

In his commentary on the gospel of John, Gary Burge shares the story told by a Westerner traveling in the Middle East in the 1980's. This traveler observed a remarkable incident in a Palestinian village near Bethlehem. In protest against Israeli occupation of their village, the citizens refused to pay their taxes. In retaliation, the office in command confiscated all the livestock owned by the villagers. The soldiers herded hundreds of sheep into one large pen. A Palestinian widow appeared before the officer to ask for the return of her sheep. "They are my only means of livelihood," she pleaded. The officer laughed cynically and said, "Well, if you can find your sheep among all these, you can take them." A soldier opened the gate and the woman's young son pulled out a reed flute and played a simple tune again and again. A sheep stopped grazing and looked up. Then another wooly head popped up. And several more sheep raised their heads, looking attentive. Then those sheep made their way through the crowd in the pen to the gate where the boy stood playing his flute. The boy kept playing as he and his mother led their twenty-five sheep home. (PPP-pg125; also Staub 38)

The relationship that exists between a shepherd and his sheep is quite special. Once that relationship is established, he can gather them from any crowd, he can lead them down any path, he will protect them and they will follow him home. *And, we're not just talking about livestock here, are we?*

Psalm 23 – Notice the strength of this union has little to do with the sheep (David) and everything to do with the attributes and actions of the Shepherd! (2,3,4,5) -- Verbs... for the Sheep.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. This morning, in HIS OWN WORDS, I want you to hear what that means, or at least, has the potential to mean in your life. (John 10:1-18)

Setting: John 9 – Jesus heals the blind man and the blind Pharisees refuse to believe in Jesus. He ends with (9:39-41) – If they could get over themselves and follow Him, they could have life!

10:1-15 -- Jesus tells a parable about sheep and a shepherd. By His own words, we learn at least four ways that He is THE GREAT SHEPHERD!

1) He Enters by the Door

- a. That is to say, He has a right to us! He is the only qualified and rightful owner of your soul, your life, you. (1-2 – others will try to steal you, but they have no right to you)
- b. (3a) – A porter would watch the sheep at night and when someone came to claim their flock, only the rightful owner could come the right way! Jesus is that rightful owner!
- c. Of course, this goes back to precious chapter. 9:1-5 – I AM LEGIT! From God.
- d. 14:6-7 – This is the way to God. No one, nothing can get you there... but ME.
 - i. 10:7-9! Rightful and Only way to Safety! HE HAS A RIGHT TO CALL YOU!

2) He Calls His sheep by Name

- a. He is a personal and loving Shepherd. He knows every single person who belongs to Him, by name. He treasures every soul, every brother and sister, you.
- b. (v3,14) – "I know my own." We sometimes hear the phrase, "*a personal relationship with your Lord Jesus Christ*" I'll tell you this, it is personal... TO HIM.
- c. If He is your Shepherd, he knows and is intimately interested in everything about you.
- d. **Luke 15:4-7** -- And when you stray, are lost, fall away... He is searching for you, calling your name! No one's needs, concerns, safety is lost in His number. He knows my name.
- e. If you are with Him, He is personally invested in your safety and provisions; if you have wandered from Him, He is just as invested in finding you and bringing you home!

3) He Leads Them Out

- a. (v3-4) -- "**He leads me beside quiet waters**" "**He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.**" And such we are, "His name's sake." So he has not provided a door, learned our name and left us to find our own way. He leads us.
- b. Partly this is accomplished by instruction. Like a shepherd leading by standing before a flock and pointing the staff to their location. The Word is that staff, that direction.
- c. But I want to focus on LEADING BY EXAMPLE. A true shepherd doesn't point, but walks ahead and clears a way for His sheep. "**He goes ahead of them.**" --

- d. **Ps. 23:4-5a** – Not beside me, that I fear we will both discover something we can't handle. Not behind me watching my weary steps. BUT AHEAD (**Heb. 4:14-16**)
 - i. *He faced Satan and defeated sin before Me. He overcame His emotions and the pull of the flesh before Me. He faced death as a result of sin before Me. He has entered heaven Before Me and prepared a PLACE for Me.*
- e. There is nowhere I can go that He has not been. Nothing I can face that He has not defeated. The Good shepherd is with me yes, but just ahead, clearing the pathway home!

4) He Lays Down His Life

- a. Lest any more evidence needed. Lest there be any doubt that HE IS THE WAY; HE LOVES YOU; HE CAN LEAD YOU HOME ... He gave it all that you might live!
- b. (**11-14**) – No one would do this. Good people will be good to you, but chose their life over yours. No one is THAT INVESTED. WILL GO THAT FAR! YES, Jesus did. More than that, He left heaven to come her to die.
- c. **Romans 5:6-10** – Maybe for a righteous man, but for a bunch of lost and ignorant sheep, just to give us the chance to come home? Who does that? Only the Good Shepherd.
- d. But that's not the best part of this. A martyr is beloved, but their death can fade into history. Not my shepherd! (**John 10:17-18**) – Lay it down AND TAKE IT UP AGAIN!
 - i. That's right. And that's why I made our point present tense. He gave His life, then reclaimed it from death. So He can continue to give His life for us as sympathetic HP servant King, protector, guide, today! (*SHEPHERD DYING KILLING BEAR - Replaced*)

Jesus is truly THE GOOD SHEPHERD. That was never in question. If there is a question for consideration this morning it is this: Are you of His Flock? Are you Good Sheep? If not, why not?

--- Bigger question: How do I know if I am of His flock or stuck in the stable as He leads them away?

Let's leave that one up to Jesus as well. Back to the story please: (10:3-5)

- 1) **Hear His Voice.** For all He has done and is doing. He is not a dictator. He does not make people listen or make people act. He speaks, He teaches, He loves. But WE must HEAR HIS VOICE.
 - a. He lovingly pleads! – **Rev. 2:7,11,29** – But He does not make us listen.
 - b. He sternly warns – **Matt. 7:24-27** – But let's you decide.
 - c. Will you listen to the will and way of Jesus?
- 2) **Know His Voice.** Recognize the difference between the thieves and robbers, the uncommitted and self-interested, who call for your time and attention ... and the Messiah, who calls purely for your good, and as the only connection between man and God, you and the Father!
 - a. **Who is Truth to you?** Family, church, neighbor, self? --- Can you distinguish HIM?
- 3) **Follow Him.** He leads, but does not demand that you follow. He faced Satan and overcame death and ascended to heaven and paved the path for you to do the same by the shedding of His blood, but you don't have to do anything about it! But if you want to be saved (**v9**) you will.

(**10:16**) – Beyond the Jews, even across a wide ocean, others can join the FLOCK and be SAVED! But they, (YOU) must hear and know and follow:

Maybe He is calling your name this morning saying:

(**Matt. 4:17**) – “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” –fold is here, home is coming!

(**Mark 16:15-16**) – Believe I can do this for you; and access my fold through baptism now!

Maybe He is calling you back. Come back to Me. Let Me protect you!

It is not a mother, but a Father, who has come to claim those whom the adversary has captured through sin. How will His sheep be found? Simple, His Son has opened the gate to play the tune. The sound of His voice, His Will, His Way... heads will raise, ...sheep will follow. He will take them home. The tune of salvation is playing today through this Instrument (Gospel) this morning. Who is coming?