

What Does A Good Shepherd Do?

John 10:11-21

What is the difference between the authentic and the imitation? Between the real and the fake? And why is it important to distinguish between the real and the fake? For instance, does it matter to you whether your physician really graduated from an accredited medical school or whether his/her degree is a fake?

Some years ago Congress listened to the testimony of Pedro DeMesones, who was at the time serving a prison sentence for mail fraud and conspiracy. It seems that Pedro had provided about 100 clients with false transcripts showing they had fulfilled medical requirements of schools they had never attended. He testified that those clients paid him anywhere from \$5,225 to \$27,000 for the fake degrees, and he had pulled in about \$1.5 million dollars for the venture. It was estimated at that time that approximately 10,000 physicians had phony foreign medical degrees. How would you like to be seeing one of those doctors?¹

It is kind of important to be sure you have the real thing, isn't it? If it is important in physical medicine, it is even more important in the spiritual area. Today we will learn more of what Jesus had to say about the contrast between Himself as the authentic Good Shepherd and those who would be false shepherds.

Last week we saw Jesus laying the foundation for telling Jewish leaders again and in a fresh new way just who He was and what His mission was while on earth. This morning we will go on to get the specifics of His mission. In order to do this in a way the people of His day would understand He makes the comparison between a shepherd and his sheep.

John 10:1-10 NAS

¹ *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.*

² *"But he who enters by the door is a 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 *"When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.*

⁵ *"A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do*

¹ *Spokesman Review*, December 8, 1984.

not know the voice of strangers."

⁶ *This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.*

⁷ *So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.*

⁸ *"All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.*

⁹ *"I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*

¹⁰ *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

No let us go pick up in verse 11 for today's message.

John 10:11-21 NAS:

¹¹ ***"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.***

¹² *"He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.*

¹³ *"He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.*

¹⁴ *"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me,*

¹⁵ *even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.*

¹⁶ *"I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.*

¹⁷ *"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.*

¹⁸ *"No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."*

¹⁹ *When he said these things, the people were again divided in their opinions about him.* ²⁰ *Some said, "He's demon possessed and out of his mind. Why listen to a man like that?"* ²¹ *Others said, "This doesn't sound like a man possessed by a demon! Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"*

What a picture Jesus paints here! He talks about something most of his listeners were quite familiar with. They had hired someone to do a job taking care of sheep. And what happens? As soon as the going gets tough the hired worker takes

off. This hired person was supposed to feed and water the sheep and to protect them from harm. But lo and behold a vicious wolf comes creeping in, growling and snarling as he comes. Instead of the worker grabbing his rod and staff and beating off the wolf, he grabs his coat and runs away leaving the sheep to fend for themselves. Needless to say they are killed and carried off by the wolf. Christ makes a strong contrast between that hired hand and the owner of the sheep, the true shepherd. The true Shepherd would fight off the wolf, even to the point of giving up his own life to save the sheep. Jesus is saying that He is the Good Shepherd who will die for His sheep.

This is the fourth of Jesus' I AM statements in John's Gospel.² Stating that He is the **Good Shepherd** is one way of comparing Himself with the false teaching of the false Jewish shepherds who had become the leaders of the Jewish religion at that time. The hired workers represent the Pharisees: religious leaders who are not really invested in caring for the souls in their flock. Under their leadership the Word of God had been distorted by men in order to satisfy their own personal needs for power and wealth. They were teaching things that were in direct contrast to the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament.

Unfortunately today we also have religious leaders who are also not really invested in caring for the souls in their flocks even though God gives them instructions.

1 Peter 5:2-4 NIV

² *Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;*

³ *not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*

⁴ *And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*

It is a serious thing for a pastor not to be the undershepherd that God wants him or her to be. The Good Shepherd has called pastors today to shepherd the flock, which is the church. To "feed" them the Word of God, to lead them in paths of righteousness, and to bind up their wounds. But God has also promised, as we see here in 1 Peter, a reward to those pastors who are faithful shepherds of the flock that God has entrusted to them. The Pharisees to whom Jesus was speaking in John 10 were not of the sort who would be receiving a reward.

