

JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10:1-18

Key Verse 10:11

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

We studied the last part of chapter nine with the title, "I Was Blind But Now I See." From the man who had been once blind we learned how to hold on to the grace of our [Lord Jesus Christ](#). We also learned from the apostles how they lived a life of faith, remembering the grace of Jesus. Those who live by the grace of God are full of grace. Those who live with their own calculations are ungodly. Today we are going to study Jesus the good shepherd. The people of the world are miserable, not because they have no money, but because they are like sheep without a shepherd. May God bless us to know what the good shepherd is like.

First, the shepherd takes care of the sheep (1-2). Look at verse 1. "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber." People usually enter the door openly and squarely. Usually those who do not enter by the door but [climb in](#) by the window or some other way are thieves or robbers. In verse 1, Jesus tells in allegory that there are two kinds of shepherds. One is the good shepherd. The other is the false shepherd. The good shepherd takes care of sheep, but the false shepherd is a thief and a robber. When Jesus said this, he hoped that [the Jewish](#) leaders would be good shepherds for God's sheep. For they were chosen as shepherds for God's flock of sheep, not only for the people of Israel but for all the people of all languages (16; 17:20-24). However they ignored God's holy mission and became like thieves and robbers who stole God's sheep.

Verse 1 also tells us that the shepherd's motive should be right. He must work to take care of the sheep: He should not work to squeeze the sheep's milk or shear their wool to sell. Jesus said this because the Jewish leaders came to the man who had been born blind to threaten him and make him tell a lie that Jesus was a sinner (9:24). The Jews should not have used him to carry out their political intrigue; rather, they should have helped him, since they were chosen to shepherd God's flock of sheep. Look at verse 2. "The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep." The shepherd must watch over sheep all day long, and when the evening comes, he must lead them into the sheep pen so that they can take a good night of sleep. The next morning the shepherd enters the sheep pen by the gate and opens the gate for the sheep to let them come out, and leads them to green pasture for grazing.

Second, the shepherd knows his sheep's name (3). Verses 3-5 are a description of the beautiful relationship between a shepherd and his sheep. Look at verse 3. "The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." The good shepherd knows his sheep's name.

To the Hebrew people, one's name represented one's whole man: his character, integrity, virtue and vice, and so on. Verse 3b says, "He

calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." The shepherd's second qualification is that he must know his sheep's name. Also, the shepherd must know everything about the sheep so that he can shepherd him. One young man said, "You just don't understand me." That's true. Nobody understands anybody else's heart. But our shepherd Jesus understands us, because he knows our hearts. Jesus cares for each of us because he is our shepherd.

Sometimes we wonder how God knows each one of us individually when there are so many people in the world. Such a question is the idea of ungodly people for their self-justification. As in fact, God-fearing people have God in their thought world and they know God personally. David said in Psalm 139:2,3, "You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways." Our shepherd Jesus knows our names one by one. Also, he leads us to the green pasture to graze freely.

Third, the shepherd must be a good example to the sheep (4). Let's look at verse 4. "When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice." In this verse, the words "goes ahead" have two spiritual meanings. First of all, the shepherd must be faithful. Usually sheep look lovely and harmless. But sheep are so dull that they have no sense of direction. So the shepherd must lead them always, going ahead of them. If the shepherd neglects to lead his sheep even one time, the sheep go astray. In appearance, sheep look naive. But sheep are very rebellious. Especially, they don't want to study the Bible. But the shepherd must teach them the Bible every day despite their rebelliousness and laziness. The shepherd must lead them to green pasture every day without fail. The shepherd must be faithful. There is no lovelier image of Jesus than the image of the good shepherd. Many people have hung the picture of the good shepherd and his sheep on their walls (Ps 95:7).

The phrase, "go ahead of the sheep," has another spiritual meaning in it. The shepherd has to be an example to his sheep. Jesus is the good shepherd to all mankind, not only because of his short teaching, but also because of his good examples which have influenced the world down through the ages. One woman was pretty when she was young. She grew up like a princess. She had a shepherd heart for students. But she did not know how to start student evangelism or campus evangelism. Even if she does not know much about business, God blessed her gospel ministry until it grew to be a world-wide missionary church. Her good exemplary life has been her life of prayer. Prayer was her potent weapon in receiving God's abundant blessing upon her ministry.

Fourth, the sheep knows his shepherd's voice (4-6). This part tells us a basic obligation of being a sheep. Look at verses 4 and 5 again. "When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." These verses tell us something about sheep. We can say that the sheep is totally helpless without the shepherd. Sheep are also not bright, but very stupid. Even if they study the same thing for more than seven years, they forget it the next day. Sheep are also rebellious. When the shepherd tells his sheep, "Go

this way," then his sheep goes that way, and if he says to his sheep, "Sit down," then his sheep stands up. Sheep are also too weak to put out to graze by themselves. They are habitually carried away by grazing until they go astray. They are stupid.

