

The Guidance of the Shepherd

John 10: 1-6

Once again we find Jesus surrounded by controversy. Our text records Jesus' response to accusations of the Pharisees. In the previous chapter He had healed the blind man near the pool of Siloam. As it was with the lame man at Bethesda, this miracle was done on the Sabbath day as well. True to their nature, the Pharisees are enraged that such "work" had been done on the holy day and they are convinced Jesus is a rank sinner.

Chapter ten is a continuation of their discussion. The Pharisees presumed to have spiritual sight, but they were yet in their sin. Jesus now speaks of the sheepfold, a place where the people of God are gathered together in comfort and safety. He warns against strangers who approach the fold with a desire to deceive and divide the sheep. He also speaks of the true Shepherd and His tender care for the sheep.

Through this simple illustration that all were familiar with, Jesus teaches a profound lesson. Let's consider the [aspects](#) of the sheepfold our Lord describes as we think on: [The Guidance of the Shepherd](#).

I. The Detection of a Stranger (1) – *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.* He begins with a warning concerning strangers who seek access to the sheepfold. He is referring to the tactics and doctrines of the Pharisees. We need to realize strangers remain in our day as well. Consider:

A. The Entrance (1a) – *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold...*By reading the entire chapter we know that Jesus Himself is the door to the sheepfold. He is the way one gains entry. He was denied and rejected as the Christ. The Pharisees and many of the Jews refused to embrace Jesus as the Son of God, Savior of the world. They sought to gain acceptance to God and entry into His fold by another means.

- This approach remains prevalent in our day. Many desire to be accepted of God, being made part of His family, and yet they desire to enter some other way. They refuse to enter through the true Door.

B. The Diligence (1b) – *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way...*Jesus reveals the determined diligence of these false teachers. They refuse to enter the door, but they are willing to climb up some other way. Clearly

this requires more effort and planning, but they are committed to their desires. Christ fulfilled the work of redemption of the cross and yet many seek to work their way in through self effort.

- As we consider the diligence of false teachers, this also reveals they sneaky way in which they operate. They will not come through the door, in full view having their motives known. They seek to climb up another way, hoping to remain undetected. Rarely will a false teacher reveal his true motives. We must guard against those who seek entry other than through Christ!

C. The Indifference (1c) – **the same is a thief and a robber**. We will see the contrast between the stranger and the Shepherd in a moment, but Jesus declares these do not care for the sheep. They are not interested in the well being of the fold. They come to satisfy their own lusts and desires, willing to steal and rob the sheep in order to obtain them.

- Jesus gives us a clear warning sign to look for. When one cares more for themselves than they do the well being of the church, you better look out. False teachers have rejected Christ and the genuine means of entry, only seeking to advance their cause, even at the expense of others! Many doctrines today enslave people, stealing their peace and joy.

II. The Designation of the Shepherd (2-3) – Here we discover the contrast between a stranger and the Shepherd. He is known and easily recognized. Notice:

A. His Approach (2) – **But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep**. The true Shepherd enters the fold through the door. (We could make application here for a pastor called of God who genuinely seeks the good of the church, but the context deals with Christ as the Shepherd.) In contrast to a stranger, Jesus enters the fold through the door. We know that He is the door, and this confirms His deity, coming to fulfill the plan of redemption. He came to obey the will of the Father in order to purchase our salvation!

B. His Acceptance (3a) – **To him the porter openeth**; Jesus speaks of the porter, the keeper of the door, knowing the shepherd and opening the door to him. Jesus is the Shepherd and the porter is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit recognizes the Shepherd and opens the door at His command.

- This paints a beautiful picture of the work of the Spirit in salvation. The Jews would've had a hard time comprehending this since the Spirit had not yet come as the Comforter, but Jesus speaks of His work in salvation. The Spirit stands as the porter, keeping the door, and as He does, He deals with the hearts of those who need salvation, seeking to allow the Shepherd in.