Jesus had already called these leaders "*thieves and robbers,*" and now He would describe them as mere hired hands, which suggests that they would only do what they needed to do to provide for their own needs, but when it came to the sheep being in danger or need, the sheep were on their own. Not so with Christ. He was willing to sacrifice His life for the sake of the sheep.

² John 6:35; 8:12; 10:9

The word “good” that Jesus used here meant to be perfect, and there is only One who is perfect. Mark describes who that is in Mark 10:17-18 NAS:

¹⁷ *As He [Jesus] was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "**Good** Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"*

¹⁸ *And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? **No one is good except God alone.**"*

Jesus is letting them know that **He is God**.

And now He wants to tell these people exactly what He is to provide them as their Good Shepherd.

Five times in this chapter (John 10) Jesus says that His death will be sacrificial in nature.³ That means He died in our place to pay for our sin. He willingly laid down His life for us so that we would never experience spiritual death. There may be many questions in your mind regarding what the Bible means by death and I hope that what follows will give you a rather simple explanation that will help clarify any confusion.

Death of course can mean the end of the body's capability to function. In that regard **everyone dies**. But when the Bible refers to death in relationship to sin, we find it is referring to **spiritual death** or what is frequently referred to as the “*second death*.”

Revelation 2:11 NAS:

¹¹ *'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the **second death**.'*

Revelation 20:6,14 NAS:

⁶ *Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the **second death** has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.*

¹⁴ *Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the **second death**, the lake of fire.*

Revelation 21:8 NAS:

⁸ *"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the **second death**."*

³ John 10:11, 15, 17-18.

Simply defined the “*second death*” is the “*Lake of Fire*.” It is the place where dead people go for eternity if they have not accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. You might think of death as a state of being rather than a conclusion to life. You see, everyone who has ever lived will go on living for eternity after his or her physical death. There will be, however, a very big difference as to where they spend that eternity. Those who have asked Christ into their life as Savior and who have a personal relationship with Him will go straight to Heaven; those who have not will go to a temporary holding area which could be called Hell and will stay there until God’s final judgment of the unsaved. That will occur at the end of the Millennium, and all of those unbelievers there will be sentenced to the “*Lake of Fire*.” It will be the most horrible existence imaginable and there will be no opportunity for parole or a shortened sentence. That is what is known as the **second death**, the spiritual death that is associated with one’s sin in the Bible. We hope this clarifies the term “*death*” as we find it used in Scripture.

We must remember that although Jesus did lay down His life for the sheep, the Jews, He also laid it down for the entire world as well (John 6:51). But even though His death was for the whole world, it would only be given by God’s grace to those who believed in Jesus’ work, to those who consciously asked Jesus to be their Savior.

Jesus, who is the **Good Shepherd**, contrasts His willingness to die for the sheep to the behavior of the Jewish leaders, whom He compares with a hired hand who keeps watch over the sheep, but when trouble comes immediately looks out for his own self-interest. He flees to safety because there is not enough money in the world to pay him for putting his life in danger merely to save a bunch of sheep. The Shepherd, however, purchases the sheep because He is willing to die for them. Consequently He also cares for them. If you ever have had any experience around sheep you probably know they are not God’s brightest creatures and they can get themselves into difficult situations without much effort. It is little wonder that God’s people are frequently compared with sheep. Sheep are also unable to protect themselves. Psalm 23 gives us a picture of the relationship between a sheep (person) and God its shepherd.

Psalm 23 NAS:

*1 The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters. 3 He restores my soul;
He guides me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.
4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You have anointed my head with oil;
My cup overflows.
6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my
life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

Sheep also have a tendency to wander off and get themselves in trouble. Then it is necessary for someone to go and rescue them.

