginning, then, in verse 1, the shepherd to the sheep. Christ's first claim is to be the shepherd to the sheep. And this, you see, is in contrast to the false shepherds to whom He's been talking. And it's very picturesque. Verse 1, "Verily, verily - " whenever you read that, that's serious, solemn, and He means listen carefully, this is serious solemn truth. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep."

Now here you have a sheepfold, you have a door, you have a thief and a robber, and you have a shepherd. Now what does all this mean? Well, first of all, in order to understand the interpretation of the parable, we have to understand the exact physical meaning here. What was a sheepfold? What was a shepherd? What was a door? And what was a thief and a robber? And then we can make the analogy spiritual.

In Palestine, there was in each village - and this had gone on for centuries - in each village located as the common property of the village in the center somewhere, a common sheepfold. And all of the shepherds in that village who would have their sheep out grazing on the hillside would at night lead their sheep into the sheepfold. There was a man who was hired to care for the sheepfold during the night and he was called the "porter." And all the sheep would be led into the fold, and they would spend the night there while the shepherd went home. The porter's job was to shut the door and to be in front of the door on guard, lest animals or thieves and robbers would come to steal or slaughter the sheep.

Now when they would bring their sheep in, something very, very beautifully symbolic happened. The shepherd would come to town with his sheep to the little village. He would come to the entrance to the large sheepfold, which would house all the sheep. You say, "Didn't they get mixed up?" No, because they all knew their own name when their master spoke, and we'll see that in a moment.

But nevertheless, the shepherd would bring all of his sheep up to the door. Then he would take his rod, a long rod - all shepherds had a rod - and he would put it down over the door very low so that the sheep could not get under it. And he would stop the sheep and he would check over the whole body of the sheep to make sure there was no hurt or no injury. And if the sheep was fine, he would lift the rod and the sheep would pass under the rod. He did that with every sheep every night.

You say, "Why is that important?" Just this, in the Old Testament, Ezekiel 20:37, don't look it up, just listen to this thought, beautiful thought. God says through Ezekiel, "Some day I'm going to gather Israel and I'm going to bring Israel into the kingdom," right? And he said this, verse 37 says, "Israel will pass under the rod into a secure place."

That's not a rod of judgment, friends. That means that before Israel ever enters the kingdom, the great Shepherd of Israel is going to stop every sheep and check and make sure there's no scratch, no hurt, no injury. You see, that's the care that God has for His own.

And so, the shepherd would check his sheep, and he became familiar with them. And the porter would accept the sheep, lock the gate, and the shepherd would go home. In the morning, the different shepherds would come to get their sheep. And the shepherd would speak to the porter, and the sheep would perk up. They recognize their shepherd's voice. And then he would call them by name, and they would follow him, and they would go back out to pasture.

Now, you see, only the shepherd could get in through the door. The porter wouldn't let a thief and a robber in. Only the shepherd could get in through the door. And so the thieves and the robbers, in order to get the sheep, would have to climb the wall. See that? Look at verse 1, "He that entereth not by the door to the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." They couldn't get in the door because the porter wouldn't let them in. And so they would have to climb the walls to get in to steal the sheep.

But the shepherd would go in the door and the thieves would have to climb over the wall in order to get the sheep that he wanted to steal. Very often they would slaughter the sheep right in the sheepfold to keep the sheep from making noise. And they would throw the dead sheep over the wall if the porter happened to be asleep.

Now notice that it says at the end of verse 1, "the same as a thief and a robber." "Thief" and "robber" are two different words. Thief is klepts from which we get our word "kleptomaniac," "one who steals." And robber is lsts which means "one who slaughters." Some stole the sheep for the fleece, others slaughtered the sheep because they wanted the meat. So you have a very vivid paromia here. Now the question is what does it mean?

First of all, you have a sheepfold. What does that represent? Well, some people say the sheepfold represents the church. And when you try to get them to explain why that's the church, it's a little hard because what is the shepherd doing leading the sheep out of the church? If this is the body of Christ, why are they leaving? See. And since when could thieves and robbers steal sheep out of the church?

