

that you may **BELIEVE**

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

John 10.1-18 | March 6, 2016

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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our series *That You May Believe*, seeing that Jesus is our Good Shepherd.

II. Connecting with One Another

Have you ever been given bad directions that got you lost? How did you find your way back?

III. Study the Text

a. Recall last week's text in John 9, where Jesus heals a man born blind.

Before continuing, re-read or scan John 9, as it leads into this week's study.

b. Read John 10.1-6.

Jesus has previously used divine language to describe himself (see John 8.58) and shown his divine power through miraculous healing (see John 9.32). Asserting that he is the "shepherd of the flock" furthers this thread of divinity.

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, leaders are referred to as shepherds, most notably Moses and David. Tod Bolsinger writes that "in the Old Testament particularly shepherd is the biblical metaphor for Israel's leaders." How do you see this metaphor developed in Numbers 27.15-17, Psalm 77.20, 78.70-72, and Ezekiel 34.23?

God is, of course, the shepherd par excellence. Read Psalm 23, 80.1, Jeremiah 3.15, 23.1-4, and Ezekiel 34.1-24. How do these passages reveal God as a shepherd?

How have you been led by human shepherding (spiritual mentors, pastors, etc.)?

How have you been led by God's shepherding?

How could you open yourself up more to being shepherded?

c. Rodney A. Whitacre writes that in John 10 "Jesus is claiming such a role for himself, but in a way unlike anything seen before. He has made clear claims to divinity and messiahship... So when he claims to be the shepherd he is claiming that Messiah has come and in him God himself has come to shepherd his people."

How is Jesus' claim "unlike anything seen before"? What significance does this claim have in your life, today?

d. It has been suggested that the cultural background of these verses is that in first century villages, many families owned a couple sheep for personal use, each of whom stayed in the courtyard of the family's home during the night. In the morning, a shepherd agreed upon by several families (and probably one of their own children) would take the sheep belonging to these families out to pasture. This shepherd's distinctive call or whistle would be heard, understood, and followed by the sheep, "because they know his voice." How does this help you understand these verses?

How does this background speak to both divine sovereignty (the shepherd's call) and the human response (in the hearing, knowing, and following by the sheep)?

How does this background speak to the theme of discernment, as there are other voices calling than just their shepherd's?

- e. In John 10.4, Jesus refers to "bringing out all his own," using the same word as in 9.34-35, where a man was "thrown out" of the synagogue.

How has following Jesus "brought you out" or gotten you "thrown out"? From where? Why?

- f. One commentator writes, "Jesus uses the shepherd motif to interpret what has just taken place with the former blind man. Judaism is described as a sheep pen, but not all the sheep in the pen belong to Jesus' flock. They are separated out as they recognize his voice and follow him out from the sheep pen. Jesus is gathering his flock together from the pen of official Judaism."

Where do you agree or disagree with this interpretation? Why?

- g. Reread John 10.6, then continue on through verse 10.

In the same way the Word of God came to Jonah a second time (see John 3.1), Jesus goes back over it again from a different perspective, in hopes that these religious leaders would "get it."

How have you experienced a similar "second explanation"?

- h. While gates are often a barrier for protection, this is not the case in verse 9. On the contrary, Jesus - as gate - is the passageway. This implies what we know emphatically from other Scriptures, that we begin life on the outside and must come in to God's "pen."

When were you "on the outside" before Jesus?

How have you experienced Jesus' welcome into the flock of God?

How could Jesus use you to point others to the passageway into the family of God?

- i. In Genesis 28.16-17, Jacob awakes from a dream to realize "the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it," then declares, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

In a way, through this passage John is inviting us to have the same response to Jesus.

What barriers prevent you from experiencing this enthusiasm for Jesus, the Gate of heaven?

- j. Read John 10.11-18.

Jesus' assertion in verse 11 builds upon a number of texts in the Hebrew Scriptures. Examine the similarities and differences you see between John 10.11 and Isaiah 52.13-53.12, Zechariah 11.4-17 and 13.7-9. Note these similarities and differences below:

John 10

Isaiah 52-53

Zechariah 11, 13

- k. It has been written that "Jesus is the admirable shepherd, and there is something admirable, heroic and attractive in his death... It is in his death that he will draw all men to himself (12.32). The beauty of the Lord's character attracts those whose hearts are able to receive divine beauty. This is far more than an admirable death of martyr. For in this death we see the beauty of God himself, since God is love, and love... is the laying down of life." Read John 3.16 and Philippians 2.5-11. How do these passages elucidate Jesus' statement in John 10?
- l. In these verses, Jesus develops themes from Ezekiel 34.
Other New Testament passages engage similar territory. For instance, see Matthew 7.15, Acts 20.29-30, 1st Timothy 1.3 and 1st Peter 5.2.
What was going on in these different situations?
What could these problems look like in 21st century America?
- m. Reread John 10.15.
"This new community is based in Jesus' death. The very pattern of life in this new community is that of life laid down for one another, a cruciform life. The possibility of such a life and the power for such a life come through the life of the Son of God poured out on the cross, thereby uniting God and mankind by taking away the sin of the world and revealing the glory of God."
Instead of Christianity being all about what we *receive*, it's also about what we *give* - to God and to one another. This is what is meant by a "cruciform life" - a life formed by the model of Jesus' crucifixion.
How has God called you to a life of giving and serving?
How could you be increasingly faithful in this giving and serving life?
- n. In verse 16, Jesus engages one of the greatest points of controversy in the early church: The inclusion of the Gentiles in the family of God. And yet, Jesus doesn't explain how those "not of this sheep pen" were to be welcomed. Must they first become converts to Judaism - or can they come right from paganism into Christian faith?
How do the questions raised in d. above speak to this very question?
How would you feel about this question as a first century Jew who'd been "thrown out of the synagogue"? How would you feel about it if you were a first century Roman citizen?
- o. How have you heard God's voice through these verses of His Word?
How can you be faithful in responding to what you've heard?

IV. Pray

- a. Give thanks that you have been welcomed into the "pen" of God, through Jesus the Gate!
- b. Lift up the pastors, staff, elders, deacons and other leaders of Good Shepherd, that they would be led by the Good Shepherd and would lead this congregation with Jesus' sacrificial love,
- c. Pray for all those God brings to your mind (children, teenagers, young adults, adults, and seniors, both singles and married folks), that all would be led by the Good Shepherd,
- d. Ask that God would draw you in, to lean more into Him and His leadership in your life.