

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Lesson Guide
February 15, 2015
The Good Shepherd vs. the False Shepherds

Memory Verse:

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION from Last Week

How 'bout that daily Bible reading? What have been your struggles or successes this week?

INTRO

(This is just a clarification that John 10 isn't saying that literally any other shepherd is a false one, i.e. modern day Pastors and Evangelists who serve Jesus. Chapter 10 is talking about the Pharisees and those who act and "lead" like them, rather than like Jesus. Just skip or summarize at your discretion.)

Let's start with a short intro about the context of John 10 and a disclaimer about the False Shepherds we're going to talk about in comparison with the Good Shepherd. First, John 10 starts in the middle of a series of events, continuing on from John 9. Every chapter of the Bible is not a stopping and starting point for a particular story. Some may be a change from one day or story to the next, but a lot are just changes in topic of the same conversation, so always be aware of what is happening in the scriptures both in AND around the verses or chapters you are focusing on.

The events of Chapter 9, include Jesus' healing of a man who was born blind. This miracle causes an uproar and so the Pharisees are called in to investigate. The Pharisees dismiss the once blind man because he declares that he is now a disciple of Jesus because of the healing

Finally, Jesus enters into a dialogue with the Pharisees after discussing their "blindness" to the truth in comparison with the healed blind man who can now see clearly, physically and spiritually. Then Jesus begins explaining to them the difference between their faulty, self-centered leadership and Jesus' own loving leadership in the metaphor of "The Good Shepherd" in Chap.10. So when Jesus talks about all those who have come before being "thieves and robbers," Jesus isn't denouncing any followers of God (Old Testament leaders like Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, David, etc.). Jesus is specifically talking about the Pharisees of that day with their pretentious, self-serving and hypocritical ways. Likewise, Jesus isn't talking about all other godly spiritual leaders to come (the Apostles, early church leaders, evangelists and pastors from then until present day. Pastor means shepherd in Latin, by the way.) There were and are many good leaders who have followed Jesus as what you might call "under-shepherds", but there's only one who can be called "THE Good Shepherd" and all the other good ones follow and imitate Him.

The Good Shepherd vs. False Shepherds: Flock Relations and Results

This week we're going to be taking a look at Jesus' extended metaphor about Himself as the Good Shepherd and the deficiency of the Pharisees as "false" shepherds. Four contrasts or differences (among many) are the differences in Method, Identity, Motive and Result that the two subjects have in regards to the Flock, which in Jesus' metaphor, represents God's people in the world, then and now.

1) **Method** (John 10: 1-5)

Jesus immediately sets up Himself as the Good Shepherd by distinguishing His method of entry into the sheep pen or fold. What Jesus is saying in the metaphor is that you can tell who is the authentic, rightful leader of any flock (in this case, Jesus' disciples, God's people) simply by the way he acts. He comes in the right way: the Gate, the only door. He walks in the gate in full view of the gatekeeper (Jesus never says explicitly, but this may represent God the Father, because later He describes His Father's love and approval in v. 17-18). He is familiar to and known by His sheep. There is nothing deceitful or duplicitous about Him. Everything He says and does is above board and in service to His helpless sheep, and they recognize His voice and mannerisms and follow Him because of this trust and familiarity.

This contrasts from anyone else who might gain access to the flock in the pen by any other means. Verse 1 talks of those who "climb in by some other way" and describes them as thieves and robbers, but for purpose of comparison, we'll often refer to them as "False Shepherds". These are simply people who want to lead the sheep astray for their own benefit. Thieves only seek their own benefit, to profit from the sheep by stealing and selling it, but they can't behave in a way that might scare the sheep so the False Shepherds have to sneak in over the wall, keep quiet and hidden or maybe even try to bribe the sheep with a treat or with sweet talk. However, Jesus says, His sheep "will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." All that will result from the thief's methods is confused sheep that will reject the stranger simply because he is not the Good Shepherd.

