

BETWEEN YOU AND JESUS

John 10:1-21

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I think the one image people use to identify with Jesus more than any other is the image of Him as a shepherd. The very word makes us think of love and comfort; of being taken care of; and being kept safe.

Jesus is, in fact, our Great Shepherd. He is our constant protector, always on guard and who does not sleep.

In **PSALM 91:1-4** it tells about Him.

'He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely, He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.'



In **verses 9-10**, it goes on to say –

'If you make the Most High your dwelling – even the Lord, who is my refuge – then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent, for He will command His angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'

Now, you might be saying that you believe in Jesus, yet some bad things have happened to you in your life. We have spoken before about the two realms of our beings; the physical and the spiritual. We have said that the spiritual is the most important because it lasts the longest. And that is where God will protect you with every bit of power He has. And, He will also protect you physically, as it glorifies His name. So, the bottom line is; if Jesus is your Savior, you will be kept safe; if He isn't – you won't be.

I think all of us would agree that we need as much protection in this world that we can get. It is such a negative place, and it is only getting worse with each passing day. It has been said that those who contemplate suicide do not want to die, but they cannot find a reason to live. You know in your own life that whether it is in the home or the workplace, emphasis is given often on what you do wrong but is rarely given on what you do right. How often have you been having a great day when all of a sudden someone you know throws a negative at you and in an instant, your attitude is shot?

This happens every day to each one of us, but we are told in the Bible to be of good cheer, because in the midst of all this negativity and turmoil; amid all of this chaos and trouble, God gives us the picture of our Great Shepherd. The One who will lead us and the One who will watch out over us.

PSALM 23 is a message of God's powerful love for us. And today, I will read it to you in the words from the New Living Translation.

'The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; He leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to His name.'

Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You welcome me as a guest, anointing my head with oil.

My cup overflows with blessings. Surely, Your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.'

In **REVELATION 7:17**, it again tells us,

'For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; He will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'

In that passage, we are given another image of a loving protector. One in whom we might find safety and rest and peace.

In **JOHN**, we read where Jesus is teaching His disciples about the kind of relationship He wants with us. We are going to look at this relationship today in the image of a shepherd and his sheep. And, as we also look at other characters, it is my hope that we see the sacrificial love Jesus has for you and if there is any one of you who isn't fully in God's fold, this morning will be the moment of decision for you.

JOHN 10:1-21 [READ PASSAGE]

Let's go over the background that led to this passage. Have you ever noticed how Wiley Coyote is always so focused on catching the Roadrunner? His focus is so obsessed with catching the bird, he becomes blind to the traps he set, and how they are going to backfire on him. Sometimes we do the same thing in our lives. We get so obsessed with pursuing something, we become blind to everything else, including the truth.

Several years ago, for instance, I had a supervisor who was out to destroy me at work. What was my sin? I was a friend to someone he despised. He was so obsessed with hating that friend; he was blind to the fact that I meant him no harm. And just like Wiley Coyote, his focus backfired on him, and he ended up being forced into retirement.

The same thing was happening during the time of this passage.

Jesus is in the midst of a controversy with the Pharisees over healing a blind man on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were so obsessed with finding something wrong with Jesus, that instead of looking at the miracle of healing, they focused in on the law and started accusing Jesus of working on the Sabbath. An argument ensued between the Pharisees and the man, and he was thrown out of the synagogue for defending Jesus.

Jesus then comes to his aid again. First He leads the healed man to have a personal faith in Him, and then He turns His attention to the Pharisees. The passage I just read is what Jesus said to them. In [verse 21](#), we see that some understood what Jesus said, but others did not.

Jesus was trying to tell them that He is the Savior; the Way; and the only Life that is available. In [JOHN 8:12](#), He says that whoever follows Him will not walk in darkness because He is the light of the world. In [2 CORINTHIANS 6](#), it is made clear that light and darkness cannot mix. It is of utmost important that each one of us realize that we are to have no spiritual connection at all with those who do not look upon Jesus as their final authority.

That does not mean we are to avoid all non-Christians in every way. If we did that, we would never be able to evangelize to the lost. But that does mean that we are not to hang out with them for the sole purpose of hanging out with them. It means we cannot make them our best buddies. It means that when we are around them, we do and say what we can to persuade them to come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ.

