



Metro Calvary – Roseville CA
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July 18, 2010

The Gospel of John

The Good Shepherd

John 10

We pick up in our study of John's Gospel this morning in **John Chapter 10**.

We want to begin by **setting the context!**

We want remember that when John wrote this there was no Chapter 10. There were no chapter divisions in the original manuscripts. They are not Divinely inspired. They were inserted in the early 1200s. This was done for much the same reason your house and my house has numbers in front of them. These chapters are like ADDRESSES by which we can find the location of particular events, persons, or truths. So John doesn't say — "I think I'll write CHAPTER 10." He simply continues the account of what we call **Chapter 9**

In **John 9** we were introduced to a man born blind. While teaching in the Temple Jesus had declared Himself to be *the Light of the World* — and if anyone *followed Him they would not walk in spiritual darkness, instead they would have the light of life*. As they're leaving the Temple precincts Jesus and His disciples come upon him. He was sitting in the dust of the earth — blind and begging in the temple precincts. His entire life was spent in utter physical darkness. The disciples wanted to talk ABOUT him — not to him. They saw the man as a topic for theological discussion. To **Jesus** he was a **person** — a **human being** to be *pitied and needing the healing touch of God*. Jesus spits in the dust and makes mud, puts it on the eyes of this man and commands him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. The man went and washed and came back seeing. What followed was bizarre. Rather than rejoice over his healing they brought the healed man before the religious leaders. They told the healed man that Jesus was not of God because He had healed on the Sabbath. Besides that — these religious leaders didn't even

believe that he ever was blind. They interrogated his parents and they assured the religious leaders that this was indeed their son, and that he was indeed born blind. They bring the healed man back for questioning and he insists that it was Jesus who opened his eyes. They become incensed — *Who are you? You were born in sin.* And in **9:34** we are told that they threw him out of the synagogue. They excommunicated him. They cut him off from Israel. Literally they **CAST him out**. The word is ἐκβάλλω ekballō. It is a very IMPORTANT WORD because we find it used in **John 10**. Draw a line in your Bibles from **John 9:34** to **John 10:4**.

Immediately after the man is cut off from his family, and in the mind of the Jews, cut off from God — we are given a beautiful **preview** of the **profound** theme of **John 10** — John tells us that JESUS FOUND him. Upon finding him Jesus asks —

John 9:35 do you believe in the Son of man (some versions read son of God?)

The healed man says —

John 9:36-38 ³⁶*Who is he, Lord that I might believe?* ³⁷*Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.”* ³⁸*He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.*

The chapter closes with Jesus blasting the Pharisees — He tells these men who claimed to be the spiritual guides of Israel that their spiritual pride had left them blind and guilty before God.

John then immediately moves into the opening words of what we call **Chapter 10** — **Truly, truly, I say to you**. Again — with these words Jesus sets Himself forward as the truth-teller in a world of lies. Again we are tethered to the prologue — *full of grace and truth*.

Jesus is claiming to be the only source of truth on the subject matter that is to follow. He challenges us to listen to Him over and above anyone else who has something to say in the subject He is addressing

The Holy Spirit captures this moment of profound **revelation** and **confrontation**. Jesus used things incredibly familiar to his listeners to tell them the TRUTH about who they were and who He is.

This teaching moment is taking place in Jerusalem, which is located in the southern region of Israel known as Judah. The heart of Judea was a central

plateau that stretched from Bethel to Hebron — a distance of about 35 miles North and South and 14 to 17 miles East and West. The ground was rough and stony — making Judaea much more pastoral than agricultural. Because of that, that the most familiar figure of the Judean uplands was **the shepherd**.

The life of the shepherd was incredibly hard! No flock **ever** grazed without a shepherd — that meant that **he was never off duty**. I used to picture the shepherd/sheep portions of Scripture through the lens of the Yorkshire Dales in England. There you find countless sheep grazing in endless, lush green pastures — the sheep safely hemmed in by hedgerows and dry stonewalls. That was BEFORE I went to Israel and discovered that the pastoral realities in Judea are the antithesis of those in England. Instead of endless fields of green there are endless miles dirt and rock with grass growing up between the rocks. The scarcity of grass causes the sheep to **constantly wander** in search of places to graze. There are no hedgerows or dry stonewalls to contain and protect the sheep — so the sheep have to be **constantly watched**. On either side of that long, narrow, plateau you see countless places where the ground drops away — where the sheep can fall and be hurt.

