**JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD**

**John 10:1–42**

**Key Verse: 10:11**

**“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”**

Happy Sunday everyone!

Today’s passage contains two of the seven “I am” statements of Jesus in John’s Gospel. Jesus says “I am the gate” and “I am the good shepherd”. For this reason, John the author really emphasizes the essential nature of who Jesus is and helps us to know Jesus better personally. To help us deeply grasp what this means, Jesus uses a beautiful and powerful story about the deep personal relationship between a shepherd and his sheep.

Our personal relationship with Jesus is so important always, but it seems so ever more today. Why? We are ever so connected with technology – internet, and phone apps such as twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, KakaoTalk, and many more in our cell phones that we can pull so easily out of our pockets. But in a recent survey of 20,000 people conducted by a healthcare company, about half of the people responded said they feel lonely or left out.

But this passage is an amazing and heart-moving reminder of Jesus our *Good* Shepherd. Jesus is not just our shepherd, but he is our *good* shepherd.

Today we want to think about what this means. Also in these verses, Jesus challenges us to grow to be good shepherds like him. May God speak to our hearts personally through his words today.

Part I. The heart of a good shepherd and the heart of a good sheep.

Look at Verse 1. Jesus starts by rebuking the Pharisees by simply calling them thieves and robbers because of what happened in the previous chapter. In chapter 9, we learned about the man born blind. The Pharisees had evil motives with the man born blind. Completely opposite to Jesus, the Pharisees were upset that the healing had taken place on a Sabbath. They didn’t care that a miracle had happened physically and spiritually. Instead, the Pharisees bullied the man and tried to use him and even his parents for their own selfish and political purposes. In essence, these leaders tried to steal the blind man’s new found faith and rob him of his social status by throwing him out of the synagogue. The behavior of these so-called religious leaders made Jesus really angry. They were supposed to be shepherds for God’s people, but sadly, they didn’t care for their own people.

In contrast, let’s read verses 2-5. Since climbing by some other way seems to mean evil motive, so (quote) “the gate” seems to represent the right motive. A good shepherd’s mission is to care for the sheep. He uses the gate because that is the right way to enter a sheep pen. Also, the sheep probably know to trust the person that uses the gate. Then Jesus talks about the shepherd’s voice 3 times. A good sheep listens to the voice of the shepherd. Sheep are simple creatures. They easily get scared. They have no sense of direction. They tend to wander off easily probably following their food with their head down or playing with other sheep without paying attention to their surroundings. But sheep do know one thing: the voice of their shepherd. From the time they’re born, they learn to recognize their shepherd’s voice, because whenever he comes, he’s affectionate, he helps them find food and water, and he fights off other animals to keep them safe. Sheep sense his genuine care, so they trust him and listen to his voice.

Here Jesus teaches us that to be a genuine sheep, a good sheep, and a happy sheep, *we* must learn to listen to our Shepherd’s voice. God has shown His genuine care through His Words and through sending Jesus His only Son. We listen to his voice as we read the Bible. *Then* we get to know him better and trust him more. Each day, there are many voices vying for our attention. Maybe it’s Netflix after a long week of work. Maybe it’s going through all the stories and pictures on Facebook or Instagram every hour. Maybe the voice in our head is to do everything possible to get our children into Harvard University or into Medical School. Whatever those voices are, above all else, may God help us to be good sheep who listen to the voice of our good shepherd Jesus through reading the bible and through prayer as one of our utmost important priorities in our daily lives.

Look at verse 3. A good shepherd calls his own sheep “by name.” In ancient times, all the people of a town would keep their sheep in one location. That must be a lot of sheep to know one by one, by name. And yet, the shepherd did know each sheep by name. The shepherd would get to know each sheep’s personality and character. Some would be playful, some slow, some loud, some stubborn, and some shy. Then the shepherd would give each sheep an appropriate name. Why does Jesus mention this? It is because our names mean so much. Rich people want to keep their legacy by paying millions of dollars to put their names on buildings, such as the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park. 25% of the money to build that park came from the Pritzker family. What if we called each other at our church by number? Member 2 plays the piano, member 6 does the PowerPoint, and member 4 does the offering, and so on. There wouldn’t be a feeling of community or family. Personally, I have met people that would call me Kim and never considering to ask me and kept calling me Kim. I knew a manager at work that called my colleague by the wrong name for 6-months straight.