To our surprise, though the sheep knows nothing, he knows one thing: It is the voice of his shepherd. In Greek, there are two words for the verb "know." One is "ginosko," which refers to the knowledge which comes through learning or experience ("a posteriori" knowledge). The other is "oida," which refers to inborn knowledge ("a priori" knowledge). The sheep knows nothing, but God gave him inborn knowledge to know the voice of his shepherd. So, the sheep follows his shepherd, hearing his shepherd's voice. The sheep can discern whether his shepherd is good or bad.

The sheep knows the shepherd's voice. Here, "voice" refers to heart. One young staff shepherd talked many times about his sheep's lack of motivation and laziness. But to others' eyes, his sheep is just like him...as the saying goes, "He is just like his father." The sheep knows nothing. But he knows his shepherd's voice, that is, his heart. Here we learn how to be a good shepherd. There are many shepherds who teach the Bible to sheep. One young shepherd has taught his sheep by preaching one-sidedly until his sheep had to visit an ENT doctor to see if his eardrums were injured. Nevertheless, the sheep continued five years of Bible study. But the sheep did not accept even one word of God. It was because his shepherd's teaching came from his brain. On the other hand, there is a shepherd who is not familiar with American English. But in six months' time, twelve sheep are flocking around him. The shepherd's wife was ill. He himself has back pain. But he has given his heart to his sheep. His sheep know his heart. His sheep know their shepherd's motivation. So they like him. Some study the Bible to please their shepherd. And most of his sheep study the Bible to live up to the teachings of the Bible.

God is our shepherd. We are his sheep. Our knowledge is limited, because it takes 120 years to learn all areas of elementary knowledge. But God gave us inborn knowledge to know God. If we say we don't know God, we deliberately suppress the truth of God (Ro 1:18-21). A Psalmist said that only foolish people say there is no God (Ps 53:1). They are like men who cover their eyes with their hands and say there is no sky. Even though King David was a figure of the coming Messiah and a man after God's own heart, he acknowledged God as his shepherd. He said, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures..." (Ps 23:1,2). David was indeed a happy man, not because he was the king of the united kingdom of Israel, but because God was his shepherd. God knew him very well. God had led his life step by step. David loved his shepherd God more than himself. He loved his sheep like his own children.

Jesus told the basic truth of being the good shepherd and the good sheep using a figure of speech (6). But the Jews did not understand, because they did not want to understand, and they were not shepherds of his people. In this, Jesus implies that the Jews were shepherds of God's sheep; however, they ignored what Jesus said to them because their hearts were evil (8:44,47).

Fifth, "I am the gate" (7-10). Look at verse 7. "Therefore Jesus said again, 'I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.'" When Jesus said, "I am the gate," he claims that he is the only door for the sheep to God's house: He is also the very shelter for the sheep. It is said that at night the shepherd himself lies down across the opening to the sheep pen so that no sheep can get out and no one can come in.

In England, a gate is a symbol of the power and glory and majesty of the kingdom. Buckingham Palace may be a good example. No one dares enter the gate of the Palace without permission. But we can enter into the glorious heavenly kingdom freely because Jesus is the gate. This is the reason Jesus says in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." If we believe that Jesus is the gate, all our worries and fears go away; we can find true salvation and rest. When we believe that Jesus is the gate, we can enter into the pearly gate of the glorious kingdom of God. Jesus said in verse 9, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture."

Sixth, "I am the good shepherd" (11-18). Why is Jesus the good shepherd? Look at verse 11. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Jesus is the good shepherd because he is different from a hired hand. When the hired hand sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. The hired hand is a false shepherd. A false shepherd takes the job of caring for the sheep not as a "calling," but as a means of gaining profit or fame. When the time comes to sacrifice for the sake of the sheep, false shepherds run away like 100-meter track runners. We should not be false shepherds, but good shepherds. When the boy David kept his father's sheep, he fought with lions and bears, risking his own life in order to protect his sheep (1Sa 17:34-36). David also fought against the enemy general Goliath as a shepherd of Israel in order to save his people from the Philistine army (1Sa 17:45-47). So David was known as a good shepherd of his people Israel. In verses 14-18 we can see why Jesus is the good shepherd.