The life of the shepherd was not only **daunting** in terms of constant watchfulness — it was **dangerous**. The shepherd had to guard the flock against wild animals — especially against wolves. There were always thieves and robbers ready to steal the sheep. **Constant** vigilance, courage, and patient love for his flock, were the necessary characteristics of the shepherd.

QUOTE: Sinclair Ferguson — *In talking about growing up in Scotland and watching shepherds with sheep — he said that shepherds always mystified him as a kid. He said that growing up he and his friends just wanted to get out of the country into the city to have a real life. He said every day he would see these shepherds go out early in the morning into the field with their sheep — sit with their sheep all day long — and then come back again at night. Ferguson said that for years he wondered — “What in the world would possess anyone to want to be a shepherd? They smell. They’re dumb.” Then he told of how one day, as a grown man, the Lord spoke to his heart and said — “Don’t you understand? These are men who love sheep.”*

That is why *shepherd* and *sheep* are the **perfect metaphor** to reveal the heart of God in caring for man — and in particular the nation of Israel.

Psalm 77:20 You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Psalm 79:13 But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever;

Psalm 80:1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock You who are enthroned upon (dwell between) the cherubim, shine forth.

Psalm 95:7 For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

*Psalm 100:3 Know that the **Lord**, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

We also find in the Old Testament that God's Anointed One, the Messiah, is pictured as the shepherd of the sheep.

Isaiah 40:11 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.

While *shepherd* is the perfect metaphor to reveal the heart of God towards man — *sheep* is the perfect metaphor to describe mankind in general — and the nation of Israel in particular — because the greatest need of *the sheep* is to have a *shepherd*.

QUOTE: Phillip Keller: A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23 — *Among the animal kingdom sheep seem to have come out on the short end. From all accounts they are of limited intelligence. When it comes to finding food, they are definitely uncreative. As creatures of habit, they will follow paths through desolate places even though not far away is excellent forage. Sheep are also given to listless wandering. They are definitely at the lower end of the intelligence scale. There are even accounts of their walking into an open fire! Shepherds confirm that they are timid and stubborn. They can be frightened by the most ridiculous things, though at other times nothing can move them. Furthermore, of all the animals subject to husbandry, they take the most work.¹*

Sheep have **no sense of direction**. If they go over the crest of a hill they have no idea where they are or how to get back. *Sheep* are **absolutely defenseless**. There is no way a sheep can defend itself. You never hear of attack sheep! I've seen a lot of old WW II movies depicting a German soldier walking the fence line of a POW camp — Have you ever ONCE seen one of those guards with a sheep on the end of his a leash instead of a German Shepherd?

¹ Hughes, R. K. (1999). *John : That you may believe*. Preaching the Word (262–264). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books.

To top it all off, *sheep* are **prone to wander**. The Bible tells us that *All we like sheep have gone astray (Isaiah 53)*. Prone to wander — No sense of direction — Defenseless. All of that screams to us that *Sheep need a shepherd*. **God says that HE is the shepherd that man so desperately needs.**

The most famous of the Old Testament references to the shepherd heart of God is **Psalm 23**, which opens with the words —

יְהוָה yehôvâh רֹעֵה rā'âh — *The LORD is my shepherd.*

As we work through the chapter we are going to find Jesus using characters and terms that were (and still are today) wrapped up in that pastoral culture.

The first — and most important figure — is *the shepherd* (6x in the chapter). **Jesus is going to say — I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD (v.14)**. **This is huge** — because with the amazing words *I am the Good Shepherd*, Jesus declares that HE is *yehôvâh rā'âh* of **Psalm 23**.

Here are the other terms and characters that fill the chapter. We are going to read about a *SHEEPFOLD (v.1)*. There is a *DOOR and a GATE KEEPER (v.1-3)*. There are TWO other *DOORS (v.7; 9)*. Throughout the chapter there are 13 references to *THE SHEEP*. We will learn that there are different *FOLDS (v.16)* and a single *FLOCK (v.16)*. Then there are those whom Jesus labels as *THIEVES and ROBBERS (v1; 8; 10)*, and *WOLVES (v.12)* and *HIRELINGS (v.12)*.