Simply, if we don’t care to get to know someone’s name, it’s a sign that we don’t care much about that person. Knowing each sheep by name shows the shepherd’s personal understanding and love of each one. In the same way, God our Shepherd, Creator of heavens and the earth, understands and loves us each dearly. Jeremiah 1:5a says, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,”. David wrote of God: “You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways” (Ps139:2–3). May God help us to grow in his love as good shepherds that build personal relationships with each other and those that that need Jesus.

Look at verses 4-5. This shows us that a good shepherd leads his sheep. A shepherd wouldn’t follow his sheep from the back. He would go on ahead of them, to lead them to good pasture, risking himself first. Jesus’ teachings were short, but his good examples were many. How did he lead by example? Jesus was more concerned about helping one lost person than about having a big and popular ministry for his own glory when he was called to go through Samaria and help the Samaritan woman (Jn4:1-4). Jesus stayed on his cross until he finished his mission (Jn19:30). Most of all, Jesus was humble in his leading. He gave up his glory and power as God’s Son to be with sinners to help us. John 1:14 says, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” We can have confidence and joy in following Jesus because of all his good examples. May God also help us grow as good shepherds like him, who lead by example.

Part II. Jesus the gate and Jesus the good shepherd.

In verses 7-10, Jesus says the first of the two “I am” statements. Jesus plainly tells the Pharisees that he is the gate for the sheep because they didn’t understand. He was essentially saying that although the Pharisees tried to act like thieves and robbers toward the man born blind, Jesus protected the man by the grace and love of Jesus the gate.

Then in verses 9 and 10, Jesus extends a gracious invitation to all of us. When we come to Jesus the gate and enter through him, we are saved, and we can come in and go out, and find pasture. He keeps us safe from spiritual thieves and robbers, and he satisfies our souls. We need to learn to enter through Jesus every day, to be kept spiritually safe and to have all our needs fulfilled in him. In verse 10, here Jesus contrasts himself with “the thief.” The thief wants to steal, kill and destroy. This represents false religious leaders, and ultimately, the devil who steals people away from God, kills and destroys them. A good shepherd, on the other hand, does everything possible to ensure that his sheep have life, and have it to the full. He wants to see his sheep eat well, be healthy, content and be full of joy. When we follow Jesus our good shepherd, he promises us life to the full. He promises a life full of meaning, full of joy, full of purpose and full of true satisfaction.

How does Jesus provide that for us? At the same time, how does Jesus challenge us? Let’s all read verse 11 together. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” From the time of Old Testament in Ezekial (Ch34), God had a shepherd-like concern for his people. Because of our selfishness though, the leaders of Israel failed to be good shepherds. But God sent Jesus to fulfill God’s hope by willingly laying down his life on the cross. This past Easter, we learned deeply about the worst possible pain and suffering that Jesus went through on the cross. Jesus as the Lamb of God (Jn1:29), sacrificed his own life and shed his own blood (1Jn 2:2), opened the way for us to be with our Father God and have eternal life (Jn14:6). This is why Jesus said he is the gate. This is why Jesus is the only good shepherd. This is why Jesus became our best friend. When we realize and accept this truly great love of God for us in Jesus, we can finally find true satisfaction and rest. We must remember and treasure this every day.

To further understand verse 11 and to be able to put into practice, we need to look at verses 12 and 13. Let’s read verses 12 and 13 together. “The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.” A hired hand enters by the gate and takes care of the sheep during ordinary times, so he looks like the shepherd. But at a time of crisis he runs away, revealing his true heart and intentions. Being a hired hand is much like working for a company today. We don’t have negative intent like thieves or robbers, but people usually don’t go to work out of willingness. It’s to get paid money. So I would run away in a time of crisis, too. Why did Jesus mention the hired hand? Spiritually speaking, Jesus mentions the hired hand to rebuke the religious leaders, and to help his disciples live not like hired hands but like true shepherds for people. 1 Peter 5:2 says, “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve;”. We don’t like to risk ourselves for others or to lose things for others. But while serving people, if we never make any real sacrifices, if we never lose anything, we can’t be like Jesus. We can’t have the deep personal, trusting, and true shepherd and sheep relationship.

