

The Good Shepherd.

Text: John 10:1-11

Suggested Hymns:

387, 359, 391, 602, 184

- 1) Enters by the door
- 2) Is known to the sheep
- 3) Is the door
- 4) Is Jesus Christ

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 10:1-11, ¹ *“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.”* ² *“But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.”* ³ *“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”* ⁴ *“And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”* ⁵ *“Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”* ⁶ *Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.*

⁷ *Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.”* ⁸ *“All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.”* ⁹ *“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”* ¹⁰ *“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.”* ¹¹ *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Jesus is the true Master and Teacher in the use of parables. His illustrations truly illustrate. They teach. They make an impression on people. They are taken from well-known scenes. Their very simplicity is beautiful and fascinating. They grip our attention because they begin with that which we know, and explain that which we do not know.

In our text our Saviour relates that which is well known. The Jews knew full well of the relationship between the shepherd and his flock. The hills and slopes and valleys of Palestine were spotted with flocks. They knew what characteristics are required in a good shepherd. The Saviour embodies some of these things in today's text. It is rich in instruction for us all. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Good Shepherd

Enters By The Door.

Get a picture fixed in your mind of how people of that day built their sheepfolds. Often it was part of the house, the outer court of it. It was necessary to come through the door of the house to enter the fold.

They did this for the safety of the sheep. Therefore no one could come to the sheep except to whom the porter opened the door. *“To him the doorkeeper opens.*

The true shepherd was well known and had no difficulty about entering. *He who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.* He had full authority by virtue of his office. There is no necessity that he should attempt entry in any other way.

If anybody attempted to break through somewhere else, if anybody would force the door, or climb up some other way, it was very evident that he was not the shepherd, but a thief and a robber. *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.*

This may mean but little to us and bear little weight and importance. Note, however, that flocks meant much to children of Israel. Thousands of people depended upon them for their livelihood. Sheep were a precious temporal possession. This explains why they exercised such great care and concern about their safety.

Note well that sheep are a type, illustrating Christians, God's people. They are extremely precious, not because of inherent value, for they have sinned against God as well as others. They are precious because they have been

purchased by Christ at such a staggering price and because they have been washed and cleansed by the holy, precious blood of the Saviour.

That is why God guards them as the apple of His eye.¹ That is why God wants them to have proper pasture as we read in Psalm 23:1-3, *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*² *He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.*³ *He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.*

That is why God does not want the wrong shepherd over His sheep. We read in Ezekiel 13:1-4, ¹*And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,*² *“Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, ‘Hear the word of the Lord!’”*³ *Thus says the Lord GOD: “Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!”*⁴ *“O Israel, your prophets are like foxes in the deserts.*

And in Matthew 7:15,¹⁵ *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”*²

2. The Good Shepherd Is Known To The Sheep.

In the surrounding country where Jesus grew up shepherds act differently from here. There they lead (not drive) the sheep. The sheep follow. This presupposes that they know the shepherd. There were many shepherds on the plains. Would they not follow the wrong one? How would they know? Our text says, *the sheep hear his voice.*

The sheep grew so accustomed to shepherd’s voice that they could readily distinguish his voice from any other person. They knew exactly when their shepherd spoke or called. More than that, the good shepherd knew every individual sheep by name. Note: *he calls his own sheep by name.* When they were all together, when different flocks had mingled and become mixed, the shepherd knew every one of his sheep by name and could call these names. The sheep would answer to such a call.

Farmers have names for their horses, cows, and dogs, etc. These animals answer to these names. Therefore the sheep would not follow another voice. Even if they heard their name called by a wrong shepherd, they would not follow.

Note that they would even flee from any other shepherd. Our text says, ⁵ ***“Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”***

What a wonderful lesson for today! Christians should heed the voice of the true Shepherd only. We are told in Romans 16:17 to ***note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*** Likewise Titus 3:10-11, ¹⁰ ***Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.***

We also read in 1 John 4:1-2, ¹ ***Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.*** And note especially John 10:11, ¹¹ ***“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.***

God expects Christians to be very careful. They must exercise greatest precaution. False teachers are very busy. They are very dangerous. Many people do not want to hear this. They think that it does not make much difference what you teach so long as you live right. They think that doctrinal differences should be wiped out, and that their existence is not justified.

You can rest assured that no one rejoices more at such foolish “babble” than the false teachers. Of course, they would like to appear harmless. That is how they can come close to the flock. But note well that they are dangerous. Hence Christians should “test them.” In other words people should examine what they are teaching. What a lesson for preachers!

