

John 10:1–6

- 1 “Verily, verily, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.
- 2 But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.
- 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.
- 4 And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.
- 5 Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”
- 6 Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

“The Sheep and Their Shepherd” ***John 10:1-6***

INTRO:

We face a significant obstacle in interpreting the Scriptures. We are a Western people and the Bible is an Eastern book. This is nowhere more evident than in our text for today’s study. In the **first six verses** of **John 10**, the Lord Jesus is introducing an analogy which will serve as the hub around which His discussion revolves for most of this chapter. This is the Eastern shepherd and his sheep.

While shepherds and shepherding were common place in the time Jesus lived, they are not so well known to us today. Not only are most of us unfamiliar with shepherding, the process of herding sheep is much different today in the West than it was in the East in the Lord’s time. So, even if we know quite a bit about sheep, it is unlikely that we know anything about the process Jesus described. Let us then, learn the art of Shepherding from the Great Shepherd of the Sheep!

I. The Picture of Shepherding (v. 1-5)

II. The Problem of the Men (v. 6)

I. The Picture of Shepherding (v. 1-5)

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

A. Our first lesson in shepherding is that we can know who people are who come to the sheepfold by the way they enter it. Now, the sheepfold was an enclosure used to shelter and protect the sheep during the night. I am told that the sheepfold could be a cave, a walled enclosure, or sometimes just an area surrounded by a hedge of bushes.

1. The people who do not enter by the door but climb up into the fold some other way, they are thieves and robbers. The word rendered *“thief”* is the Greek word from which we get kleptomaniac, someone who steals. *“Robber,”* means a highwayman or bandit and can mean an insurrectionist. The bottom line is both of these kinds of characters are up to some kind of illicit activity, and they are in it for personal gain. They have no concern for what is best for the sheep, only for what is for their own benefit.

2. God wrote much in the Old Testament about these characters. For example in Ezekiel 34:1-4 we read,

“The word of the LORD came to me: 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? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. 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.’”

3. The Great Shepherd of the sheep will one day deal with the unfaithful shepherds. In this immediate context, He is talking about those Pharisees who set themselves up as the rulers of God’s people who were throwing His sheep out of the fold!

4. On the one hand, we have the people who climb the walls. On the other, we have the person who enters by the door way.

“But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.” (v. 2).

He is the shepherd of the Sheep. Here is the fulfillment of those passages in Ezekiel. The Shepherd’s concern is not personal gain, but the welfare of the sheep. It is difficult to know how the Pharisees understood the phrase *“the shepherd of the sheep.”* However, it is likely our Lord Jesus had in mind texts like Psalm 80:1

“Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth!”

There is also Isaiah 40:10-11

“Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and His arm rules for him; behold, His reward is with Him, and his recompense before Him. He will tend His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in His arms; He will carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.”

or even **Psalm 23:1**

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

Perhaps these are only an allusion, but they allude to the Lord Jesus being Yahweh of the Old Testament.

B. In **verses 3-5** we find our second lesson in shepherding.

“To [the shepherd of the sheep] the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear His voice, and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. When He has brought out all His own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

Not only can we determine the identity of the people by how they enter the fold, we can also see their character in how they respond to true sheep.

1. First, the shepherd is the one whom the sheep hear. The fact that ***“the sheep hear His voice,”*** is a crucial point in this entire chapter. It is found here in this verse and is repeated three more times. Look at **verses 4,**

“And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”

We read again in **verse 16,**

“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.”

Finally in **verse 27** we read,

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

The Eastern shepherd spent long periods of time with his sheep. He led them from pasture to pasture and watering hole to watering hole to find food and water for his sheep. This meant the sheep got to know and trust the shepherd. I have read that sometimes at night a number of shepherds would leave their flocks in a single sheepfold. In the morning to separate their flocks they would simply call out to their sheep and they would hear their shepherd’s voice and come at his call! The shepherd is the one whom the sheep hear.

2. Second, the shepherd is the one who knows the sheep.

“He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out.”

We read here that He calls them by name! He knows each one and He called them individually. I can’t help but think of that great statement in **2 Timothy 2:19.**

“Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.’”

We might respond, ***“Of course the Lord knows who are His. He knows everything!”*** Paul has a special kind of knowing in mind here. He knows us personally. He cares about us individually. He watches over us carefully.

Remember what the LORD told Moses in **Exodus 33:17?**

“So the LORD said to Moses, I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.”

Yes, the LORD cared about Israel, but the LORD wanted Moses to know that He loved him in a very special way.

3. Third, the shepherd is the one whom the sheep follow (v. 3- 4). How do we know the shepherd? He is the one Whom those who are truly God's sheep follow! The life of the sheep is one of following the shepherd.

C. What about the other guys, the robbers and thieves? Jesus talked about them in verse 5,

“A stranger [the sheep] will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

The true sheep will never follow a stranger. Those who are really God's sheep will not follow a false teacher, because they do not know the voice.

II. The Problem of the Men (v. 6)

A. In verse 6, John turns our attention back to the Pharisees who were listening to this story.

“Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.”

Jesus spoke to them in a figure of speech. But the condemning thing was that they did not understand what He talked about. John implied these fellows did not know the Shepherd's voice and could not hear what He said.

B. Let's try to briefly apply what Jesus taught.

1. First, for those of us who are leaders of His flock, it is serious business to be a shepherd of God's sheep. Granted, He is the Shepherd of the sheep, but if you would be an under-shepherd, you better make sure He has called you to that place. Sheep are not left in the hands of a shepherd haphazardly. The Great Shepherd will take a stern account of those who shepherd His sheep. The words of **Jeremiah 23:1** chill my blood.

“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture, says the LORD.”

2. Second, He wrote to all of us. Are we His sheep? Not only did the Lord teach us Who His Shepherd is, He told us who the true sheep are.

True Sheep Know the Lord's Voice. Have you heard the Lord's voice in His word? Have you heard Him calling you to put your trust in Him alone for your salvation?

True Sheep Know the Lord. They have a personal relationship with Him. They spend time getting to know Him better in His word and talk with Him through prayer.

True Sheep Follow the Shepherd. Years ago I spoke with a man who claimed to have received Christ as his Savior, but he had never gone to church. I asked him why he

thought he was saved. He said it was because this evangelist told him he was. I told him I doubted it. He asked me why and I replied, “*Because you aren’t following the Shepherd!*” Before we can join in David’s joy and say, “*The Lord is my shepherd,*” we must be sure that we are His sheep!

Hymn #461 *He Leadeth Me*