

John 10.1-21 Sermon / COB / 09.21.14

Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: Title]** Good morning! We are going to read in both John 10 and Ezekiel 34 today, so you will want to have a Bible open. If you want to use the New English Translation, which I am using, you can grab one off of the table in the center aisle. When you have a Bible, stick your bulletin in Ezekiel 34, and then turn to John 10.
- † We are going to be referred to as sheep this morning. I thought about asking Jenn and Mike to bring in their pet sheep, but Jenn did not answer that email, so I decided to take that as a sign from God. No live sheep in our sanctuary today. Maybe at Christmas...
- But maybe not; sheep are an interesting metaphor for believers. Unfortunately, because of how God designed their digestive system, they are known to be quite gassy animals. Has the Wrigley family found this to be true? You wouldn't want to sleep with a sheep in a tent, would you?
 - A University of Illinois study says sheep are equal with cattle and just below pigs in intelligence. I always wonder how we know such things; do we give them an IQ test? Anyway, that's not too flattering for when we are called sheep, but sheep can recognize and remember a person's face, they can learn to read facial expressions to discern emotions, they can learn their own names, and there are unsubstantiated reports that some in England have learned to defeat cattle guards by rolling on their backs.
 - Probably none of that applies to what Jesus is going to say to us today. In fact, probably Jesus' parables are all about him as the shepherd, and not at all about us as the sheep. But it is worth noting that by nature sheep do bunch into flocks, they will follow a trusted shepherd to pasture, and they are essentially helpless to defend themselves against predators.
 - Let's pray, and then we will see what Jesus has for us today...

God's Shepherd

- † **[Slide 2: 10.1]** So you should have your Bible open to John 10. At the end of John 9, Jesus was speaking publically to some Pharisees, the religious teachers of the Jews. He admonished them for being blind to their need for him as the Messiah-savior, and said as a result they would remain condemned for their sins. What we have in John 10 is a continuation of that dialogue.
- Jesus begins v.1 with Ἀμήν ἀμήν [amen, amen], which we interpretively translate as "truly truly" or "I tell you the solemn truth." This is how Jesus begins some of his most important teachings.

John 10.1-6 NET: [Jesus speaking] "I tell you the solemn truth, the one who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber."

† Jesus is envisioning the type of sheepfold that is in a courtyard, surrounded by a stone wall.

[Slide 3: 10.1-6] The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. The doorkeeper opens the door for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought all his own sheep out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him

because they recognize his voice. They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him, because they do not recognize the stranger's voice." Jesus told them [the Pharisees of John 9] this parable, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

- † **[Slide 4: leading]** The shepherd in this parable knows his sheep intimately. The sheep follow the shepherd because they know and trust him. As is true in the near eastern cultures, this shepherd leads his sheep from in front. Rather than chasing and herding the sheep, he leads by example and puts himself out front to face any dangers, and thus proves himself worthy of following. With transparent integrity, the shepherd leads his sheep out to be blessed in the pasture.
 - In contrast stand the thief and the robber who want to hurt the sheep. Now to understand the full thrust of Jesus' words, we need to read Ezekiel 34, so let's turn there in our Bibles. I am not going to put this passage up on the screen, so please do turn there in your Bible.

Ezekiel 34.1-10 NET: The word of the LORD [Yahweh, God] came to me [Ezekiel]: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them— to the shepherds: 'This is what the sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the choice animals, but you do not feed the sheep! You have not strengthened the weak, healed the sick, bandaged the injured, brought back the strays, or sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled over them. They were scattered because they had no shepherd [not really], and they became food for every wild beast. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over the entire face of the earth with no one looking or searching for them. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As surely as I live, declares the sovereign LORD, my sheep have become prey and have become food for all the wild beasts. There was no shepherd [not doing his job, anyway], and my shepherds did not search for my flock, but fed themselves and did not feed my sheep, Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: This is what the sovereign LORD says: Look, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand my sheep from their hand. I will no longer let them be shepherds; the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore. I will rescue my sheep from their mouth, so that they will no longer be food for them.'"

- † **[Slide 5: #1]** Ok, so point number one: the shepherds of Israel, the religious and political leaders God put in place, have not taken care of the sheep, instead they have acted to harm the sheep to help themselves, so God is angry with them and will remove them from authority. Ok, you see that?

Ezekiel 34.11-16: "For this is what the sovereign LORD says: Look, I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will seek out my flock. I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered on a cloudy, dark day. I will bring them out from among the peoples and gather them from foreign countries; I will bring them to their own land. I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams and all the inhabited places of the land. In a good pasture I will feed them; the mountain heights of Israel will be their pasture. There they will lie down in a lush pasture, and they will feed on rich grass on the mountains of Israel. I myself will feed my sheep and I myself will make them lie down, declares the sovereign LORD. I will seek the lost and bring back the strays; I will bandage the injured and strengthen the sick, but the fat and the strong [the religious and political leaders] I will destroy. I will feed them— with judgment!

† **[Slide 6: # 2]** Point number two is that God himself will care for his sheep. And we see again how angry he is with the religious and political leaders: he will feed them judgment! Skip down to v.23.