And then another very common one, and the one that I've always heard all my life, was that this is heaven. You know, you hear people preach on thieves and robbers climbing into heaven. No. Thieves and robbers - you can't climb into heaven. Besides, why would the Lord lead the sheep out of heaven again? Can't be heaven. Can't be the church and it can't be heaven.

You say, "What is it?" I'll tell you. I planned to tell you all along. It's Israel. The sheepfold is Israel. Very simple. It's Israel. You say, "Well, how does that fit?" Well, the sheep are the Jews. The sheepfold is Israel. It's just that simple. All through Israel's history false shepherds have come in and taken the sheep, fleeced the sheep. And the only rightful Shepherd, the only one who has messianic authority to come in the door and take His elect sheep and lead them out of Judaism is Jesus Christ, isn't it? See, the sheepfold is clearly Israel.

Some of God's elect are in that sheepfold. And Jesus is the Shepherd Messiah who comes to lead them out of Judaism into a new relationship with God through Him. And all the false leaders of Israel have been trying to climb the walls to impose their false messiahship on the sheep, haven't they? But here's the rightful Shepherd.

So, He's talking to these Jews. In the context Israel is the natural thing. Now what about the door? What is the door? "He that cometh not by the door into the sheepfold - " Well, by the door He refers to His rightful privilege to lead Israel. John the Baptist, some say, is the door. In other words, they say that John the Baptist pointed out the Messiah and says, "You're the Messiah," and opened the door, and ushered Him in to Israel to call out His elect. Whether or not it's John the Baptist, I don't know, it's possible.

But I do know that basically the door represents messianic authority. Nobody else had the messianic right to go in that door and lead out God's elect sheep but Jesus Christ Himself. Nobody else. He comes in the right way. He fulfilled all the messianic promises. He was the virgin-born Son of God. He was declared to be so by the Father who said, "Thou art My beloved Son." He was declared to be so by His words and His works. He was declared to be so by John the Baptist and the testimony of others.

Jesus conformed to every messianic promise. He was the rightful Shepherd, the one sent from the Father to take the elect of Israel, lead them out of Judaism to form a new flock, soon to become His glorious church.

Well, then who are the thieves and robbers? These are the Jewish leaders, and in particular the Pharisees to whom He's speaking, who were self-appointed, self-glorified false shepherds, sneaking in over the walls to try to fleece the sheep and slaughter them. They kept them under their treacherous, hateful bondage. They were stealing and slaughtering by substituting their false doctrine and their false leadership and they were claiming to be from God, weren't they? "We're the true shepherds of Israel." And they were stealing the sheep.

Jesus says one of the most potent statements He ever uttered, Matthew 23:15, listen as I read it to you, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" Listen to this " - for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte - " one convert to your false flock. Now watch this. " - and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." What a statement. False shepherds, stealing the sheep of Israel and turning them into children of hell. Serious. Damning the sheep were these false shepherds, stealing over the walls, slaughtering the sheep.

You see, nothing from God ever justified their mission. They weren't in this thing because of God. They appointed themselves on their own whims and their own desires. And their rule over the sheep was not that of a tender loving shepherd, it was despotic, and treacherous, and painful, and abusive. And Jesus says in contrast, "I came through the door, I have the messianic right to enter the sheepfold of Israel and gather My elect sheep and lead them out."

Well, you know, Israel has always had false shepherds, nothing new for them. I was reading yesterday in Ezekiel 34 and came across this particular portion where he discusses these false shepherds. They had them even in Ezekiel's time, nothing new at all. Ezekiel 34, listen to this. "And the Word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man - " that's a reference to Ezekiel " - prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, - " see, here they are, false shepherds " - prophesy and say unto them, Thus says the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves!" Can you imagine that? The sheep are all starving and they're sitting around feeding themselves. "Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat, and you clothe yourselves with the wool. You kill those who are fed: but you feed not the flock." You take the fat ones and you kill them, and you let the skinny ones die off.