They must come in at the door, which is Christ. ⁹ ***“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*** If they do not enter by the door of Christ, they are robbers and thieves. Again, they must speak properly. Only Christ’s Word has any claim in the Church. If they do not speak the Word of Christ, then they are robbers and thieves. Preachers must know their sheep and must be known of them. This is necessary that they may bring the very things which the flock needs.

3. The Good Shepherd Is Also The Door.

Jesus now changes the comparison. He turns to another phase of this picture, or illustration. ⁷ *Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.* There was a good reason. They did not understand the parable about the Good Shepherd.

They were hostile to Jesus. He had not gained His authority to teach and to preach as they thought it must be done. We would say, He had not secured His license, His commission, or His ordination, from them.

Hence they did not, or perhaps even did not want to, understand. They were not interested in Jesus’ claims, with the exception that they sought something against Him.

Hence Jesus seeks another avenue, another phase of the parable, to bring the truth home to them. He is very earnest. Note the *Most assuredly* or “*verily, verily.*” Jesus wants us to know that there is only one door into the Kingdom and that He is that Door.

We read in Acts 4:12, ¹² *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* And 1 Corinthians 3:11, ¹¹ *“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* That Jesus is the door, the only way to heaven is also made very clear in 1 Timothy 2:5-6, ⁵ *“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all.*

We need to note this lesson today. People have very odd and very warped conceptions of the kingdom of God and how they may enter it. The majority of people think that they can enter by the door of character, or door of self-righteousness. But this door does not lead into the Kingdom.

There is only one door, and that is Christ. By Him, by faith in Him, by trusting in Him, people enter into the Church and into heaven. By Jesus, and Jesus alone, they enjoy the marvellous blessings of the Kingdom, *“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*

Note the words “*be saved.*” In Christ we have forgiveness.³ Forgiveness ushers in many other astounding blessings, peace with God,⁴ assurance,⁵ and life and salvation.⁶

Note the phrase “*go in and out.*” Christians are right at home with Christ. It is the proper family relationship. Not only the joys, but also the privileges of the home the Christians enjoy.

Note the term “*find pasture.*” The Saviour supplies every need of the Christian. There is no lack. *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

4. The Good Shepherd Is Jesus Christ.

There is no doubt about this if we view Jesus in the true light. He was prophesied as a Shepherd.⁷ We read in Isaiah 40:11, *“He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.* The whole Old Testament serves this one grand purpose that it foretells the coming of the Messiah, both by word and by ceremonies.

The New Testament speaks of Jesus as the great Shepherd. We read in Hebrews 13:20, *“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.”*⁸

Jesus Himself boldly claims to be the good Shepherd, in John 10:11, *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.* There can be no doubt about it. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus has not come to destroy any of the sheep. Our text says, *“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.*

Destruction and death is the work of the heretics, who murder the souls of people by their false teaching. Christ’s purpose is rather to “give life” and to give an abundance of it. His whole mission on earth confirms every claim.

We know that Jesus provides, *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.* He tenderly cares, ¹¹ *He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.* He sacrificed Himself, *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*⁹

He rose again, ²⁰ *Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,* ²¹ *make you complete in every good work to do His will.*¹⁰ He will welcome the wanderers, ²⁵ *For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*¹¹ He will crown the faithful, *when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away* we read in 1 Peter 5:4.

In the face of such marvellous claims of marvellous benefits which we enjoy because of Christ there cannot be any doubt that Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,¹²

I am Jesus' little lamb,
Ever glad at heart I am;
Jesus loves me, Jesus knows me,
All things fair and good He shows me,
Even calls me by my name:
Every day He is the same.

Jesus is my staff and stay,
Gently guiding day by day.
When I hunger, Jesus feeds me;
When I thirst, my shepherd leads me
Where the quiet waters flow,
Where the sweetest pastures grow.

Should I not be always glad?
Jesus would not have me sad.
When my days on earth are ended,

By my loving shepherd tended,
In His arms I then shall rest,
There to be for ever blest. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and
minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Psalm 17:8; Zechariah 2:8

² Cf. Deut. 18:22; Jer. 14:14; Jer. 23:16; Matt. 24:11, etc.

³ Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14

⁴ Rom. 5:1

⁵ Rom. 8:1

⁶ Rom. 8:38-39

⁷ Cf. Ezek. 34:23; Ezek. 37:24; Zech. 13:7.

⁸ Also 1 Pet. 2:25

⁹ V 11

¹⁰ Hebrews 13:20

¹¹ 1 Peter 2:25

¹² Hymn 602