Look at verses 14–18. Jesus repeats for emphasis that he is the good shepherd. Here we learn that a good shepherd has a deep personal relationship with God and a good shepherd also cares for the “other sheep”. Jesus deeply understood his Father’s will. He understood his Father’s heart for sinners. Because he understood his Father’s heart, he could sacrifice himself, just like a good father sacrifices himself for his children. Good shepherds have this same personal relationship with God the Father through Jesus and cares for all the people of the world.

In verses 17–18, we see that a good shepherd is a good sheep to God. God loved Jesus because Jesus chose to obey his will. In turn, Jesus obeyed God because he loved God. In this way, Jesus himself was a good sheep to God. When he was a good sheep to God, he became a good shepherd. Good shepherds are those who love God and obey God.

So when we look at verses 11-18 together, Jesus is indirectly teaching us here how to become good shepherds. Actually, this was why he called and trained his disciples in the first place. In the end he told Simon Peter, “Do you truly love me more than these? Feed my lambs” (21:15–17). Jesus not only was a good shepherd for his disciples; he also wanted them to become good shepherds for God’s flock and he did so out of his own accord. In the same way, He wants us to grow as good shepherds for his flock. Later, John wrote in one of his epistles in 1 John 3:16, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers”.

Willing obedience is important here because what happens when we do something out of blind obedience? We become bitter and angry. We also blamed everyone else if things don’t go our way. I went to Northwestern University for college, but I actually wanted to go to University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. For many years, I blamed my parents for forcing me to go there because they said they would give me a car if I went to Northwestern University. They did give me a car and I used it whenever I wanted, but I thought they were going to buy me a car. I didn’t want to share with the family. My point in this story is that I willingly obeyed, but when the situation was not exactly what I wanted, I blamed my parents. May God helps us to good shepherds out of love.

In verses 22-30, here we learn more about Jesus’s heart and the heart of the Jews. In modern Greek understanding, the phrase "to keep in suspense" means, "to annoy or bother". The Jews were just annoyed and bothered by Jesus. The bottom line was this: these Jewish leaders truly did not care at all about who Jesus was. And we understand this through Jesus's response. Jesus comes back to the theme of being a good shepherd and good sheep in verses 26 and 27. The Jews simply were not good sheep. They genuinely did not want to listen to Jesus, trust Jesus, nor follow Jesus. So how can they know who Jesus is? Even after seeing all the amazing miracles that Jesus had performed, they decided not to believe. So, Jesus bluntly tells them that they refuse to believe because they are not his sheep. Jesus didn't say they couldn't believe or had a hard time believing, but he said they just refused to believe.

Look at verses 31-39. Upon hearing all that Jesus had to say, it would have been such a beautiful moment if the Jewish leaders accepted Jesus' testimony and rejoiced in how they can have eternal life. Instead, they just got angry. The Jews just interpreted his words as blasphemy. They were so angry that they picked up rocks again to stone Jesus to death. But Jesus didn't run away. He wasn't afraid. He still had compassion on the Jews and wanted to help them. In these verses, Jesus mentioned the Old Testament because he wanted the religious leaders to realize that God uses human beings and even called them (quote) "gods". God used the term "god" on people, therefore Jesus could call himself that and since he was human and was from God and is God. Jesus really tried hard to help them. Sadly though, they still did not listen and refused to repent.

Finally, John the author ends the section on a positive note. Look at Verses 40-42. When John the Baptist was baptizing, he told the people to repent and told them about Jesus. Jesus came and many people went to him and many people believed in him. The author John mentions this to contrast the Jewish leaders and these people. Unlike the calloused and proud Jewish leaders, these people's hearts were open, listened to Jesus’s voice. Thus, many repented of their sins and believed in Jesus. Jesus, our good shepherd, continued to help wandering people to be saved.

Today we learned that Jesus is our good shepherd. We also learned that he wants us to grow as good shepherds for his flock. May God help us especially to listen to the voice of our good shepherd Jesus.