"The diseased have you not strengthened, neither have you healed that which was sick, neither have you bound up that which was broken, neither have you brought again that which was driven away, neither have you sought that which was lost; but with force and cruelty have you ruled them." See, that's always the way with false teachers and false shepherds, they don't care anything about the flock.

"And they were scattered, because there's no shepherd: and they became food to the beast of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, upon every high hill."

He's indicting the leaders of Israel, see? "My flock was scattered upon the face of the earth, and none did search nor seek after them." Verse 7. "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the Word of the Lord;" and then He just really lets them have it. He tells them they're going to be paying for what they've done.

And down in verse 11 and following He said, "Some day I'm going to go out Myself, and I'm going to regather My flock, and I'm going to bring them into their land, and I'm going to lead them by the waters and in the green pastures." And He's doing that through Messiah, Jesus Christ. And some day in the kingdom He's going to do it as they all pass under the rod into the kingdom.

So false shepherds have always been with Israel. They've always been with everybody. They're around now. Paul talks about them. We've got a world full of deceivers, a world full of frauds, and fakes, and liberals, who stand in denominational churches and even some undenominational churches and spew out all kinds of devilish doctrine. These are false shepherds.

And the tragedy is that Peter says, "Many follow their pernicious ways." Paul said, "For such are false prophets, - " 2 Corinthians 11:13 " - deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." They're not. They try to be. They're thieves and robbers, climbing over, stealing, fleecing, and slaughtering the sheep.

Jude, listen to what he says, "They are spots in your love feasts - " They hang around, you know? They're spots. They're blemishes. " - when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water - " You know, in the desert when a cloud came over, everybody got excited. If it didn't have any water, it was a giant disappointment. That's them. A lot of noise and no rain. " - carried about by winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their shame, wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." You get the idea how God feels about false teachers?

There have always been false shepherds. There are false shepherds all over the place today, all over the place - in our city, everywhere. There's even going to come an ultimate false shepherd. Zechariah 11:15-17 describes him. God's going to allow a false shepherd called the "foolish shepherd" to rise up in the last days. And you know who it is? It's none other than antichrist. And then God's going to shatter his rule.

It says He's going to "wither his right arm and cut out his right eye." And a shepherd without his arm can't do anything with sheep, can't even pick them up, can't lead them, can't do anything. And without an eye he has no depth perception, he can't tell where they are. No, there's always been false shepherds, and there always will be, culminating in the final false shepherd, antichrist.

In contrast to that, Jesus says, "I'm the true One. I have messianic right to enter the door, gather God's elect sheep, and lead them out of Judaism," to the green pastures of a new covenant provided

in the sacrifice of Christ.

Verse 3, "To him the porter opens - " that is to the true shepherd. He's not going to open for thieves and robbers. "To him the porter opens; and the sheep hear his voice." Did you know that God's sheep hear when Christ speaks? "And he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." Glorious thought.

Two things are here. The human side, we hear when He calls. Divine sovereign side, He knows our names. You say, "How does He know our names?" Listen, my friend, the Bible says that if you're one of His sheep, your name was written in the Lamb's book of life before what? The foundation of the world was ever laid. He knew your name. That's My sheep. And when the time comes, He calls your name. You know something? You know when He calls if you're His sheep. His sheep hear His voice. They know He's calling and He knows their names.

You know, the more I thought about that, the more thrilling it became. To think that He knows my name and that He knew it before the foundation of the world, and that He has that kind of a personal, intimate relationship with me that He actually cares and loves Me in a special personal way.

You know, the shepherds always named their sheep. Brown leg, or black ear, or something like that, or whatever particular characteristic the sheep might have. He knew their names. When he called, they knew his call. They knew it. And so He steps into the fold and He calls, and those that the Father gives to Him shall - what? - come to Him. So there's the divine side. That's sovereignty. He calls His own sheep. But there's a human side. They have to hear His voice, don't they? And respond.

