

## Introduction

When we lived on Priest Road, we had 22 acres, of which about half was in pasture land. When I was playing professional golf, I had seen that property, and had prayed specifically for it. When it went on the market, I bought it at a very good price. I bought a couple of brush goats to help clean up all the poison ivy on the property. Karen liked the goats and decided that she wanted to start raising some. So, we bought more goats, and they ate the poison ivy and cleaned up our fence lines really well. One of the things that I learned about shepherding during that time was how they know the voice of the shepherd. When Karen would go to the fence by the barn and call out to the goats, no matter where they were in the fields, they would come running to her. They knew her voice and they responded to her voice. If anyone else called out to them, the goats ignored them. They knew her voice, and only responded to her voice.

John 10 is about the good shepherd, and one of the characteristics of the true shepherd is that the sheep hear his voice and they follow him. The sheep know his voice and only respond to his voice. John wrote that a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.

(Jn 10:4-5) “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 not know the voice of strangers.”

John 10 is a continuation of the passage in John 9. It was the last day of the feast of Tabernacles, and Jesus healed the man born blind. The Pharisees were upset that Jesus had healed him on the Sabbath. They had talked to the man, to his parents, and then to the man again. They wanted to verify that this man had been born blind, and to find out what had happened. Upon finding out, they still disbelieved, and they put the man out of the temple because he had testified about Jesus. The Pharisees saw themselves as the shepherds of Israel. They felt they had the power to put people out and to bring them in. After putting the man out, Jesus found the man and the man believed in Jesus, and worshiped Him. Afterwards, Jesus spoke to the Pharisees, who had heard Him minister to the man that had been blind, and said, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.”

Then Jesus tells an allegory. Some translations say that Jesus spoke a parable to them. The Greek word used here is paroimia (Strong’s G3942), and it is a figure of speech, illustration, or allegory. The word for parable is parabole, and it is not used here. A parable is usually shorter and has one main point, and is easy to understand. An allegory gives a picture or illustration to teach us something about a person or thing. An allegory is usually more complex and can teach several things. The gospel of John does not include any of the parables of Jesus, but it does have a number of allegories that Jesus used. In John 6:35, Jesus said, “I am the Bread of Life.” In John 8:12, Jesus said, “I am the Light of the World.” These are allegories to help us gain a better understanding of who Jesus is.

In our passage today, Jesus gave an allegory to help people understand that He is the true Shepherd of Israel. I have titled it, “How to Recognize the Good Shepherd”, and there are five ways that are given. Each of these characteristics are contrasted with the characteristics of the false shepherds of Israel, the Pharisees. The first way to recognize the true shepherd is that He comes by the door to the fold. The second way to recognize the true shepherd is that He knows the sheep and the sheep know Him. Third, the true shepherd is the door of the sheep. Fourth, the true shepherd has good fruit. Fifth, the good shepherd lays His life down for the sheep.

## How to Recognize the Good Shepherd

1. He comes by the door
2. He and the sheep know each other
3. He is the door of the sheep
4. He has good fruit.
5. He lays His life down for the sheep

(Jn 10:1–21) “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 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. {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} A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. {20} Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?” {21} Others were saying, “These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?”

### 1. He enters by the door (Jn 10:1-3)

Our text begins with “truly, truly,” or in some versions, “verily, verily.” The Greek word is *amen* (Strong’s G281), which means trustworthy, firm, surely, truly, or verily. (It comes from the Hebrew word, *aman*, (Strong’s H543). It is an expression of strong affirmation and utmost importance to what is going to be said. Scholars say that this expression is not used to begin a discourse, and that this is a continuation of Jesus’ conversations with the Pharisees at the end of John 9. The Pharisees believed that they were the true shepherds of Israel, so Jesus is going to use an allegory to let them know who the real true shepherd of Israel is. The allegory is about sheepfolds, something that most Jewish people were very familiar with, but for most of us in the western world, this is not something that we are very familiar with.

(Jn 10:1–3) “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.”

Jesus said, “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. But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” The first characteristic of the true shepherd is that he goes through the door of the fold.