Jesus chose to use all of these figures of speech (**v.6**) to instruct his listeners (and you and me) about the NATURE and BEHAVIOR of THE GOOD SHEPHERD — the NATURE and BEHAVIOR of HIS SHEEP — the NATURE and BEHAVIOR of the FALSE SHEPHERDS and HIRELINGS.

Let's read through the first section of the chapter

1“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. 2But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” 6This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but

they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁷ So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it 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. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Verse 1 — the sheepfold

Jewish shepherds kept their sheep in **two kinds of sheepfolds**. If they were out in the country, the sheepfold was like a low-walled corral made of stone with a narrow opening in front. We will come to that sheepfold in a while. If they were in town, the fold was much bigger — it was structurally larger and sturdier. It was essentially an enclosed communal corral. THAT is the sheepfold of **Verse 1**. It was not uncommon for this sheepfold to be part of a family courtyard. There would be **several flocks** brought into that sheepfold in the evening. Those flocks were committed to the care of the *gatekeeper* or *porter* for the night.

Knowing that those listening understood this imagery perfectly — Jesus says

¹ ...he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

The only reason anyone would climb over the wall is because they KNEW that the *gatekeeper/porter* would not recognize them as the legitimate shepherd of one of those flocks. Jesus used two powerful words to describe those who were not legitimate and true shepherds of those sheep —

κλέπτης *kleptēs* — THIEF

λστης *lē-s-tēs* — ROBBER.

The difference between *thief* and *robber* is that the *thief* employs stealth and deception to steal, while the *robber* uses violence to take the property of another.² Here are a couple of insights that can help us to put a face to the *thief* and the *robber* —

Judas (the man who embezzled money from the funds given to support Jesus and His disciples, and who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver) is called *kleptēs* — a **THIEF** (*John 12:6*).

Barabbas (the man the Jews chose over Jesus to be released by Pontius Pilate) is called *lē-s-tēs* — a **ROBBER** (*John 18:40*).³

The **THIEF** and the **ROBBER** — were not truly shepherds. They were only interested in stealing or wounding the sheep. They had no right to the sheep — and had to avoid the gate.

²But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the gatekeeper opens.

The *gatekeeper* was responsible for protecting the sheep during the night. In the morning he made sure that ONLY THE LEGITIMATE SHEPHERD could enter the sheepfold and have access to the sheep. In contrast to the *thief* and the *robber* — Jesus says that the genuine shepherds of the sheep would simply knock on the door of the sheepfold because they knew that the *gatekeeper/porter* would recognize them as the legitimate shepherds of the sheep and would open to them and they would enter through the gate.

² Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1993). *A handbook on the Gospel of John*. Helps for translators; UBS handbook series (323). New York: United Bible Societies.

³ Robertson, A. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Jn 10:1). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

This whole picture is incredibly simple and clear in the minds of those listening — but the application of these familiar images are going to blow their minds!

HERE'S THE PICTURE — The *sheepfold* (v.1) is not heaven — it's the nation of Israel. In this chapter Jesus makes it clear that *the sheepfold* is the nation of Israel

John 10:16 And I have **other sheep** that are not **of this fold**. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be **one flock**, one shepherd.

The Gentiles are the “*other sheep*.” They are not of the fold of Israel. Remember also —

Psalm 80:1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock You who are enthroned upon (dwell between) the cherubim, shine forth.

Psalm 95:7 For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Psalm 100:3 Know that the **Lord**, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Time and again the Old Testament Scriptures referred to the political and religious leaders of Israel as the shepherds of God's people. The *thieves* and the *robbers* represent the men who ruled over Israel that were not legitimate shepherds. They were men who were far from the heart of *yehôvâh râ'âh*. Yet they **PRETENDED** to be shepherds over God's people out of selfish motives!

Ezekiel 34:1-10 The word of the Lord came to me: ²“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?** ³You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. ⁴The 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** (sounds like the religious leaders of Chapter 9 in their dealings with the man who had been healed by Jesus). ⁵So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. ⁶**My sheep** were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them. ⁷“Therefore, **you shepherds**, hear the word of the Lord: ⁸As I

*live, declares the Lord God, surely because **my sheep** have become a prey, and **my sheep** have become food for all the wild beasts, 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, ⁹therefore, **you shepherds**, hear the word of the Lord: ¹⁰Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am **against the shepherds**, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves.*

The men spoken of in **Ezekiel 34** were *thieves and robbers* in the sheepfold of Israel. Here in **John 10** Jesus is telling the religious leaders of **Chapter 9** that they were cut from the same piece of cloth as the pretend shepherds of **Ezekiel 34**! Jesus is calling the religious leaders of **John 9** *thieves and robbers* because, like the shepherds of **Ezekiel 34**, they were more interested in fleecing the sheep than guiding, and guarding them. They *fed themselves, and have not fed God's sheep — with force and harshness they ruled* over the healed man, casting him out and cutting him off from the social and religious life in Israel.