Luke 15:3-7 NAS:

3 So He told them this parable, saying, 4 "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? 5 "When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 "And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' 7 "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

The Pharisees were in no way like Jesus, but were more like babysitters. They should have rejoiced over the healing of the blind beggar but instead they tried to use him to prove their charges against Jesus. Then they excommunicated the beggar from the synagogue when he would not agree with them. Jesus, however, went to find the beggar and then took care of him.

John 10:14-15 NAS:

14 "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

In the Gospel of John, the word *know* means much more than intellectual awareness.⁴ It speaks of an intimate relationship between God and His people (see John 17:3). He knows His sheep personally and consequently knows what is best for each one individually.

Jesus knows our names as we learned in John 10:3. He knew Simon (John 1:42) and even gave him a new name. He called Zaccheus by name in Luke 19:5, and when He spoke Mary's name in the garden, she recognized His voice immediately (John 20:16). Not only does our Shepherd know our names but He also knows what we are like. Perhaps one sheep has unwarranted fears; another may have a propensity to fool around too much with sheep of the opposite sex; another might be prone to certain addictive behaviors; another may be lazy; and yet another may have a combative nature. A "good shepherd" will know each of these things about each sheep and be able to care for their individual special needs.

I am not sure if you can relate to this but there are times when I do not think I know what I need or who I am supposed to be. How comforting it is during such times to call on my Shepherd to show me the right path. Psalm 23, which we just read, is about as good a description of how the "Good Shepherd" cares for His sheep. No matter where we, the sheep, may wander, we need not fear, because the Shepherd will always be at our side to

⁴ *Ginosko* - To know, understand.

care for us and to guide us. The more we experience that care and trust in Him, the more intimately we get to know Him. We are better able to recognize His voice and follow His direction by submitting more completely even in difficult situations. What a wonderful comforting relationship to have the King of the universe love you so much. We read of Christ's deep love for us in John 13:1 NAS:

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

This is better than any fairy tale you can imagine yourself in, because this relationship is real and not just imaginary. If by any chance you do not have that kind of relationship with Christ and would like to be part of His flock, you can do so right now by simply confessing to Jesus that you are a sinner who needs a Savior and tell Him that you believe He died for your sins so that you might have eternal life. That is all it takes if it is done from a sincere heart. If you have now done that sincerely, then you are part of the family of God, the Holy Spirit is now living within you, and you have the assurance of eternal life that will never be taken away by anyone or anything. Congratulations!

John 10:16 NAS

16 "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

This verse has caused much discussion and confusion for some people. They feel called to debate and explain who the other sheep are, the ones who "are not of this fold." Even though Christ makes it clear who the other sheep are, some cults have tried to re-interpret this Scripture.⁵

The "**fold**" is Judaism (John 10:1), but there are other sheep that were not included in the promises and covenants of Israel. These sheep are the **Gentiles** (all people who are not Jews). When Jesus began His ministry He went first to the "*lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" The two folds are simply that: Jews or Gentiles. Do not be led astray.

Matthew 10:5-6 NAS:

5 These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; 6 but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew 15:24-27 NAS:

24 But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" 26 And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." 27 But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters'

⁵ For instance, the Mormons teach that the "other sheep" were the Indians on the American continent.

table."

The people converted at Pentecost were Jews and Jewish proselytes (Acts 2:5, 14), but the Church was not to remain a "*Jewish flock*." Peter took the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10–11), and Paul carried the message to the Gentiles in the far reaches of the Roman Empire (Acts 13:1ff).

There is but one flock, the people of God who belong to the Good Shepherd. God has His people all over this world (see Acts 18:1–11), and He will call them and gather them together.