Firstly, Jesus is the good shepherd because he is a good sheep to God (14,15). Look at verses 14b and 15. "...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." When he said that he knows the Father, it meant that he knew his Father's will that he sent him to be the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. God sent his one and only Son as the Lamb of God. Jesus had to die as the Lamb of God. It is common sense that everyone wants to live; no one wants to die when he is young. But Jesus decided to die in his early thirties. Jesus repeatedly said, "I lay down my life for the sheep." Verse 11b says, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." But Jesus did not die helplessly; he died to save men from their sins. Here we learn one spiritual secret. A good shepherd is not a brother to sisters or an uncle to nagging sheep. A good shepherd is like a good father who sacrifices for the sake of his children's welfare and future success. One young shepherd had many sheep who were almost the same age with him. He enjoyed many of his brother sheep and many of his sister sheep. Soon the young shepherd realized that his sheep only enjoyed, but did not study the Bible wholeheartedly. The young shepherd had three days of fasting prayer about the true concept of being a shepherd. After a

week, through Bible study, he realized that a shepherd is not a brother to his boy and girl sheep, but a father. When he repented a miracle happened. All his boy and girl sheep began to acknowledge his shepherd's spiritual authority, and they respected him like a spiritual father.

Verses 17-18 say, "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again." God loved Jesus because he chose to obey his Father's will to save men from their sins. Jesus obeyed God because he loved God. Jesus was indeed a good sheep to God. There are many shepherds who say, "Well, sheep are born to be rebellious and disobedient." But it is not true. When we love God, our sheep will love us, too.

Secondly, Jesus is the good shepherd because he cares for the sheep. In chapter 9, Jesus, out of his great shepherd heart, healed a man born blind. No one cared for the man. But Jesus cared for him. As a result, the Pharisees were out to take his life. On another occasion, Jesus and his disciples went into a synagogue, where there was a man whose right hand was shriveled (Mk 3:1-6). Jesus cared for him and healed him, even though it was a Sabbath. Because of this, the Pharisees condemned Jesus as a violator of the Sabbath law. But Jesus, the good shepherd, did not mind, as long as he could care for his sheep. Bible teaching is essential to a shepherd. But a shepherd must care for his sheep's fatalistic problem in light of the Bible teaching. In order to care for a sheep, we must lose a lot. So there is a saying that a shepherd life is a losing business. If we don't lose everything in order to care for the sheep, we cannot be like Jesus, a good shepherd who lost so much, finally his life.

Thirdly, Jesus is the good shepherd because he cares for all peoples of the world (16). Look at verse 16. "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." In this verse, "other sheep" means all the peoples of the world other than the Jews. At that time, the Jews disregarded the Gentiles because of their racial pride. But Jesus cared for all the Gentiles. Jesus wanted them all to be members of his Father's house. Jesus knew that the world was like a jungle for brutal beasts, ripping and tearing each other. Nevertheless, Jesus wanted the world to become God's world, in which "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, and the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them" (Isa 11:6). His time of crucifixion was approaching. But he was deeply concerned with God's will for world salvation in accordance with the prophecy of Isaiah, "a light to the Gentiles" (Isa 42:6, 49:6, 56:6).

Fourthly, Jesus is the good shepherd because he makes the sheep's life abundant (10). Look at verse 10b. "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." The main purpose of Jesus' coming was to give abundant life. Without Jesus, we only become selfish and miserable. In Jesus we have strength to love others. One young medical doctor studied so hard that he damaged his back to the point the medical world could not help him. After conversion, his back pain was

cured miraculously. He began to give his life to shepherding young students. Recently one American girl whose heart was broken experienced a father's love through him. Her broken heart has been healed gradually and she is getting prettier day by day. There was a pretty girl called Jennifer. She was a girl from a broken family. She was a happy girl like a "Happy Farmer" in the song. One day her parents divorced without any obvious reason. When her parents divorced, Satan caused Jennifer to be deeply sorrowful. When she was sorrowful, soon her heart was broken. So she cried by herself. When her younger sister came, she cried with her and they sympathized with each other. But through Bible study, she deeply accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Savior, realizing that God gave his one and only Son as our good shepherd, and finally he gave his life and died on the cross, shedding his holy blood to save men from their iniquities and transgressions. Soon she married a professor in a university. Now she is happy because she married a handsome young professor. To tell the truth, she is really happy because she is under the care of Jesus, the good shepherd.

When we study this passage we cannot but think of many nations which have suffered under political power struggles. Especially, we remember Russian people. Russian people are so intellectual and full of humanity and artistic talents. Russia was the first country to put men into outer space. Once, their ambition to conquer the whole world with communism was remarkable. But in view of history, Russia was a nation with many politicians and scientists, but she never had a good shepherd. Because of this, the people of Russia have been wounded and destroyed by brutal animal men. May God grant many good shepherds in Russia, as well as in America.