After publically branding these men as *thieves and robbers* — Jesus identifies Himself as the true Shepherd of Israel. In the last line of **Ezekiel 34:10** God says — *I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them. **The door*** in this verse is not Jesus. It represents lawful access to the sheep and recognition as the true shepherd. **Jesus is God Incarnate** (prologue) **come to the sheepfold of Israel**. Jesus didn't need to sneak into the nation and take sheep for Himself by force or guile. Jesus came to Israel just as the Old Testament Scripture had promised (**Isaiah 40:11**) — the *gatekeeper* (believed by most scholars to be John the Baptizer) recognized Jesus as the shepherd of **Isaiah 40:11** and opened the door for Him.

PRESENT APPLICATION: In a sense those involved as pastors in the Body of Christ should be like the *gatekeeper/porter* in that they should be quick and vigilant to recognize Jesus as the Good Shepherd and welcome Him into the portion of the flock that He has given them to watch over. Towards the end of the first century Jesus was actually left outside of the Church in Laodicea — *Behold I stand at the door and knock (Revelation 3:20)*. May we never see Jesus outside the door of this assembly, knocking and asking to come in. May He always be recognized as the TRUE and **GOOD SHEPHERD**. May we always invite Him to speak to His sheep — call His sheep — lead His sheep.

QUOTE: J.C. Ryle — *The false shepherd of souls is he who enters the ministerial office with little or no thought about Christ, from worldly and self-exalting motives,*

but from no desire to exalt Jesus, and the great salvation that is in Him. Christ, in one word, is the grand touchstone of the minister of religion. The man who makes much of Christ is a pastor after God's own heart, whom God delights to honor. The minister who makes little of Christ is one whom God regards as an impostor--as one who has climbed up to his holy office not by the door, but by "some other way."

³...The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁷So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

There is so much for us here that we are going to have to walk through it a couple of times.

³...The sheep (all of the sheep in the pen) hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

HIS LISTENERS KNEW HOW THAT WORKED

When the true shepherds arrived at the communal sheepfold in the morning — they didn't have to separate out their own sheep one by one. Each shepherd would separate his own sheep by merely calling to them —all the sheep heard that one shepherd's voice, but only that shepherd's sheep responded. His would push their way through the other sheep and make their way to their own him.

QUOTE: William Barclay — *H. V. Morton tells of a scene that he saw in a cave near Bethlehem. Two shepherds had sheltered their flocks in the cave during the night. How were the flocks to be sorted out? One of the shepherds stood some distance away and gave his peculiar call which only his own sheep knew, and soon his whole flock had run to him, because they knew his voice. They would have come for no one else, but they knew the call of their own shepherd.*

HERE'S THE PICTURE —

Jesus has already branded these religious leaders as blind in **Chapter 9**, and as false shepherds, thieves and robbers, here in **Chapter 10**. Now Jesus declares that He is not only the True Shepherd, but as the promised shepherd of **Ezekiel 34** and **Isaiah 40** He was *leading His own sheep OUT* of that sheepfold.

FIRST — Think of the nation of Israel — It is a nation — a political state that is built upon two inseparable things — ethnicity (They descend from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and religion. THAT is the sheepfold that would contain the flock of the Lord — In fact from that sheepfold would come the Lamb of God! Jesus is going to lead His sheep out of THAT *sheepfold*.

Again — let's remember the picture — the physical enclosure that Jesus is using as an object lesson. It contained several flocks — each answering to the voice of it's own shepherd. I can't help but think of the various sects within Israel. Some in Israel were the followers of the Pharisees (The hyper-legalists who added their man made traditions and laws to the Word of God). Some were followers of the Sadducees (They didn't believe in miracles or angels or resurrection — they literally subtracted from the Word of God). Some were followers of the Herodians (They were willing to make spiritual compromises for the sake of political favor). Some were followers of the zealots (They advocated the violent overthrow of Roman rule). By way of this metaphor Jesus says — I am the legitimate and true shepherd of Israel; and as such have access to the sheep of Israel. Jesus is saying that among the various sheep in the *sheepfold* of Israel — He has his own sheep.

