

# John 10:1-6

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, amen and good morning. Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in John chapter 10. It's good to be back with you this morning. Last week we were wrapping up a trip to Memphis to see my niece graduate.

And I think about this time when I would have preferred to be opening God's Word with you. So, I was in a minivan on Highway 22 in northern Alabama, which is just a mind-numbing stretch of road. I would have really liked to have been doing this instead, so I'm glad that I'm here with you today. Our text for today is John chapter 10, verses 1 through 6.

The Bible uses many titles to refer to Jesus Christ. I propose to you that none is more precious than the title, Good Shepherd.

Lord willing, we're going to spend the next five weeks in John's Gospel in this chapter where Jesus refers to himself in this way. Now, we covered all of chapter 9 in a single week, a couple of weeks ago.

[ 1 : 1 5 ] So, you may go, why suddenly are we going to pump the brakes so much and slow down? And the reason is the chiasmic structure. The literary structure of this chapter presses it in that direction.

So, really quickly, if you're unfamiliar with chiasms, it's a literary structure that allows you to take a text and fold it upon itself.

So, the first thing in the text corresponding with the last thing in the text and stepping toward a center of the text. So, just quickly and broadly, I want to walk you through chapter 10 so you'll get why we're doing this.

And then we'll do a little bit of background and then read our text together. So, firstly, the first section, today's text, verses 1 through 6. The sheep hear the shepherd's voice.

So, kind of thematically, we're picking that up. Then the corresponding part of it is the substantive part of the text, which is verses 19 through 42.

[ 2 : 2 1 ] So, Lord willing, a month from now, we'll look at those verses together. And there, we see Jesus saying again that his sheep hear his voice.

Next, verses 7 through 10, Jesus talks about him being the door for the sheep. And correspondingly, verses 15 through 18, he talks about laying down his life for the sheep.

And then the central piece of it is Jesus declaring himself the good shepherd in verse 11 and in verse 14. So, we'll take a look at each of those, and I won't talk about it at all today, past this, but verses 1 through 6, also chiasmic.

And each of those breaks down in that way. As we spend this time in John chapter 10, it has been my prayer that God would profit us greatly as we take it up.

So, before we read, allow me just a moment to connect the end of chapter 9 to the discourse that is before us. In chapter 9, Jesus heals a man who was born blind.

[ 3 : 2 8 ] As you have come to expect, this causes confusion and commotion. So, the man is brought before the Pharisees and put through a series of examinations.

First him, then his parents, and then back to him again. At the conclusion of this series of examinations, the man says, this is chapter 9 in verse 33, If this man, referring to Jesus, were not from God, he could do nothing.

And they answered him. This is a group of Pharisees he's brought before. You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us? And they cast him out.

Verse 35, Jesus heard they had cast him out. And having found him, he said, Do you believe in the Son of Man? He answered, And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?

Jesus said to him, You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you. He said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

[ 4 : 35 ] So, Jesus welcomes the man that was born blind, that he had healed. Verse 39, Jesus said, For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.

Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, Are we also blind? Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no guilt.

But now that you say, we see, your guilt remains. So, we spent a minute of time talking about this text, And noted that Jesus, having healed a blind man of his physical disability, And then, much more importantly, of his spiritual disability, Uses this sight language to expose the prideful Pharisees.

He's speaking here with a great deal of irony. Similarly, in Mark chapter 2, verse 16 and 17, We read, And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, Said to his disciples, Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

[ 5 : 55 ] So, it's these men that think they're righteous because of their careful observance of the law, Which was not a perfect observance of the law.

See no need of a savior that Jesus is talking about here. And so, it's in this context that Jesus goes on to speak in chapter 10.

He is speaking to these Pharisees. Blind men who have been thrown out of the synagogue a seeing man.

So, John chapter 10, verses 1 through 6. And I'm actually going to read all the way through verse 18, Just to get our heads set into the discourse. But before I do, I'll pray.

Father, would you help us as we take up your word together this morning? Would you bless my feeble preparation and I'm sure my feeble delivery?

[ 6 : 52 ] We want to rightly understand it. We want to behold Jesus by it. We want to be changed from one degree of glory to another for the sake of your name.

And so, it's in that name that we pray. Amen. Alright, John 10, beginning in verse 1. Jesus says, Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus again said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

[ 7 : 58 ] All who come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he has a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me. Just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold.

I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

[ 9 : 01 ] No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.

So Jesus, in chapter 10, employs a rich metaphor. We have very little cultural context to enliven what is happening in this moment.

First century Jews were agrarian people. The whole economy was based on livestock and fields and harvest.

First, the average person among us can see a cow eating grass in a field and then order a burger in a drive-thru and make no mental connection between the two. How does one get from there to there?

But not so with them. Livestock were part of their daily experience. Sheep being taken out to pasture and brought back into safety at night would have happened regularly, happened right in front of them.

[10:07] So this picture of sheep being called out and led would have been vivid in their minds. This is strategic language that Jesus is employing here.

Further, and I would suggest more importantly, it's a rich metaphor because of its biblical foundation. I hope that we are a bit less lost at this point.

Perhaps you know your Old Testament well. I hope so. The men that Jesus is addressing most certainly would have known their Old Testament well.

