

## Knowing the Shepherd's Voice

We live in a dangerous, chaotic, and confused world. Some are so discouraged that they find themselves cynical about engaging the world around us, and some fear even to bring the next generation into this world. Jesus gives us reasons why we should have hope and be very actively engaged, with optimism, in the world around us. In the text before us, we are reminded that Jesus has given us true shepherds to help lead us through this broken world.

### John 10:1-6

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

Jesus indeed gives us shepherds for our development and protection (see Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Matthew 9:36-37). The metaphor in our text of shepherds and sheep is very significant, because everyone knows that sheep could not survive in the Judean wilderness apart from faithful shepherds providing for them and protecting them. In this text, Jesus teaches us some very important lessons about shepherds and sheep.

#### I. True shepherds follow the Great Shepherd (vv. 1-4a)

Jesus illustrates for us that there are both false shepherds and true shepherds in the Church. This, of course, is very sad. We live not only in a fallen world but a Church rife with sin. In John's day, he taught his parishioners very clearly about deceitful teachers within the Church (See 1 John 2:22, 26; 4:1). Paul also taught on this subject (1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-5). The difference between false shepherds and true shepherds are that the true shepherds enter by “the door” and the false shepherds enter “by another way.” Clearly, Jesus shows us in verses 7 and 9 that He is the door; therefore, those who are the true shepherds come in the name of Jesus, proclaiming Jesus is the only way of salvation, for the glory of Jesus. The false shepherds preach another way, avoid the centrality of Jesus Christ, and teach doctrines and ethics that are contrary to His will. Notice in verses 2-4 that true shepherds not only enter by the door but they call the sheep by name, and they go out before the sheep, setting a good example.

#### II. True sheep only follow true shepherds (vv. 4b-5a)

Notice in these two verses that the true sheep follow the true shepherds: “The sheep follow him, for they know his voice.” Because we have been born again by the Holy Spirit, and because we devote ourselves to the word of Jesus, we recognize His voice in the lives and ministry of true shepherds. It is important for us to follow our leaders. Paul says (1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13) “We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.” And the writer of Hebrews affirms the same (13:17): “Obey your leaders and submit to them for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.” At the same time, true sheep run from false shepherds. They run from false shepherds not only for their own sakes, but for the sakes of others who are under their influence. Sheep need to place themselves under the ministries of true shepherds. One can't help but notice that mainline churches are shrinking in size and aging in their membership, as true sheep continue to leave the flock of those who no longer proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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In verse 6, we notice that the disciples did not understand this figure of speech that Jesus used with them, and, in the subsequent verses, Jesus expands and explains this parable in marvelous ways, as we shall see next week.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What is the difference between a true shepherd and a false shepherd? What are some of the messages communicated by today's false shepherds?
2. Why does Jesus call false shepherds "thieves and robbers"?
3. How does Jesus describe true shepherds in verses 2-4?
4. Describe how someone in your line of work, or your role as a student, faithfully lives out the life of a true shepherd.
5. How do God's true sheep respond to true and false shepherds? Why? What does this mean for us, our families, and our friends?

**Going Deeper**

1. In what ways do you most need to grow and develop as a true shepherd?
2. In what ways are you listening to and being influenced by voices of false shepherds?