THEN — in **verse 7** Jesus refers to Himself as “*The door of the sheep.*” THIS door is not the door into heaven. Jesus declares that He is *the door* of the sheepfold — and BY HIM it is possible for the sheep to *leave* the fold (the religion of Judaism) and to *enter* His flock. So we have the picture of Jesus leading men and women out of the sheepfold of Israel.

BY THE WAY — This is not the end of Israel as a nation. In his letter to the **Romans**, Paul says in **Chapter 11** that there is still a remnant of His sheep in the nation of Israel. The Old Testament promises a yet future day when the Nation of Israel will recognize Jesus. At present, there are individual Jews being led out of that sheepfold (out tour guide in in Israel, Steve - our friend Amir Tsarfati); but Jesus is at this time primarily calling sheep that are not of the fold of Israel.

Here's how D.A. Carson put it — *Jesus comes to the sheep pen of Judaism, and calls his own sheep out individually to constitute his own messianic 'flock'.*

In the very real history of Israel there is an amazing foreshadowing and picture of this. We find it in the Old Testament Book of Numbers. There in **Numbers 27:15–17** Moses prays for a successor who will lead the people of God **out** and **bring them in** ‘so that the LORD’s people will not be like sheep without a shepherd’. Check this out — The name of the man that the Lord says will succeed Moses in Israel’s history is recorded in the very next verse of Numbers 27 — His name is **Joshua**, which in Greek, is ‘**Jesus**’.

⁴When he has brought out all his own,

A quick stop on this phrase **brought out**. We mentioned earlier that it is the same Greek word translated as **CAST him out** — κβάλλω ekballō — back in **Chapter 9**. On the human side this man was being **CAST OUT** by man — but on the heavenly side He was being BROUGHT OUT by Jesus. The Pharisees *threw* the beggar out of the synagogue, but Jesus **led** him out of Judaism and into His Messianic flock!

he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

In the western world — shepherds drive the sheep from the back of the flock, often using a sheep dog. The shepherds in the land of the Bible in the day of Jesus (and even today) lead their flocks — they lead by their voice — they lead by calling them on.

⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

STORY: (Unknown Source) — *A man in Australia was arrested and charged with stealing a sheep. But he claimed emphatically that it was one of his own that had been missing for many days. When the case went to court, the judge was puzzled, not knowing how to decide the matter. At last he asked that **the sheep** be brought into the courtroom. Then he ordered **the plaintiff (the accuser)** to step outside and call the animal. The sheep made no response except to raise its head and look frightened. The judge then instructed **the defendant (the man accused of stealing the sheep)** to go to the courtyard and call the sheep. When the accused man began to make his distinctive call, the sheep bounded toward the door. It was obvious that he recognized the familiar voice of his master.*

HERE'S THE PICTURE — To not know the difference between truth and error.... the doctrine of Christ and the doctrine of man, is a sure proof that you are do not belong to Jesus.

“This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. 7So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

There are THREE DOORS in this first half of the chapter and we don't want to confuse them —

“The door into the sheepfold” (v. 1) — Jesus came to Israel through the way appointed in Scripture; the *gatekeeper/porter* (John the Baptizer) opened the door for Him.

“The door of the sheep” (v. 7) — This is the door that leads people out of their present fold — in this case, Judaism. Jesus, Himself, is **the way out**. Jesus Himself opened the way for multitudes to leave the old religious system and find new life.

In **Verse 9** we find Jesus, Himself, to be *The door of salvation (v. 9)*.

In closing I want us to visit some huge truths about the Shepherd and His sheep.

Concerning the Shepherd —

he calls his own sheep by name

The whole of the Christian life is intensely personal between the individual believer and the Lord Jesus Christ. That life **BEGINS** with Jesus calling us **BY NAME**.