Well, that's a beautiful picture. You say, "Wait a minute. This bothers me. I mean, is He just calling out a people from Israel? What about the rest of us?" Oh, listen, you're taken care of, so am I, praise the Lord. Verse 16, "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold - " that is not of what fold? Israel. Sure. " - them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd." Who's that other fold? It's not Israel, is it? It's the Gentiles, folks. He calls us, too. He goes over to the Gentile fold.

They've got their thieves and robbers, too, right? You better believe it. False teachers in there just as bad as Judaism, maybe worse. But He's the true Shepherd in that fold and He says, "I've got to get My Gentiles out of there, too, and make them one fold, one flock, one Shepherd." There's that idea of oneness again.

Oh what a thrill to know that Jesus knows me, that I have to pass under the rod, and He just checks me over to make sure He's got all my hurts in His mind and understands my needs. Beautiful thought to think that I was given to Him as a gift from the Father, that I'm one of His precious sheep, and that He is a tender loving Shepherd and leads me every day. What a joy.

You see, God is not way off removed, pushing buttons on some supercomputer, you know, see? I mean, that's not the analogy here. He's a tender loving shepherd who knows me and checks me over every day. Oh, what a joyous thing. He leads me where? The psalmist said, "In green pastures by still waters through the valley of the shadow of death." He leads me all the time.

And you'll notice what it says at the end of verse 3, "He leadeth them out." You know, shepherds don't get behind the sheep and herd them along. They lead them. You want to know something exciting? The shepherd always went first, saw the danger, checked out the trail, found the place to pasture, always went out front. And every place the sheep went, he'd already been. Do you like that? Can you apply that to your life? I don't care where you are, friend, Jesus has been there. Isn't that good? Whatever you've gone through, He's been there. Yet without sin, but He's been there. He understands the anxiety of your heart because He's been there. Every step you've ever taken, He's already taken. He's leading. He's out there in front. Beautiful thought.

Verse 4, "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." Now here's an interesting contrast. Beautiful, beautiful thought. And when he putteth forth his sheep, then he goes and leads them, and they follow. And there's two things. First, he's got to get them out of the fold before he can lead them, right?

And the word "to put forth," ekbal, means "to cast them out, or drive them out." He's got to go in the fold and call their names. And, you know, they like it in there, see? Lots of other sheep and it's kind of nice and secure. And he's got to get his little rod and say, "All right, you know, black ear, on your way," and get his sheep out of there. It takes a little bit of energy to get them out of the fold. Once they're out of the fold, he can lead them.

Now you know something? That's a beautiful picture of salvation. All of God's divine energies are concentrated in salvation, see? Getting us out of the bondage of whatever fold we're in, whether it's the pagan fold or the Judaism fold, and He puts His energies and divine energies, Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son all cooperating together, the great power exercised at Calvary and the resurrection, to drive us out of that fold, and then He gets in front and leads us from there on.

Salvation is the hard part, breaking with sin. Then we follow His gentle, tender, careful leading. And Isaiah says if we just are a little bit weak, you know, we can't follow too well, Isaiah says He gathers the little lambs in His bosoms. If you can't keep up because you're kind of young, He'll carry you along. Isn't that good?

And he also says He goes kind of slow and gently leads those that are with young, those who have burdens. He doesn't make you run if you can't run. He just takes you along. The sweet Shepherd. And, you know, they're just standing, I'm just thinking, they're standing right in this group here, one of

those sheep, that blind beggar, see?

And I love the end of verse 4, "They know his voice." That is so good. I think of John 20, Mary Magdalene in the garden. Jesus' body was gone, resurrected. She didn't know that. She says, "Oh, sir, they've taken my Master and I don't know where they laid Him." She thought He was the gardener, Jesus. Finally the light dawned. She knew it was Jesus, you know, and she tried to grab Him and hold onto Him. He says, "You can't hold on to Me yet. I haven't gone to My Father. I'm going to go, and I'll come back, and then I'll be here to stay."