In our passage, we find that the Pharisees were listening to Jesus with a closed mind; one that was so focused on “getting something on Him” that they couldn’t hear the simplicity of the truth Jesus was laying out before them. Looking back on it, we can see that in their actions of throwing the blind man out of the place of worship, all because he was healed and was defending the healer from an onslaught of curses and insults.

Let’s talk about ...

1. THE SHEPHERD

Is there anything we might learn from these Pharisees? After all, they knew the Scriptures and they followed them religiously. In fact, they knew them better than most Christians know them today, and they followed them certainly a lot better than most of us do today, too. So, what was the problem? The problem is that they never had the Holy Spirit in their hearts. To each of the churches in Revelation, seven times John said, ***“He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”***

It is the Spirit of God that convicts us and helps us understand what God wants from us. It is the Holy Spirit that guides us as we walk with the Lord. And it is the Holy Spirit that gives us the power to live for Jesus. The Pharisees wanted power, but Jesus came offering

peace and so He was not accepted.

In our passage, Jesus talks about two kinds of shepherds. In **verse 12**, He talks about the hired shepherd. He would have had to relationship with, or commitment to, the sheep. If a wolf had attacked a sheep, he would have left it while he fled for his own safety.

We find the same thing in churches today. It isn't a person, but an attitude. That is the attitude of legalism. I am not saying it is wrong to know what God's word says and then to make sure it is done, but while we are doing that, we are commanded to use compassion for others. The Pharisees knew God's word, and they did it, but there was no compassion in their hearts except for themselves.

The second type of shepherd Jesus talks about is the good shepherd. The good shepherd is the owner of the sheep. He has a special relationship with them. They could call each by name and they could recognize each sheep on sight. That is the kind of shepherd that Jesus said would lay down his life for his sheep.

In **verses 17-18**, Jesus informs the people that he was not only laying down His life for His sheep, but that he also had the authority to take it up again. No other shepherd could do this; only the Son of God could do it.

The shepherd would herd the sheep into the pen and then lay down across the opening of the pen for the night. Nothing could go in or out without his knowing it. Many a shepherd lost his life as wolves tried to get one of the sheep while he was asleep. When Jesus laid down His life for us, he saved us from being ravaged by our enemies, too.

Had the story ended with Jesus dying upon the cross, it would have been a tragedy for His sheep. When a shepherd dies, the flock is left without a leader, and they will soon wander away into the wilderness where they will soon perish. But the story does not end at the cross.

Jesus is talking about laying His life down for His sheep and in **verse 18**, He says:

'No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and authority to take it up again.'

And, in so doing, God has given us our Good Shepherd back again. Christianity does not just mean being saved from sin – it also means having a living shepherd guide us and protect us in His love. If you have ever wondered what was involved in a deep, deep relationship, read **verse 14** again.

'... I know My sheep, and My sheep know Me.'

There are three relationships that exist spiritually. The relationship that God and Jesus have; the relationship that Jesus and we have with one another; and the relationship we are able to have with God the Father through Jesus the Son.

Jesus is our spiritual shepherd. He is the One we follow and trust. Now, let's talk about ...

2. THE SHEEP

The sheep have a very personal and trusting relationship with their shepherd. They literally put their lives in His hands and will follow anywhere He leads. The shepherds of that day would herd their flock into one pen at the end of the day that might hold many different flocks.

As I said earlier, one shepherd would lie down to sleep in the middle of the pen's opening. In the morning, each shepherd would come and call their flock and the sheep would run to their own personal shepherd. Now, in this passage, Jesus talks about two different types of sheep.

In **verse 16**, Jesus said,

"I have other sheep who are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to My voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."

What a beautiful way to describe evangelism. Jesus gave us a picture of a loving shepherd who is concerned about lost sheep, going out to bring them into the fold. The use of sheep to describe Christians is accurate. Sheep are known for their 3 D's. Dirty, Dumb, and Defenseless. Spiritually, humans fit that same description. We are dirty before Christ, we do not understand anything spiritually until Christ, and without Christ, we have no defense whatsoever to keep us safe for eternity.

Sheep start each year clipped short, white, and very pretty to look at. But as the year goes on and the wool collects on his body, so too does all dirt and dust that surrounds it. Finally, they are shorn, and that entire dirty coat comes off and they start over anew and clean. We start out nice and pretty too, but then as the world gets more and more hold on us, we too, start to get dirty.