There are two types of sheepfolds in John 10. This is the first sheepfold, and it is one that would be found in a city like Jerusalem. It would be a walled-in area with a door, and it would house multiple flocks of sheep. There was a sheepfold near the sheep gate, one of the gates of Jerusalem. Shepherds would bring their flocks in for the night and put them into this sheepfold. They would pay a porter or gatekeeper to watch over the gate at night, so that they could go home and sleep at night. The only way to get to the sheep would be to climb over a wall or go through the gate. The gatekeeper knew who was authorized and who was not authorized to go into the sheepfold. He would only let the shepherds who were keeping their sheep there, into the sheepfold. The sheepfold represents the nation of Israel, and the gatekeeper was the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the true shepherd of Israel, and He has come through the gate to be the Shepherd of Israel. He came in fulfillment of the prophecies given in the Old Testament. In Micah 5:2, he was born in Bethlehem. In Isaiah 7:14, He was born of a virgin. In Isaiah 11:1, He was out of the stem of Jesse. In Luke 1:32, He fulfilled many prophecies about being from the lineage of David. It would be impossible for any other person to fulfill all the prophecies about the Messiah, the true Shepherd of Israel. He came through the gate.

- (Is 7:14) “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”
- (Mic 5:2) “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Too* little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.”
- (Is 11:1) “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.”
- (Lk 1:32) “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;”

On the other hand, the Pharisees had claimed to be the true shepherds of Israel, but they were thieves and robbers. They had no legal claim to the flock. They had not been appointed by God to shepherd the flock. They had not come in through the gate.

## 2. **He and the sheep know each other** (Jn 10:4-6)

The second characteristic of the true shepherd of Israel was that He would know the sheep and the sheep would know him. When the doorkeeper or porter lets the shepherd in, the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not come to a stranger or follow a stranger, because they do not recognize the voice.

Earlier I mentioned that when Karen would call to her flock, they would come running to her. She usually had some treats for them, and they knew that. If someone else had treats and called to them, they would ignore them. Karen had spent time with the goats. She had names for each of them. She used the names of women in the Old Testament, and named each goat. She kept their hooves trimmed, and kept up with their worming records. She knew all of her goats, and all of them knew her.

(Jn 10:3–4) “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.”

In these sheepfolds, where several different flocks were being held, when a shepherd called, only his sheep would come to him at the gate, and he would put them out. After he had put them all out, and counted all of them, he would lead them out of the city into the pastures where they could graze. They followed the shepherd because they knew His voice and trusted him. They had spent a lot of time together and they had relationship.

Jesus said that the sheep simply would not follow a stranger, but would flee from him, because they did not know the voice of strangers. The Pharisees were not relational. They had strict rules and man-made laws. They lorded over the people. They took advantage of them. They were interested in power and control, and the people knew that.

(Jn 10:5) “A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

Notice what God said about these shepherds in Ezekiel 34. He begins by saying, “Woe, shepherds of Israel.” Then God rebuked them for feeding themselves and not the flock. He tells them that they have not take care of the sickly, healed the diseased, or brought back the scattered. They haven’t sought for the lost, and they used force with severity to dominate them. There was not relationship and care for the sheep. Jesus, on the other hand, had come to seek and to save that which was lost (Lk 19:10). Jesus had gone around healing the sick. He had just healed the man born blind. The Pharisees had put him out of the temple, but Jesus went and found him. The Pharisees were only interested in themselves, and were not concerned about the sheep. Jesus knew the names of the sheep. He called Zacchaeus to come down from the sycamore tree (Lk 19:5). He told Nathanael that He saw him under the fig tree before Philip had called him (Jn 1:48). Jesus knew the names of His sheep, and He had relationship with them.

(Eze 34:1–6) “Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, {2} “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? {3} “You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat *sheep* without feeding the flock. {4} “Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. {5} “They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. {6} “My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek *for them*.’””

(Lk 19:10) “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Then John wrote, “this figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.” Most versions say “figure of speech”, but the KJV uses the word parable. It was not a parable, but an allegory. Jesus had just told the Pharisees that they were blind, and we find here that they were not able to understand what Jesus was saying. They were spiritually blind, and without understanding.

(Jn 10:6) “This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.”