What made the difference? How did she finally know who He was? One word, "Mary." See, she knew His voice. He said her name, she knew His voice, see? That's the way the shepherd works. He just calls the name, and we know His voice, and we follow. What a beautiful thought that is.

Verse 5, could go further, we won't. "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." I love that. True believers don't depart from the faith. Matthew 24:24, "There will come - " false shepherds " - false Christs, false apostles, who if it were possible, would deceive the very elect." You know what that verse means? You can't deceive the very elect. They would do it if it were possible. Not possible. True sheep hear the shepherd's voice. They don't listen to the voice of strangers.

It's interesting that a shepherd's sheep will not, even though the false shepherd speaking physically, would imitate the voice of the shepherd, the true shepherd, they won't follow him. They become so aware of their own shepherd's voice. Just like your dog, if you've had him for a long time, knows your voice. And they follow only their shepherd.

Well, verse 6, "This parable - " or paroimia, spoke Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which He spoke unto them." Right, that's the point, isn't it? They didn't understand. You know, they thought they were shepherds. Jesus says, "You're not only not shepherds, you're not even sheep. My sheep hear My voice. Not only are you not leaders, you aren't even followers." They have just been taken down a few notches.

Then He completely changes the paroimia, in verses 7-10, very quickly in just a minute or so. And He says, "I'm not only the shepherd to the sheep - " this is such a beautiful thing, we could - and we'll spend more time on it next week - but He says, "I'm the door to the fold."

You know, and I really struggled with this for a long time because I could not seem to get in my mind how Jesus can be the shepherd and the door at the same time. That's what you call a mixed simile. I couldn't figure - how could He be the shepherd and the door? That's confusing.

But He says in verse 7 - I love it - "Then said Jesus unto them again - " this indicates that He's broken His thought in a new paromia with the same kind of analogy but different. "Verily, verily, - " again it's all new again, all fresh " - I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." Now how could He be the door when the door before was messianic authority, or messianic right to enter and gather out the flock?

Well after hours - and I mean literally hours - talking to the Spirit of God and asking Him to show me in the Word of God, I came across some thrilling truths as to how the shepherd can also be the door. Now watch this. Once the flock was led out of that fold, from Israel He gathered His own, took them out to a new pasture.

Now it's true, and this is a beautiful thought, when a shepherd and his sheep were way off from the village, they wouldn't go back every night, too far to go. So he would build a little sheepfold on the hillside just for his own sheep. That's the sheepfold in view here, not a mixed sheepfold anymore. These have been led out. These are God's own, and God has made a little sheepfold for them out on the hillside. And it represents the place of blessing.

And the picture is like leading them out of Judaism into the new sheepfold, which is the place of the Father's blessing. And to that sheepfold, Jesus says, "I am the door." He not only leads a man out of the bondage, but he leads him into the new blessing in God, doesn't He? And He says, "I'm the door."

Now watch this. That little hillside sheepfold was just a little simple wall out of mud, or stone, or wood, and it had an opening. No door, just an opening. Jesus says, "I am the door." How does that work? Just this, at night the shepherd would take all of his sheep, put them in the fold, and you know what he would do then? He would lie down across the opening and no sheep could ever go out or in without going over the body of the shepherd. Literally, the shepherd was the door.

So Jesus says in one breath, "I'm the Shepherd." In the next one He says, "I'm also the door." For in the truest sense that shepherd on that hillside became the door to the sheepfold, and he knew every sheep that went in and out. You cannot enter the presence of God through any other door. You must go over the broken body of Jesus Christ. That's the only way. The shepherd who lays his life down for the sheep, right? Jesus, Paul says, is the only way to have access to the Father, Ephesians 2.

So here the sheepfold isn't Israel, at all. The sheepfold is the blessing of God. It's a new one. It's a whole new one. You see, the break is in verse 7. All new. "Verily, verily," all over again, a new sheepfold, Christ the door. The only way into the blessing of the Father is over Christ. Jesus is the door. There's no other way, is there? Jesus says, "I am - " what? " - the way." Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other." No other way. In verse 8, "All that ever came before me were thieves and robbers."