He goes before His sheep

In virtually every picture of God shepherding His people in the Old Testament — that is the place we find Him. *“He leads me by the still waters — He leads me in the paths of righteousness” — “You lead thy people like a flock.”*

HUGE — Jesus *goes before His sheep* in everything with one exception — the experience of sin. With this single exception — *"He was tempted in all points like as we are."*

He knows what it is to be hungry, tired, persecuted, despised, rejected, and sorrowful. He knows what it is to have a loved one die (we will see this in **Chapter 11**). He knows what it is to suffer physically — and He knows what it is to face death. It is so wonderful and so important for you and me to know this morning that no matter how strange or hard our path might seem — Jesus has gone before us. There is no need for us to fear **because we are following the lover of our souls.**

QUOTE: F.B. Meyer — *It may be that you cannot discern Him; but this makes no real difference. Dare to believe that if you are in his place--that is, if you are treading a path which is clearly marked out for you by inevitable circumstances and by unmistakable inward promptings, although you cannot see Him, and the way seems lonely, yet--that He is just before you; the darkness veils, but does not obliterate Him; the Lord is going before you, and the Holy One is your reward.*

There is going to be so much more for us to learn about the Good Shepherd as we study through the rest of this chapter.

Concerning the sheep —

FIRST — I believe that verse 3 certainly implies what theologians call *election*. It is possible to infer that they were His sheep even prior to being called by Him. But I believe that the context does not stress election — rather it stresses identification — by that I mean that it is stressing the behavior that proves that you belong to Jesus — the trademark, if you would, of those who truly are **HIS OWN SHEEP**. Jesus has His own sheep. There are those men and women who belong to Jesus and those who do not belong to Jesus. The thing that identifies you as belonging to Jesus is that you hear His voice and you follow. That is a part of the spiritual DNA, if you would, of the sheep that belong to Jesus.

SECOND — They follow the shepherd anywhere. THAT is a trademark of His sheep. No one has a right to claim to be one of Christ's sheep if he or she lives in willful, persistent, open disobedience, and refuses to do something about it. Just as there are false shepherds, so there are goats that try to pass for sheep. One day Christ will say to them, ***"I never knew you"*** (**Matt. 7:23**).

Becoming a Christian begins in eternity (Eph 1 - chosen before the foundations of the earth). But it transpires in life with Jesus saying — FOLLOW ME. It

implies FAITH and OBEDIENCE and DEPENDENCE. If you belong to Jesus you trust in Him, look to Him for direction and help as each moment needs. Sometimes following Jesus requires us to believe in Him against everything we see and every emotion we feel. If we lean to our own understanding we will end up lost, hungry and wounded.

FOLLOWING JESUS — From the first moment we hear His voice and step out of the fold to follow Him, we embark on a life of faith — in which Jesus goes before us and we follow Him. That's why we are told that *the just shall live by faith*. That's why Paul would say — *this life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me*. That's why we are told to be *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*. The Word of God is essential to the life of faith - *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*.

RESPONSE

Turn to Psalm 23

In the **23rd Psalm** David is reflecting on the many years he spent in the fields with his father's sheep. Perhaps he was even thinking of the patriarch Jacob saying to Pharaoh — *the Lord hath led me and fed me these many years*. Surely he must have reflected on his own life — all of his failings as well as all of his successes. And yet as an older man he would say — *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."* Following Jesus offers security that no human achievement or success can provide.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³ He restores my soul. How many times has he done that for you and me? When we've been shot at, worn out, discouraged — Jesus restores our soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death — and many of us have walked there, the valley of deepest darkness — I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. That's the ultimate consolation. You know — over and over again if you search the Scriptures for the cure to fear — it's always the same. *Fear not, for I am with thee.* I will fear no evil for thou art with me.

As we FOLLOW Jesus we come to know His strength and His power keeping us, His love, His grace.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. I love this — *⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.* It can be translated — *goodness and mercy shall **hunt** me all of the days of*

my life. Isn't it remarkable that men and women spend their entire life hunting for security or for wealth or for pleasure — but the man or woman who really knows the Lord as a shepherd, KNOWS HIS VOICE and FOLLOWS Him — can say *surely goodness and mercy will **hunt** me.*

And if all that weren't enough — FOLLOWING JESUS ends with *and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

QUOTE: F.B. Meyer — *The memory of his agony and death shall ever be with us, nerving us to believe that He loves us too much, that we have cost Him too much, for it ever to be possible that we should be forsaken or neglected. And so at last we shall be folded with all the flock beside in those sweet pasture lands, in which the Lamb leads his flock unto living fountains of water, and God wipes away all tears from our eyes.*

Jesus is calling men and women this morning!