Ezekiel 34.23-24: [God speaking] **I will set one shepherd over them, and he will feed them— namely, my servant David. He will feed them and will be their shepherd. I, the LORD [Yahweh], will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them; I, the LORD [Yahweh], have spoken!**

† **[Slide 7: # 3]** Point number three is that God would put a new shepherd over his people. God calls this shepherd David, meaning King David. Now, this prophecy came to Ezekiel hundreds of years after David’s death. It could refer to when God resurrects David and establishes the kingdom of God on the New Earth; but we know now that it is the Messiah, Christ, who will rule in God’s name over that kingdom; we also know that the Messiah is a descendent of David, an heir to his throne, in heritor of his promises from God.

- The Messiah is the ultimate Davidic king prophesied to come and restore Israel to relationship with God, which we might say is bringing the sheep back to God’s sheepfold. We learned in John 9 that this ultimate Davidic king would heal Israel’s spiritual blindness and reverse the curse on the earth so that even the physically blind could see. That king, that shepherd, that Messiah is Jesus.

† Now turn back to John 10. Keeping all this from Ezekiel 34 in mind, we see what Jesus is saying in John 10 is that the religious leaders, such as the Pharisees, were supposed to act with authority from God to protect the flock, but in fact they were more like thieves and robbers, out to help themselves even if it hurt the flock. So now God the Father was angry, and thus he was going to judge these religious leaders and remove his authority from them.

- In the New Covenant period, as the Messiah-savior, Jesus would be God the Father’s shepherd for the Jews, and from this sheepfold, he would call out his people. Those people would follow Jesus, and in the end would be resurrected to new life in God’s kingdom on the New Earth.

The Gate

† **[Slide 8: John 10.7-10]** In v.7, Jesus again says Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν, I tell you the solemn truth. This begins a new parable.

John 10.7-10: **So Jesus said to them again, “I tell you the solemn truth, I am the door for the sheep. All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he will be saved, and will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come so that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.”**

† **[Slide 9: door]** The current religious leaders were not protecting the flock, instead – like thieves and robbers – they were looking out for themselves, even to the point of hurting the flock. Those who belonged to Jesus could see that.

† In contrast to the religious leaders, Jesus would act as the gate or door to keep the sheep safe. He offers the sheep salvation or safety as they come in and the blessings of pasture when they go out. Jesus is the only way to security and provision for life. Sheep, people, relying on Jesus will end up with life, and have it abundantly!

- Let's look at a contrast. Think of life as one who is lost, without a sense of purpose, without a sense of hope that there is something better than chasing after the sugar high of feeling good or the emptiness of more stuff. Now contrast that with life as one who is saved, who knows about Heaven and the New Earth and is assured to go there, who thinks eternally and sees purpose in this life of making an eternal difference and communing with Christ.
- Let's look at another contrast. Think again of life as one who suffers and sees no point in it, who is hurting physically and emotionally without hope of ever getting better, who thinks, "If there is a God he must hate me," who even when times are good feels empty. Contrast that with a life of intimacy with Christ, with mature understanding of what life is about and how it works, with a joy and peace that transcends the ups and downs of circumstances.
- Think how much Christ adds to our experience, the way we are purified or sanctified, the way we grow more mature and selfless, the way we are equipped to help others, the way we learn to draw close to him and trust in him, the way we feel when we rejoice at his blessings and praise his name, the way we can count on other believers who have integrity the world lacks.
- Jesus is our gate, our door. He provides us with salvation and with provision, so we can have true spiritual life and have it abundantly.

The Good Shepherd

† **[Slide 10: John 10.11-15]** Let's look at v.11 for one more metaphor or parable about Jesus.

John 10.11-15: [Jesus speaking] "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not a shepherd and does not own sheep, sees the wolf coming and abandons the sheep and runs away. So the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them. Because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep, he runs away. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father— and I lay down my life for the sheep.

† **[Slide 11: follow]** Now Jesus is the "good" shepherd. The Greek word καλός means good or useful, and in this context it might take on the connotation of being blameless.

† A shepherd of actual sheep might risk his life to protect his sheep, but Jesus goes farther: Jesus actually plans to give up his life for his sheep.

- The death of the shepherd of actual sheep would leave his sheep at risk, but Jesus' death protects his sheep. Jesus says he gives up his life "for" the sheep. The Greek preposition ὑπὲρ means "in behalf of" here: Jesus dies *for* his sheep, *in behalf of* his sheep. John often used this preposition to show someone sacrificing to help someone else.
- The good shepherd here is not dying to be a mere example, he is dying in the defense of the sheep, to save them. Thus it is wrong to view Jesus' death as just an example of humility and love; rather, he laid down his life to pay the penalty of our sins, to take our punishment, so that we could have forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and eternal life.
- The thief in v.10 wants to slaughter the sheep, but the Good Shepherd wants to sacrifice his own life for the sheep. The hired hand will not risk himself for the sheep, but the Good Shepherd here is planning on how to sacrifice and die for the sake of his sheep.

