

The Life and Ministry of Christ, Part 32

Continuing His conversation with the Pharisees about the man that was born blind, Jesus gave the parable of the Good Shepherd, (John 10:1-17). In this parable, Jesus revealed His true identity to the Pharisees. The parable also addresses the Pharisees, who believed they were the spiritual guides for the people.

The parable of the Good Shepherd, (John 10:1-17)

The parable begins with two images of Jesus. First, Jesus is the Shepherd Who leads His sheep through the door into the safety of the sheepfold. Second, He said He is the door by which the sheep enter. So, Jesus is both “the door” (v.7) and “the Good Shepherd” (v. 11). He is the Way into safety and He is the Provider and Protector. Jesus introduced the parable by referring to the sheepfold or sheep pen. This was an enclosure with stone walls that was a secure place guarded by a doorkeeper who prevented thieves and beasts of prey from entering.

John 10:1–2 NKJV Most assuredly, 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. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

What does this say about the Shepherd and the thief? The watchman opens the gate for the shepherd who calls his own sheep by their name. The thief attempts to access the sheep by climbing over the wall. There is only one legitimate entrance into the sheepfold. The shepherd of the sheep enters by the door.

John 10:3 NKJV To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

Who is the doorkeeper or watchman?

Since Jesus is the door, who is the doorkeeper? The doorkeeper recognizes and gives legitimacy to the shepherd.

Several possibilities have been presented about the doorkeeper’s identity.

- The first and most logical would be the Father who affirmed Christ and His authority. Several times throughout the Old Testament and during Christ’s life and ministry here, the Father identified Him.
- The Old Testament prophets also foretold the coming of Christ and revealed who, what, when and where He would be.
- John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of Christ, affirmed this is the One on Whom I saw the Spirit and this is the Son of God.
- The Holy Spirit operated in multiple dimensions throughout Jesus’ life

and ministry to affirm that He is the One. The Holy Spirit was present and active in His birth, baptism, temptations, ministry, and resurrection.

- The under-shepherds are people who point to Jesus. The under-shepherds are people who emerge from within the flock and leadership is vested in them. They carry on the work of Christ and care for God's church. They minister under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd.

John 10:4-5 NKJV And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

Sheep know their shepherd's voice.

Several years ago, I was called to help one of our church youth with his sheep. Steve was in a panic because his sheep were out on the highway and they were scattered everywhere. When I arrived at their house, Steve was chasing his sheep here and there. I knew we would never be able to catch the flock. The more excited he became, the further they ran. I tried to say something to them and they ran from me in a panic, because they did not know my voice. I told Steve, "go back to the sheep pen and get some food and call the sheep." Upon getting the food and commencing his calls, one by one, they began to assemble at the sound of his voice until all of them were reunited in the sheep fold.

Why is it so important for believers to know the Lord's voice?

If a stranger enters the sheepfold, the sheep run away from him, because they do not know his voice.

How can we learn or know the Lord's voice?

The sheep know the shepherd's voice because they enjoy an existing close relationship and familiarity. We cannot know His voice if we do not have a vital relationship with Him. Jesus said the sheep recognize their own shepherd's voice and would by no means follow a stranger. Voice recognition is not a passive thing but an established bond. We know Him and He knows us by name.

John 10:7-10 NKJV Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

Remember that Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees who assumed that they were the controlling authority over the people. The analogy of Jesus being the door demonstrates how He lays down His life for His

sheep. When we enter by Christ into the sheepfold, we find safety.

John 10:9–10 NKJV I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

Two opposites are mentioned here.

The One Who saves, gives life, fullness, abundance, and prosperity is the **Door**. The **thief** comes to steal, kill and destroy. God, through Jesus Christ, presents us with everything that is necessary for abundant life.

Joel 2:26 NKJV You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, And praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; And My people shall never be put to shame.

2 Peter 1:3-4 NKJV His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature.

Remember, Jesus was addressing the Pharisees. As we read this section, determine who are the hirelings.