2) **Identity** (John 10:1, 9-10)

Jesus, again, sets up His authority and authenticity by stating that not only can He enter freely through the gate for all to see, but He IS the Gate! Not only does He meet the high standards of being the Good Shepherd, He IS the standard! It's His identity! Jesus' love and care for the sheep not only defines who He is, the very reality of a Good Shepherd (actions, motives, methods, the whole thing) is defined by Jesus and who He is. This may sound confusing, but think about it like this: any time there's a comparison, there has to be a standard. If you want to know how long something, you get a tape measure or a ruler... but what if my ruler is a little longer than yours or the marks on my tape measure are a little wider than yours? Then we would have to decide which is true, but without a true standard, we'd have to just disagree or estimate, and that measurement wouldn't be 100% right. Jesus says "I'm the ruler. I'm the measuring tape. If you want to measure what love looks like or what service or sacrifice looks like, look at me." Jesus is what safety, security and salvation looks like: what LIFE in abundance, "to the full" looks like. If anybody offers any of those things to you, hold them up to Jesus and see if they can stand up to the comparison. Here's a Hint: they can't compare, unless they are just smaller versions of Him, doing their best to point back to Him as the standard. Interesting then, isn't it, that the name "Christian" means "little Christ" and

“Christian” is just a nickname for a Disciple of Christ that first started being used in Antioch while Paul and Barnabas were there making disciples. (Acts 1:26). As we said before, there are shepherds who are good (the little shepherds or “under-shepherds”) but there’s only one standard: THE Good Shepherd.

Now obviously, the False Shepherds’ identity not only falls short of the standard of Christ but is the absolute opposite. Jesus says that they have no love for the sheep, and that they only come “to steal and kill and destroy.” The False Shepherds, the thieves, are not only anti-sheep, but they are the anti-standard, the anti-Christ, and if they are anti-Christ, they can only be the standard for danger, destruction and death. Jesus paints the picture as plain as possible because both the Pharisees and His followers were having a hard time getting it at first. (v. 6).

3) **Motive** (John 10:11-13)

Jesus has established that the Good Shepherd and the Thief cannot be more different: they are opposites! He goes on to flesh this out in the motives of both. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep in order to protect them from danger. Period. If there’s danger, bears, wolves, lions... even thieves, they better know that to get to the sheep, they’re going to have to come through and over the dead body of the Good Shepherd. His motive is His love for the sheep and to save them from harm and preserve them. They are precious to Him.

The False Shepherd (now referred to as the hireling or the hired hand, or worker) could not possibly care less about the sheep! All he wants is his money, his benefit, and the sheep can all die for all he cares! Jesus says “when he (the hireling) sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.” The exact opposite of the Good Shepherd, the False Shepherd would rather save his own neck than risk it for the sheep. “The man runs away because he is a hired hand and care nothing for the sheep.” (v.13).

4) **Result** (John 10:12, 15-16)

Finally Jesus shows us the results of the leadership of the Good Shepherd. We have seen that He will lay down His life for the sheep. He keeps them calm with His voice, He leads them to safety through the Gate and He keeps them safe by fighting to the death with any danger that might come against them. As a result, the sheep will live in safety, peace and unity. As long as they follow the Good Shepherd, “there shall be one flock and one shepherd.” (v.17). We also see the glorious reward of the Good Shepherd from God the Father! Because Jesus has this love for the sheep, the same love that the Father has, Jesus has been given the authority to not only lay down His life, but the authority to take it up again! Jesus, God the Son, is magnificently powerful, so sovereignly indestructible, that He has to have permission from God the Father to even die! We, being human, can’t even begin to imagine that because we all know that one day we must die. It’s just a fact of being alive... except for the One who is the standard of Life! God the Father has agreed to allow God the Son to die for us (His Sheep) because He (All 3 persons of God) loves us so very much! So we have an immortal, omnipotent Protector whose main motive is His all-powerful love for us! That’s who THE Good Shepherd is! Jesus Christ. And Jesus unashamedly lays it out for both the Pharisees and His followers that the differences between Him and the leadership of the Pharisees could not be more different, like darkness and light or death and life: Inherently Opposite Results.

Take Home: So What?

- As Disciples of Christ this ought to encourage us. If our leader is God Almighty, ruler of Heaven and Earth, right now, and His primary motive is His love for us, then this ought to dispel our fears and give us the confidence we need to get working for Him. If we still feel fear (and often we do) it doesn't make us un-saved or backslid; it just means we're weak... like the sheep. We are constantly dependent on God and we need to pray and ask God to remind us of His sovereignty and give us the courage and strength to do His will.
- Ask God to make Jesus your standard in everything. The culture has made the phrase into a cliché, but you can never go wrong by asking yourself "What would Jesus do?" The answer will always be whatever demonstrates love, sacrifice, obedience, humility and ultimately glorifies God the Father.
- Stop comparing yourself to other people, and base your identity, who YOU are, not on how much money or stuff you have or how popular you are, but on the Standard of Life, Jesus! Base your identity, your self-esteem, comfort and security on who you are in Christ Jesus, and keep your life in line with His Word!