- We also find comfort in this thought. The Spirit will never open the door to anyone other than Christ. If we are in fellowship with Christ, the Spirit will guide us as we serve Him. Much has been brought into the modern church contrary to the Spirit. If the Spirit doesn't open the door, it must be a stranger seeking to climb in some other way!

C. His Appeal (3b) – **and the sheep hear his voice.** The shepherd speaks to the sheep and they know his voice. His is familiar to them and they find comfort in his presence. By his speaking to them, they are comforted and encouraged.

- Does that not picture our Lord? He speaks to His sheep through His Word. We know His voice as He speaks. We are drawn to Him because we know He cares for us. I want to know more of my loving Shepherd and hear from Him more than I have in the past.

D. His Assessment (3c) – **and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.** The shepherd knows his sheep by name, and he calls their name as he encounters them in the fold. He is well aware of the sheep that are there and would immediately recognize one that was foreign to the fold.

- It is good to recognize the Shepherd, but it is a greater blessing to be recognized of Him. I am glad He knows my name! I am glad to be counted among the fold. I rejoice to know the Shepherd of my soul knows me, loves me, and is leading my life! He knows each of us individually. You are not just a number to Christ; you are somebody in Him.

III. The Devotion to the Shepherd (4-5) – Jesus reveals the unique relationship sheep have with their shepherd. They are devoted to Him because of His love and care. Notice:

A. The Provision (4a) – **And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them.** Jesus speaks of the provision of the shepherd for the sheep. As he puts them forth from the safety of the sheepfold, he goes before them. He doesn't drive them from behind; He leads them out in front. He walks the path before them, seeking the right way, keeping them from harm. Aren't you glad our Lord leads us daily? He has already traveled the path we walk, and He goes before us seeking our good.

- The idea of the shepherd putting forth the sheep reveals that force is sometimes necessary. Sometimes sheep are stubborn and don't want to follow the shepherd. In those times the shepherd has to force the reluctant sheep to follow the others. We will have to admit that

Christ has had to prod us at times as well. We often know what He desires of us, and yet we are reluctant to follow His lead. The safety of the fold is wonderful, but if we are to become what the Lord desires of us, we must follow Him as He leads, even if that takes us on an unfamiliar path.

B. The Peace (4b) – *and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.* Obedient sheep don't know where they are headed, but they are not concerned. They simply follow the guiding voice of the shepherd, fully trusting them to lead where they need to go. They travel at peace as long as the shepherd is leading and they hear his call.

- Eventually the Lord will lead us out of the safety and comforts of the sheepfold down a path unfamiliar to us. We will experience new surroundings and newfound challenges. However there will be peace knowing we are led by the Shepherd. I had much rather follow Him down a path I am unfamiliar with than remain in the sheepfold alone while He leads others to greener pastures!

C. The Persuasion (5) – *And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.* Jesus speaks of the intimate relationship the sheep enjoy with their shepherd. They follow only him because they are familiar with his voice. They instinctively flee from the voice of strangers. They love their shepherd and are convinced he will lead them in the paths they need to follow.

- The believer is bombarded with many voices today. In fact, often there are so many voices seeking our attention that it becomes hard to hear the Lord when He speaks. We know the Lord will lead us in the right path. I am persuaded that He loves me much more than others and I am secure in Him. We must stay close so we can hear His voice, resisting the temptation to wander from His guidance. When we hear the voices of strangers seeking to influence our lives, we must flee to the safety of the Shepherd.

Conclusion: This passage has been easy to understand, but many in Jesus' day could not comprehend what He said. Their hearts were far from Him and they weren't ready to receive His words. The same is true today. Simple childlike faith is all that is necessary for salvation and yet many refuse to believe. Jesus is the true Shepherd and He is the door of salvation. The strange doctrines promoted today will only bring despair.

Wherever you are spiritually, all need to seek the Shepherd. If you have never been saved, Jesus made the way for you. He stands ready to welcome you into the fold through salvation. Those who are born again in Christ need to remain close to Him and follow as He leads. Stay near the Shepherd and He will lead you into the pastures of His good will.