### 3. **He is the door of the sheep** (Jn 10:7-9)

The Pharisees have not understood what Jesus has been saying, so He said to them again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. Previously Jesus had spoken about the door and that the real shepherd goes through the door to the sheepfold. Now, He switches things around a little bit, and uses a similar allegory. This time, He said that He is the door of the sheep.

(Jn 10:7) “So Jesus said to them again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.”

In the first allegory, the sheepfold is referring to an enclosed shelter in the city, one that had walls around it and a door to get into it. In this second allegory, the sheepfold is a different type of enclosure. Out in the fields, a shepherd would put together an enclosure with thorny bushes, with one opening in it. There was no door to the sheepfold; the shepherd was the door. The shepherd would lay across the opening to the sheepfold. The sheep could not get out without going through him. No predator come into the fold without going through the shepherd. In this second allegory, Jesus is the gate to the sheep.

The Pharisees saw themselves as the door of the sheep. They had just put out the man who had been healed of blindness. When they did that, Jesus went and found the man, and revealed Himself to him. Jesus was the door into the kingdom of God for this man that had just been put out. Jesus was the true door to the sheep.

The Pharisees let people know they were the door. Earlier, when they had questioned the man’s parents, they had not answered the Pharisees’ question, and referred them to their son because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Jesus to be the Messiah, he would be put out of the synagogue. They were acting as the door to the sheep, but God had not put them in that role; they had taken that role on their own. They were thieves and robbers; they had taken something that was not theirs to take.

(Jn 9:20–23) “His parents answered them and said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; {21} but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself.” {22} His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. {23} For this reason his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

Jesus continued, “all who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.” Jesus was not referring to the prophets that came before Him, like Moses, Elisha, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or Isaiah; He was referring to those who claimed to be the shepherds of the flock of Israel. Earlier, we looked at Ezekiel 34, where God pronounced a woe to the false

shepherds who were feeding themselves and not the flock. They were taking advantage of the flock, but not caring for them. They were not searching for the lost, or healing the sick. These are the people that Jesus was referring to that came before Him.

(Jn 10:8) “All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.”

Jesus said that the sheep did not hear them. These false shepherds did not connect with the people. The people did not hear, understand, or obey these false shepherds.

Then Jesus said for the second time, “I am the door.” The way into the kingdom of God is through Jesus. In John 14:6, Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” There are not multiple paths to the kingdom of God. There are some cults and groups that say that there are many paths to God. They say that you can find God through Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, or other tracks. This is false, and a deceptive teaching to keep people from following the true and only way into the kingdom of God.

(Jn 10:9) “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”

(Jn 14:6) “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

The path to God is a narrow gate. In Matthew 7, Jesus said, “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Jesus is that small and narrow gate that leads to life. He is the door to the sheep. These other paths may appear religious and good, but they are a path that leads to destruction.

(Mt 7:13–14) “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. {14} “For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

In John 8:24, Jesus said to the Pharisees that unless they believe that He is the Messiah, they were going to die in their sins. Jesus is the only One to have died for our sins. He was the only One to live a sinless life, who could give His life for us. Unless we believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and receive Him, we will die in our sins. He is the gate, the only gate to the sheep.

(Jn 8:24) “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.”

From a pastoral standpoint, there are applications that I want to bring up at this point. In the first allegory, the thieves go over the wall, but not through the gate. Pastors should be recognized and go through the proper channels. Paul told the Ephesian elders to be on guard for the flock because savage wolves would come in, not sparing the flock, and draw away the disciples after them. There are false shepherds, false teachers, false prophets, and false apostles that try to come in and draw people to themselves. Leaders need to come in through the gate, and the gate keeper is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes overseers, which is one of three words used to describe the office of pastor. The elders, or overseers, need to be on guard against those coming into the sheepfold some other way than the gate.

(Ac 20:28–30) “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. {29} “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; {30} and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.”

Jesus is the gate to the sheep. Any pastor coming into the sheepfold need to go through Jesus. That means that they believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and that He died for our sins, and was raised from the dead. They must have received Jesus into their lives, and have a relationship with Jesus. Jesus is the gate that anyone coming into the fold, whether leaders or otherwise, must go through.