- † Jesus says that he knows his own and his own know him, just like God the Father knows him and he knows God the Father. This is not “know of” right? It is not that we know Jesus lived 2000 years ago and is a historical figure; it is not even that we know Jesus is the Son of God and savior. Jesus’ own people know him, know him as a person, know him as God the Son, know him intimately. They can talk to him, and they do talk to him. They listen for his guidance through the Spirit and the scriptures, and they depend on his empowerment and protection.
- We follow Jesus as our good shepherd, because he knows us and we know him. We trust him, because he has transparent integrity and already has laid his life down for our sake.

Inclusion of all peoples

- † **[Slide 12: 10.16]** There is more good news for us as we finish our passage.

John 10.16: [Jesus speaking] “I have other sheep that do not come from this sheepfold. I must bring them too, and they will listen to my voice, so that there will be one flock and one shepherd.”

- † In vv.1-5, Jesus implied he was calling his sheep out of the sheepfold of the Jews. Now Jesus says there are other sheep not from this sheepfold. We have already learned in this gospel that Jesus came to offer salvation to the whole world, and he already in this gospel has shown attention not only to the Jews but also to the Samaritans [who were half Jews] and gentiles [who were non-Jews].
- Jesus said earlier that salvation comes from the Jews, since he is the Jewish Messiah who fulfills the promises God made to the Jews through the Jewish prophets and scriptures. And Jesus offered this salvation first to the Jews. But he had other sheep among the Samaritans and the Gentiles. This is good news for those of us who are not Jewish in heritage.
- † Jesus would make all these sheep – Jewish sheep, Samaritan sheep, and Gentile sheep – into one flock with himself as shepherd. Now believers in Christ are one flock regardless of heritage.
- Paul said the same in Galatians 3.28-29 NET: “There is neither Jew nor Greek [Gentile], there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female– for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise.”
 - So we believing non-Jews can be in the flock of Christ, along with the believing Jews. As the one sinless man, Jesus fulfilled the obligation of Adam, the first man, to reflect the character of God and represent God here on Earth. This purity qualified him to be the flawless sacrifice for all people, and since he was also the divine Son of God, he was able to bear the penalty for all our sin when he died on the cross.

[Slide 13: 10.17-18] John 10.17-18: [Jesus speaking] “This is why the Father loves me– because I lay down my life, so that I may take it back again. No one takes it away from me, but I lay it down of my own free will. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it back again. This commandment I received from my Father.”

- † Scholar D. A. Carson wrote, “It is not that the Father withholds his love until Jesus agrees to give up his life on the cross and rise again. Rather, the love of the Father for the Son is eternally linked with the unqualified obedience of the Son to the Father, his utter dependence on him, culminating in this greatest act of obedience now just before him: his willingness to bear the shame and ignominy of

Golgotha [where Jesus went to the cross], the isolation and rejection of death, the sin and curse reserved for the Lamb of God.”

- † It is important to note that Jesus was not a victim here. The Son of God came to earth as the man Jesus for a purpose, and one aspect of that purpose was to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. It was within Jesus’ power to stop his crucifixion, but he chose to be obedient to the will of God the Father by suffering for our sake.
- † It also is important to note that Jesus gave up his life so that he could take it back again. Jesus did rise from the dead on the third day, and this resurrection was not an afterthought or coincidence, it was the climax of the crucifixion episode, in view from the start, the moment when Jesus completed his victory over death and sin, when he proved his identity and the acceptance of his sacrifice by God the Father, when he gave a visual promise that we too would be resurrected, when he reached the pinnacle of his earthly glorification.
- † Let’s see how the people respond to what Jesus said...

[Slide 14: 10.19-21] John 10.19-21: Another sharp division took place among the Jewish people because of these words. Many of them were saying, “He is possessed by a demon and has lost his mind! Why do you listen to him?” Others said, “These are not the words of someone possessed by a demon. A demon cannot cause the blind to see, can it?”

Conclusion

- † **[Slide 15: gate]** We are dealing with very theological issues in the book of John. For the most part, as we have gone through this book in our sermons, I have tried to focus our attention on the message John was conveying about who Jesus really is, and what that means for us.
 - In the devotions, I explore a little more how you might reflect on these truths in the context of daily life. So I hope you will do the devotion I have provided for you today. It is designed for five daily reflections, each about ten to fifteen minutes in length.
- † Today we have learned that Jesus is God the Father’s shepherd for both the Jews [who were his representative people when Jesus lived] and the non-Jews who come into the church as believers.
 - As the good shepherd, Jesus died for us to pay the penalty for our sins, so God could forgive us and reconcile with us, so that we could have eternal life in intimacy with him.
 - As the gate, Jesus provides us with salvation and provision for life, he provides us with true spiritual life and even that abundantly.
- † Certainly, reflection upon these truths should cause us to rejoice! and praise both God the Father and Christ the Son of God! We will sing some songs of response in a moment.
 - Reflection upon these truths also should embolden us in life. If Jesus is our shepherd, if he is our gate, if he is our savior, then we should not live in fear or intimidation or anxiety or stress. We should learn to depend on him, not only for eternal life, but for abundant life right now.
 - And this means we also should be rejoicing and praising his name boldly in public. God expects all his sheep, all his people, to do this, because of what we have in Christ. Let’s pray...