The missionary message of the Gospel of John is obvious: "*For God so loved the world*" (John 3:16). Jesus Himself defied custom and witnessed to a Samaritan woman. He refused to defend the exclusivist approach of the Jewish religious leaders. He died for a lost world, and His desire is that His people reach a lost world with the message of eternal life.⁶

Jesus continues to save people as they hear His voice in the Scriptures. **One flock and one Shepherd** speaks of the Church with believers from Jewish and Gentile "*sheep pens*" in one body with Christ as Head (Eph. 2:11-22; 3:6)⁷ We see again, as we do often in the New Testament, that has always been God's plan for all people all over the world to come together as one, protected by one Shepherd, and loving and caring for each other. Because of people's sinful nature that plan has not been workable, but one day it will.

Jesus now goes on to spell out some important facts.

John 10:17-18 NAS:

*17 "The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. 18 **No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily.** For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded."*

Jesus makes it clear to the Jewish leaders that He knows that God loves Him. Further, Jesus makes it clear that He knows it will soon be time for Him to give up His life and He wants to make it perfectly clear that He is not going to lose His life because He is abandoned by His Father or because of their power. It is precisely because of the fact that He is willing to give up His life voluntarily for the sins of the entire world that God loves Him so much. God could easily save Jesus, but then none of us could be saved. It was necessary for Jesus to be put to death and He went willingly. No one took Jesus' life. He gave it up of His own accord, by His own choice. But He also let them know that He would prove His power to them by rising from the dead.

In other words, because Jesus was willing to obey the command of His Father for Him to

⁶ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Jn 10:11.

⁷ Walvoord, John F.; Zuck, Roy B.; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:310.

die for the sins of the rest of the world, God gave Him the power to rise from the grave. By saying this, He was also once again affirming His special relationship with His Father, God.

John 10:19-21 NLT:

19 When he said these things, the people were again divided in their opinions about him. 20 Some said, "He's demon possessed and out of his mind. Why listen to a man like that?" 21 Others said, "This doesn't sound like a man possessed by a demon! Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Some of the people reacted by saying Jesus must be demon-possessed to be talking this way. Others stated that these were not the words of one who was controlled by a demon. If He were controlled by a demon His words and actions would be evil. Instead He continually honors the God who sent Him and He behaves with the utmost humility and gentleness. In addition no one possessed by a demon could open the eyes of a blind man.

In this world you may be persecuted for doing good in the name of Christ just as Jesus was in doing good in the name of His Father. But He received the great reward because of His willing obedience and so will you if you endure to the end.

The question you must answer for yourself today is, are you a sheep in Christ's fold? Is He in reality your Good Shepherd? As indicated earlier sheep are pretty dumb animals; yet God uses them to represent people. The implication is that people can do some pretty dumb things too. Like wandering away on their own and refusing to come into the fold. A sheep who did not follow the shepherd could get into all kinds of trouble. He or she could get stuck in thorns and brambles; he or she could fall over a ledge and break a leg; he or she could be attacked by some wild animal. Sheep are followers; they are not leaders. So they need a shepherd to lead them to green pastures and clean water. They need a shepherd to guide them through their whole life. People are the same. Without Jesus as our Shepherd, we wander into all kinds of trouble and stray down paths that are not good for us.

I would encourage you today, even if you have asked Jesus to be your Savior some time ago, to examine your daily life. Are you daily being led by the Good Shepherd? Are you daily eating the food He provides by spending time reading **and thinking about** the Bible? Are you walking down the paths the Shepherd wants you to take **by being obedient to everything He tells you in the Bible?** He, as the Good Shepherd, already gave His life for you and now He is living in Heaven so that He can continue to be your Shepherd. Jesus wants to lead you, mend your wounds, and provide for you. Jesus knows the best path for you to take. When He sets up do's and don'ts for you, it is because He knows that if you obey them you will be happy. You will still have problems, that goes with being alive, but when Jesus is your Good Shepherd and you are following in His paths you will lead a life that will be fulfilling and satisfying. And you will have the Good Shepherd to help you with those problems.