



# Listen to the Good Shepherd

Fourth Sunday of Easter

John 10:11-18

“I am the good shepherd;  
I know my sheep and my sheep know me  
just as the Father knows me and I know the Father  
and I lay down my life for the sheep.  
I have other sheep that are not of this fold.

April 22, 2018

## Thought for the Week

The context of this discussion is the conversation that Jesus has with the Pharisees after the story of the man born blind. The story of the man born blind ends with the Pharisees asking Jesus, "Well, are we also blind?" Jesus says to them, "If you were blind, then you would have no sin, but since you say 'We see,' your blindness remains." That's the beginning of this discussion.

The argument between Jesus and the Pharisees reflects the situation that was present in the community of Israel after the Jewish War when the Pharisees were dominant. In the story of the man born blind (John 9) the Pharisees are in charge, so the audience of John is addressed as Pharisees. What that means is that the people who heard John 9 identified with the Pharisees and could be addressed as Pharisees. Pharisees were devout Jews who cared about the nation and their communities. They cared about God and the observance of the law of God.

They were like many of the people and ministers of the various religions today. They are the people who are religious. They attended the synagogue services, observed the law, did what is right and good, and they cared about it. They were not like the people who had nothing to do with religion or who were indifferent to it. They were who Jesus is talking to and he was talking to them in relation to how they will respond both in the priority of the healing of the man born blind, and also in their relationship with him.

The parable of the good shepherd is a very powerful metaphor of relationship between Jesus and the sheep. It develops the metaphor present in Ezekiel 34 (which I recommend you read). It begins with a condemnation of those who are false shepherds. God says to Ezekiel, "Mortal, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to the shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord God, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves. Shouldn't shepherds feed the sheep?'"

Then later on, "'As I live', says the Lord God, 'because my sheep have become prey and my sheep have become food for all the wild animals since there was no shepherd and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep but the shepherds have fed themselves and have not fed my sheep, therefore you shepherds hear the word of the Lord.' Thus says the Lord God, 'I am against the shepherds and I will demand my sheep from their hand and will put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer will the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths so that they may not be food for them.'"

*Happy Birthday Sabrina (4/29)*

## **Witnessing for Christ**

How can Jesus be the Door and the Shepherd at the same time? Actually, there was no door that swung on hinges and had a padlock to secure the sheepfold. The man who was guarding it slept across the doorway so that he, himself, was the door. Jesus is not only the door; He is also the Good Shepherd, the one who stays in the doorway. He is the Door which opens to eternal life; He is the One who protects His own; He is the Good Shepherd.

Jesus is also called the Lamb of God. How can He be the Lamb of God and at the same time be the Good Shepherd? This may sound like mixed descriptions, but it is one of the most gracious truths in Scripture. He is the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He came down and identified Himself with us, who are the sheep—but He is the Shepherd also. The fact that He became a Lamb emphasizes the humanity of Jesus Christ. The fact that He is the Good Shepherd emphasizes the deity of Christ. He alone was worthy and able to save us. No other human being could do this; He had to be God.

The Lord Jesus Christ has a three-fold relationship to this flock, which is known, as His church. First of all He is the Good Shepherd, and He defines the Good Shepherd in verse 11: “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” Then He is the Great Shepherd, for we read in the magnificent benediction given in Hebrews 13:20: “Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will...” So today He is the Great Shepherd of the sheep, as seen in Psalm 23. But that does not give the total picture. He is also the Chief Shepherd. This speaks of the future. Peter says in his first epistle, “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Pet. 5:4). The hireling does not care for the sheep. Founders of some of the world religions did very little for their followers. Modern cult leaders actually get rich off people. In contrast to this, the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep, and He protects His own.