Jesus says there's been a lot of other false doors, haven't there? Lots of false shepherds and doors, but all of them, every false one, has been a thief and a robber. What wonderful truth. The true sheep didn't hear them, did they? True sheep waited for the true Shepherd, see?

There have been false prophets, false teachers, false messiahs, false shepherds, false doors, who said, "We're the way. We're the way. Come through us. Come through us." But the true sheep didn't hear. They waited for the true Shepherd.

So, Jesus says, "I'm the door to God's fold. You'll never get in except by Me. I not only lead you out of bondage, but I'm the door through which you enter into God's presence." You see the difference in those two parables? Verse 9, He then applies it directly.

"I am the door." And He drops the sheepfold idea. "By Me if any man enter in - " not sheep, now He's talking to us " - he shall be saved." To enter into God's blessing, and to enter into God's sheepfold through Christ means you're saved, sthsetai and it means to be - watch this one - "safe. To be safe." That's security. You come through Christ into God's sheepfold, you're safe, you're secure. There's warmth, there's love, care, security. What a promise. For anybody who wants to enter into God's fold, they come through Christ and they're safe.

So safe - watch this, end of verse 9 - that you can go in and out. Do you like that? You know, some people say to me, "Oh, I've gotten God. I found God. Oh, be careful, see? Stay in the fold, see?" Now He changes the analogy all together. You know something? Once you're inside, you can go back out into the world, and walk through the world all you want, communicate your love, communicate who your Shepherd is, and then when the world gets too dark and the problems become too deep, you can just go back in the fold again and say, "Lord, I'm back for a little comfort."

The idea of in and out is not going in and out of salvation, that's ridiculous. The idea of in and out changes the metaphor again. It just changes a little bit - a simulation, so He changes it a little bit. It's the idea of we can actually go back out into the dark world and wander around we don't have to be afraid of wild beasts anymore. We don't have to be afraid of thieves and robbers. We're secure wherever we are.

And then He adds in verse 9 that you'll also "find - " what? " - a pasture." Did you know the Shepherd not only takes care of us but He feeds us? You say, "What's our food?" Right here in the Word of God. That's our food. And, you know, if there are some feeble sheep, that's because they're not eating.

Tragically, the Shepherd has to lead very slowly because we have a lot of sheep who are dragging along. If you want to be a healthy sheep, feed the Word to your soul, and you can go in and out and find pasture, God's sustaining Word, feast on it. Be a healthy sheep.

Verse 10, we'll close. "The thief cometh not - " and here's the contrast, drawn as a summary " - the thief cometh not, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." Contrast. "I am come that they might have life - " that's the opposite of killing is giving life " - and they might have it more abundantly."

False shepherds, false doors come to damn, slaughter, destroy, steal the sheep. Jesus says, "I'm the true Shepherd and I came to gather you up and give you life, abundant and rich in new pasture, in a new sheepfold, with new resource and purpose."

Oh listen, I trust that you know that Shepherd's voice. I pray that you're in His fold. If not, do you feel Him pushing you a little bit? Do you hear Him calling your name? Will you hear His voice?

You say, "Well, I'm already a sheep." Then I ask you this, are you a healthy one? Are you feeding in green pastures? Are you being enriched in His Word every day? He is a Shepherd who loves His sheep. We need to follow His voice. When you don't read the Word, you can't hear His voice. And when you can't hear His voice, that's when you drift away, isn't it? If you don't know this Shepherd, hear His voice. If you do know Him, hear His voice, feed on it.

Father, we thank you this morning for this very beautiful lesson in the care that Jesus has for those that He loves and that love Him. Lord, teach us further from these truths to understand You and us and our relation to You. And we pray, Father, that if there are some this morning who are still locked in the fold of error, bondage, that they may hear the voice of the Shepherd calling them out today, and they may follow.

For those of us who are Christians, Father, help us to follow faithfully and to feast on Your Word daily, that we might hear Your voice and be nourished. We thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.

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