In Barna’s survey of pastors and their worldviews in 2022, he found that about half of all Pentecostal and charismatic pastors believe that good people can earn their eternal salvation. In other words, they do not believe that Jesus is the gate. They believe that there is another way into the fold, a gate called good works. That same survey “found that slightly less than half of all the pastors connected with traditionally black denominations are born-again, based on their theological beliefs.”<sup>1</sup>

The gate to the sheep is Jesus. Anyone wanting to come in to the sheep, must come through Jesus. There is no other way into the fold. After the lame man was healed in Acts 3, Peter preached and said, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” There is no other way. Jesus is the door to the sheep.

(Ac 4:12) “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

#### 4. **He has good fruit** (Jn 10:10-18)

The first way to recognize the good shepherd is that he goes through the gate. He is recognized by the doorkeeper, who is the Holy Spirit. The second way to recognize the good shepherd is that he has a relationship with the sheep. He knows them by name and the sheep know his voice. They won’t come to a stranger, but they will come to him and follow him because they know and trust him. The third way to recognize the good shepherd is that he is the gate to the sheep. The fourth way to recognize the good shepherd is by his fruit. In a contrasting statement, Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” The false shepherds do not bring life; they destroy life; they steal, kill, and destroy. The good shepherd brings life. Their intentions and results are radically different. Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees who were not bringing life to people; they were interested in power, control, and money. Jesus was healing and saving people. He was bringing life to people. We must examine the fruit of the shepherds.

(Jn 10:10) “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

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<sup>1</sup> Source: *American Worldview Inventory*, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, N=1,000 Christian pastors, 2022.

In Matthew 7, Jesus said to beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. He said you will know them by their fruits. Good trees bear good fruit, and bad trees bear bad fruit. He concluded by saying, "So then, you will know them by their fruits." When we look at the life of Jesus and the life of the Pharisees, they were radically different. Jesus went preaching repentance and about the kingdom of God, and He healed people, and set people free. He came that people would have life and have it abundantly. There was good fruit from His life and ministry.

(Mt 7:15–20) "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. {16} "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? {17} "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. {18} "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. {19} "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. {20} "So then, you will know them by their fruits."

In Matthew 23, Jesus pronounced eight woes to the scribes and Pharisees. In the fifth woe, He said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also." Jesus was looking at their fruit, and it was not good. They were hypocrites. They looked clean on the outside, but inwardly they were full of robbery and self-indulgence. They had terrible fruit.

(Mt 23:25–26) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. {26} "You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also."

## 5. He lays his life down for the sheep (Jn 10:11-18)

The fifth and final characteristic that Jesus gave is that the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

(Jn 10:11) "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

When the Father sent Jesus, He sent Him to lay His life down and pay for our sins. He came that we might believe in Him, and have our sins atoned for. When John introduced Jesus, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world." The Lamb of God was going to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. Jesus knew that He had come to lay His life down.

(Jn 1:29) "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

In Mark 10, Jesus said to His disciples, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." He knew that He was going to lay His life down for you and I. The true shepherd lays His life down for the sheep. He is selfless, and puts the needs of others before his own needs.

(Mk 10:45) "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."



Jesus proclaimed that He was the good shepherd, and that the good shepherd lays His life down for the sheep. This in contrast to a hired hand, one that was not a true shepherd. When the hireling sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is not concerned about the sheep. The false shepherds are concerned about their own necks; they are concerned only for their own well-being. This is quite the contrast to the true shepherd that is willing to lay his life down for the sheep.

(Jn 10:12-13) “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.”

Then Jesus repeats Himself, saying, “I am the good shepherd.” This time, He gave another reason why He was the good shepherd. He said that He knows His own, and His own know Me. Earlier, we saw that the good shepherd goes through the gate and calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. Jesus not only knows our name, He knows everything about us. He knows more about us than we know about ourselves. He knows the days ordained for us when there was not yet one (Ps 139:16), and none of know that number. He has detailed information about everything in our lives. He knows when we sit down and rise up (Ps 139:2). He knows our thoughts and our intentions (He 4:12, Ps 139:4). There are no secrets or things that we can hide from Him. For some of us that is very comforting. He will work all things together for our good (Ro 8:28), and He will accomplish all that concerns us (Ps 138:8). For others, it is a troubling truth, because they have not yielded every area of their lives to Him, and somehow think that they are able to hide things from Him and get away with them.