John 10:12–13 NKJV But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

Who are the hirelings? and Why would Jesus say this when He was talking to the Pharisees? The hired hand does not have the same commitment as the shepherd. He is only interested in making money and self-preservation. When we examine all that has been said about the Pharisees, it is obvious that they were included in this group. The Pharisees wanted to be honored and exalted by everyone. They wanted to shepherd the flock without care and commitment to its wellbeing. These along with the thieves and robbers were false shepherds. Ezekiel condemned them for consuming the fat and wearing wool while neglecting to provide support to the vulnerable, alleviate the suffering of the infirm, mending the injured, or locating the missing, (Ezekiel 34:2-10).

John 10:11 NKJV I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

John 10:14-15 NKJV I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father;

and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Notice what we learn about the Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd values the sheep above His own life and lays down His life for the sheep. The thief is only interested in stealing and killing. The hireling is only interested in making money and self-preservation. Notice the intimacy that Christ has with His sheep. Jesus said, “I know My sheep and am known by My own.” These verses initially speak about the household of Israel but ultimately include all who believe in Him.

John 10:16 NKJV 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.

The “other sheep” are the peoples of other nations and peoples who will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gentile nations will be brought into the flock by the death of the Shepherd. Jesus said, “They will hear My voice.”

The next paragraph refers to the Lord’s death.

He ties His death with the story of the good shepherd.

John 10:17–18 NKJV Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

After giving this parable, Jesus told them they could not take His life from Him. He said He had the power to lay it down and take it up again four times, (vv. 11, 14, 17-18).

What does this mean?

This distinguishes Christ’s death from an ordinary human death. Jesus, the Son of God, came to this world for this purpose to lay down His life so that we all may be saved. Death usually is imposed upon us by disease, violence, or circumstances that are out of our control. Jesus chose to surrender His life of His own accord. We notice His authority over His own life several times when they tried to take up stones to kill Him or throw Him over a cliff. Even in the Garden when they came to take Him to be crucified, Jesus said, “I am He,” and they all fell over backwards. He voluntarily surrendered His life so that He may take it again in the resurrection thus providing salvation and new life to those who believe in Him. Jesus’ words would be totally out of place if He

were merely a human being and not the Son of God.

After Jesus said this, there was another division among the Jews.

John 10:19-21 NKJV Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings. And many of them said, “He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?” Others said, “These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

This was the third time Jesus’ teaching divided the people, (John 7:43; John 9:16; John 10:19). His statements caused many of the hostile crowds to think that He must be out of His mind, if not demon-possessed. Others among them said He could not have healed the man born blind if He had a demon.

This conflict occurred at the Feast of Dedication – John 10:22-39

At the feast of dedication, John records a final confrontation with the Jerusalem crowds. The feast of dedication was instituted in 165 B.C. by Judas Maccabaeus to observe the restoration of worship and dedication of the temple after it had been defiled by Antichus Epiphanes in 167 B.C.. It was called the Feast of Lights, or Hanukkah. Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Feast.

John 10:22–24 NKJV Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon’s porch. Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, “How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.”

Jesus answered them with one of the greatest promises for believers and anyone who hears His voice.

John 10:25–26 NKJV Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.

Read this aloud.

John 10:27–30 NKJV My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.

Every believer should take this message personally. There is a place of security, comfort, and provision for all who put their trust in the Lord.

This should bring great consolation to your soul.

Jesus is your Good Shepherd.

No one is able to snatch you from His hand and no one is able to snatch

you from the Father's hand. Jesus paid the ultimate price so that you may enjoy this uninterrupted peace, security, and joy.

When Jesus finished saying this, the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.

John 10:33 NKJV The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."

Jesus attempted to speak to them once again, but they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand. (John 10:39) Listen to Jesus' words.

John 10:36-38 NKJV Do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

Bethany Beyond Jordan – John 10:40-42

John 10:40-42 NKJV And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed. Then many came to Him and said, "John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true." And many believed in Him there.

We can add our amen to that. "Everything that John spoke about this Man is true." Jesus went from Jerusalem to Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John first baptized. In our next study, Jesus is called by Mary and Martha to come to Bethany because Lazarus is sick unto death.