1 PETER 2:1-4 tells us,

"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind"

It is only by the hand of the shepherd that the sheep gets to cast off all its dirty outer garment. And, it is only by the hand of our shepherd, Jesus Christ that we are able to throw off all the dirt in our hearts. Because He died for us, we are covered in His blood.

We have talked about how the shepherd leads the sheep and cares for the sheep. WE have talked about how the sheep are defenseless without the shepherd and need the shepherd for everything they have.

Now, let's talk about something else. Let's talk about ...

3. THE PEN

Let's relate the pen to Heaven for a moment. The sheep go into the pen for safety from the outside world. Christians receive Christ and receive safety from the world.

To be among the sheep in the pen, the sheep must have a shepherd. To be among the saved in Heaven, you must also have the Shepherd. The pen has one way in and so does our salvation. The shepherd guards the entrance in each situation.

Going back to [verse 1](#), Jesus makes an extraordinary statement.

'I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.'

If you listen to those in the world, you will hear every possible thought on how we might be able to get into Heaven. Some say you have to get there by your good works. In other words, if you are really good, and make no mistakes, then you will get to Heaven. The trouble is; nobody is good enough to never make a mistake. Then as soon as you do make a mistake where does that leave you?

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Even others say that it doesn't matter what road you take, you will still get to Heaven. That makes as much sense as my telling you it doesn't matter which road you take away from church this morning, it will lead to your house. All you have to do is open your eyes and you will see how wrong that statement is.

Jesus said that anyone who went in the pen any other way, besides the gate, was a robber and thief. In [1 CORINTHIANS 6:10](#) it tells us that thieves will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Let me make something very clear to everyone who could ever hear my voice. There is only one way into the pen and that is through the gate that is being guarded by the shepherd. And there is only one way into Heaven, and that is, again, through the narrow gate the Good Shepherd guards. If you try any other way, it simply will not work, period.

If you have not accepted Jesus as your personal Christ, you will not go to Heaven. God has already written the rules, and they do not change just because we don't agree with

them. That reason this world is having problems today is that we have been busier trying to change the rules than we have been trying to follow them.

As long as the sheep remain in the pen, they will be totally safe from lions. As long as we stay in Christ, we will also be kept totally safe from the lion that prowls around looking for someone to devour.

The pen is where the shepherd and his sheep commune with each other. He can learn their individual traits and sounds, and they can trust him to care for them even more. When we are in Christ, we give Him the opportunity to know us even better and we will also begin to trust Him more and more for all we need.

We can also equate the pen to the local church. In [HEBREWS 10:25](#), we are told to not forsake the gathering together. I don't think that is as much of a strict command as it is a loving plea. ***"Please come into My holy house with other believers and see what a beautiful time it will be for you."***

And, as Jesus warned us, there would be others who are not real shepherds. Let's talk now a little about ...

4. THE THIEVES

It is possible for a robber to climb the fence, get into the pen, and lead some sheep astray. Likewise, in the local church it is possible for some who just claim to be Christians to come in and lead others astray, too.

They will not be obvious. They will not be wearing masks and carrying flashlights. They will be people you have known and trusted for years. But they will not have the agenda of the Lord God in their hearts; they will have their own agendas in their hearts. And the Lord God will deal brutally with them unless they repent of their ways.

But, do not dismay. Be of good cheer. We are to be joyous and trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Watchman who stands watch over each one of us. He guards us and He yearns to know us more and more. He loves us.

We have a set of instructions to help keep us safe. They were given to us out of God's love for us, and desire to keep us whole.

- We are to work at knowing Jesus more so we can recognize our shepherd
- We need to follow Him, rely on Him for cleansing, and trust Him to keep us
- We must look for those sheep who are not yet into the fold
- Keep a time and place to commune personally with Jesus – every day.

We must come to understand and accept that which the Jews in this passage could not. In [verse 19](#), it says,

‘At these words, the Jews were again divided.’

I have been trying to show you how we fit perfectly into the images of sheep being led by their master. I have tried to show you the similarities and some of the things to watch out for – all for your spiritual safety.

We must be aware of one thing many of us either skim over, or just don’t pay attention to. The God of this universe; the God who created every single thing; wants more than anything to have a very personal and loving relationship with each one of us.

Jesus called Zacchaeus by name because He wanted a relationship with Him. At the empty tomb, Jesus called out to Mary because He knew her. And Jesus is calling out to you this morning, because He wants to know you, too.