(Jn 10:14) “I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me,”

Jesus said He knows His own and His own know Him, “even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father.” Jesus knew the Father intimately. They were in constant communication, and Jesus only did the things He saw His Father doing. That is the kind of relationship Jesus wants us to have with Him. He wants us to know Him intimately. That requires us to be in constant communication and fellowship with Him. We must pray without ceasing, and be devoted to prayer. We must abide in His word. We must sit at His feet like Mary did, listening to Him. We must know Him in the same way that the Son knew the Father, and the Father knew the Son.

(Jn 10:15) “even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”

Then Jesus repeated that He was going to lay His life down for the sheep. Jesus knew that it would not be at the Feast of Tabernacle, which is the one that is just getting over. His hour had not yet come. He knew it would be in a few months at the Feast of Passover. Jesus was going to lay His life down. It was not going to be taken from Him; He was going to lay His life down. There was a purpose behind laying His life down, and it was for the sheep. He was going to lay His life down so that the sheep could be forgiven and they could have that intimate fellowship with the Father that He enjoys with the Father. When Jesus laid down His life, the veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom. Now anyone could come into the holy of holies and have intimate fellowship with the Lord. Jesus removed the curtain, the barrier of sin that separated us.

(Mt 27:51) “And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.”

Next, Jesus said He had other sheep, which are not of this fold, and that He must bring them also. These other sheep will hear His voice, and become one flock with one shepherd. Jesus was referring to the Gentile believers. Jesus laid His life down so that our sins could be forgiven, and this was not just for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. Jesus was going to break down the barriers between the Jews and Gentiles, and they were going to be one flock with one shepherd.

(Jn 10:16) “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.”

Then Jesus said that the Father loves Him because He lays His own life down so that He could take it again. Some people may be willing to lay their life down for a cause, but they do not have the ability to take it again. Jesus, being the Son of God (fully God) and the Son of Man (fully man), was able to take His life up again. Jesus knew that He was going to die, but He also knew that He was going to be raised from the dead on the third day.

(Jn 10:17) “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.”

Jesus made it very clear that no one takes His life away from Him, but He was going to lay it down on His own initiative. Jesus had the authority to lay it down, and He had the authority to take it up again. He had received this commandment and authority from the Father.

(Jn 10:18) “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.”

In Matthew 26, when Jesus was arrested, Peter drew out his sword and cut off the ear of the slave of the high priest, whose name was Malchus. Jesus reached out and healed his ear. Then Jesus told His disciples to put their swords back. He went on, saying, “Or do you not think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels.” In the Roman army, a legion had two cohorts. Each cohort had ten units. Each unit was comprised of six centuraie, and each centuraie had eighty to hundred soldiers. When we run the numbers, we find that each cohort had between 4,800 and 5,000 men, and there were two cohorts in a legion, making the total number in a legion close to 10,000 soldiers. Jesus said that He could have brought in twelve legions, or 120,000 angels, which could have easily wiped out the one cohort that was assigned to the Jews to arrest Jesus. Jesus had the power and authority to stop His arrest and sentence of death, but He gave up His life on His own initiative.

(Mt 26:53–54) “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? {54} “How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, *which say* that it must happen this way?”

The other thing that stands out about Jesus laying down His life on His own initiative was how much He loves us. In Romans 5:8, Paul wrote that God demonstrated His love towards us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Jesus laid His life down for us because He loves us. A true shepherd loves the sheep. He lays his life down day in and day out, serving and caring for the sheep, and feeding the sheep; and he does this because he loves the flock.

(Ro 5:8) “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

**Conclusion and Applications (Jn 10:19–21)**

After Jesus had given these allegories to the Pharisees about how to recognize the good shepherd, a division occurred. These religious leaders were always having divisions and strife. A division occurred because of what Jesus had spoken. Some of them held on to the belief that Jesus had a demon and was insane. They said to those who did not hold this view, “Why do you listen to Him?” The other side said that “these are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?”

(Jn 10:19–21) “A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. {20} Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?” {21} Others were saying, “These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?”

Jesus has just given two allegories to them. In the first allegory, He showed them that He entered through the door, not over the wall. He said the porter or gatekeeper knew Him, and the sheep knew Him. Second, He said that He knows the sheep by name, and they know His voice, and they follow Him; He has relationship with them. Third, in the second allegory, He said that He was the gate. In order to go into the sheepfold, they had to go through Him. Fourth, Jesus told them that He had come to give life, while the thief had come to steal, kill, and destroy. It was a prodding to examine the fruit in recognizing the true shepherd of Israel. Fifth, He told them that He was the good shepherd and that He was going to lay His life down for the sheep. It would not be taken from Him; He would lay it down on His own initiative, and that He would take it back up afterwards, speaking of His resurrection from the dead. These are the things that caused a division among the Pharisees that heard Him teach these allegories.

In John 20, John wrote that these signs were written so that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, we may have life in His name. There are going to be some people who believe, and will have life in His name. There will be others that hear and see, but don’t really hear and see. They do not believe in Jesus, and they are going to die in their sins; they will not have life, because they have rejected Jesus.

(Jn 20:30–31) “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; {31} but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

This morning, after hearing Jesus’ words about the signs of the real shepherd of Israel, the good shepherd, do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah? Jesus just healed a man born blind, and that sign was recorded in the gospel so that we might believe in Jesus and have life. After hearing and reading about it, do you believe? Second, if you believe, have you asked Jesus to come into your life? Have you received Jesus? If you are in the group that believed that Jesus was not demon-possessed, but was the Messiah, the Son of God, who had been sent by the Father, I encourage you to pray and receive Christ this morning. Just pray something along these lines.

“Jesus, I believe that You are the Messiah. I believe that You came and died for my sins, and were raised up on the third day. I want You to be the Lord and Shepherd of my life. I ask You to come in and forgive me of my sins. I confess You as Lord, and I want to follow You wherever You lead. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

**Closing Prayer**

Father, thank You for this passage about ways to recognize that Jesus is the good Shepherd. There are so many applications for the church today and for recognizing true shepherds of the flock. Help us to follow these principles. Give us wisdom and discernment. And for those of us who are pastors, help us to love our sheep. Help us to know their names, and have relationship with them. Help them to know our voice. Help us to lead and feed the flock. Help us to protect the flock, and to lay our lives down for the flock. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Discussion Questions**

- How can Jesus be the door and the good Shepherd at the same time?
- How is the Holy Spirit involved in the call of shepherds in the church today? (See Ac 20:28)
- In larger churches, how can a shepherd know all the sheep by name and have relationship with them?
- Why should the church members (the flock) be involved in selecting a shepherd?
- What are some ways that we can examine the fruit of a shepherd? Do the qualifications for overseers in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 provide guidelines to help with this?
- If sheep know the voice of the shepherd, and are willing to follow, what are some reasons that they would be willing to follow? What are some things that you need to know before you follow them?
- Jesus said that His own would know Him in the same way that He knows the Father and the Father knows Him. What will it take for the church to know Jesus that way? Do you have that same kind of relationship? Do most believers have that kind of relationship?

## **How To Recognize the Good Shepherd**

### **Introduction** (Jn 10:4–5, 6:35, 8:12, 10:1-21)

1. **He enters by the door** (Jn 10:1-3, Is 7:14, Mic 5:2, Is 11:1, Lk 1:32)
  
2. **He and the Sheep Know Each Other** (Jn 10:4-6, Lk 19:10, 19:5, Jn 1:48, Ez 34:1-6)
  
3. **He is the door of the Sheep** (Jn 10:7-9, 9:20–23, Jn 14:6, Mt 7:13-14, Jn 8:24, Ac 20:28–30, 4:12)
  
4. **He Has Good Fruit** (Jn 10:10-18, Mt 7:15–20, Mt 23:25-26)
  
5. **He Lays His Life Down for the Sheep** (Jn 10:11-18, Jn 1:29, Mk 10:45, Ps 139:2, He 4:12, Ps 139:4, Ro 8:28, Ps 138:8, Mt 27:51, Mt 26:53–54, Ro 5:8)

### **Conclusion and Applications** (Jn 10:19–21, 20:30–31)