Does anything leap into your mind when Jesus presents himself as a shepherd? I hope something, something jumps up in your mind. We read together Psalm 23 not that long ago.

Perhaps at least that text for you. But if not, some time in the Old Testament is going to serve us well at this point. So leave John 10 behind for just a moment and join me in some quick sweeping Bible background by joining me in Ezekiel chapter 34.

[11:15] The blessed sound of turning pages.

Ezekiel 34. I'm going to hop through this text a little bit just for the sake of time. Listen to the words that Ezekiel recorded.

Verse 1. The word of the Lord came to me. Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, even to the shepherds, thus says the Lord God.

Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves. Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat. You clothe yourselves with wool.

You slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened.

The sick you have not healed. The injured you have not bound up.

[12:20] The strayed you have not brought back. The lost you have not sought. And with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered.

Because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts, my sheep were scattered. Skip to verse 11. For thus says the Lord God, Behold, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out.

As a shepherd seeks out his flock, when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered, on a day of clouds and thick darkness.

And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land, and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel.

[13:25] I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. Skip to verse 22.

I will rescue my flock. They shall no longer be a prey, and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them.

He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord. I have spoken.

I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. Shepherds who are taking advantage of the sheep, we see in Ezekiel 34.

Sheep who are scattered. A prince who protects and feeds. The men Jesus is speaking to, were they not blind, should be perceiving all of this as Jesus presents this metaphor.

[14:33] This text should be alive in their minds. However, this is not the only Old Testament text. These men declared themselves disciples of Moses in John chapter 9 and verse 28.

One might think they would recall the prayer of Moses for a successor. Numbers 27, verse 15 and following, Moses spoke to the Lord saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in.

Language sound familiar? That the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd. The next verse in Numbers 27 names Joshua as Moses' successor.

So we've got David as a type for Christ and Ezekiel. We've got Joshua now. Jesus is the transliteration of the name Joshua from Hebrew to Greek to English.

These connections ought to be being made. Other Old Testament passages indict the priests for not shepherding as they should. Isaiah 56, verse 9 through 12.

[15:54] Jeremiah 23, verse 1 through 4. Chapter 25, verse 32 to 38. Zechariah 11. I'm just showing you that it's replete. It's all throughout the text.

And the Old Testament presents God as the ultimate shepherd of his people. Psalm 23, Psalm 80, verse 1, Isaiah 40, and verse 11.

Do you see how rich this metaphor is? It's not random. It's not offhanded. Jesus is not shooting from the hip here at all.

He's saying some very, very clear things to this group of men. This is a metaphor. It's laden with Old Testament teaching.

In a few short words, he's bringing all of this up to say to them that they are false shepherds and that he is the true God who will call out his people.

[16:52] Now, in the back of your bulletin, adults, it's not really for you, but you might like to color too. There's a cartoon. And it's a quote from John Calvin.

This is in his preface to Olivier Tannes' New Testament. I hope I pronounced that correctly. He said this quote, So, you rightly take up, rightly study the Old Testament, you will arrive at the conclusion that Jesus is the Christ.

And that is the very point that Jesus is making here. He's not being cryptic in John 10. He's indicting false religion and false teachers.

They know exactly what's going on. We'll see as we progress through chapter 10. But verse 6 records, back in John 10, this figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

And understanding all of that background, John means for this to be striking to us. How could these men not understand the thing that he is saying as he speaks of himself as the shepherd?

[18:37] This is how he begins the dialogue, verse 1. Truly, truly, it's to say, really, really, listen, pay attention, this is true, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

He's expounding on what he has said at the end, of chapter 9. Now, the sheepfold was a place where a group of families would bring their flocks in at night for protection.

Right? Smaller flocks, a group of people partnering together to put them into a common pen or perhaps a courtyard, and a man, often referred to as an under-shepherd, would be hired to watch over them throughout the night.

Now, the sheep would be safe from predators in the sheepfold. It was a structure designed to keep wolves out, but not safe from a thief and a robber.

So, somebody would be hired to look over the space and make sure somebody didn't come in and take out what was not theirs. Now, these words, thief and robber, are too similar in English to ascertain much of any variance in them.

[20:00] Isn't a thief and a robber just the very same thing? But they could be translated from the original a thief and an insurrectionist. I don't pretend to know exactly what Jesus means by these two words, but perhaps he is suggesting that the leader who is not the shepherd doesn't belong among the sheep as he gets in and he stirs up, but he means harm and he causes rebellion.

Well, whatever is meant here, they are presented as being harmful and being entirely unconcerned about entering the proper way. Now, I don't believe that anybody in my hearing, I could be wrong, but falls into this category of false religion, false teacher.

My assumption this morning is that none of you are presently in the works of trying to form a cult of some kind. At least I certainly hope that that's not the case. The strong indictment of this text really doesn't demand a lot of our time, but what does require attention is the juxtaposition of the

metaphor which then infers some warning for us.

not this, but this, and here we have such opportunity to look to Christ. Verse 2 says, but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

Jesus is the shepherd of the sheep. verse 1-6 might leave that unclear, but we know this is the case because he tells us so in verse 11 and verse 14.

[ 21 : 42 ] There he says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Verse 14, I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.

It's the shepherd that is granted access to the sheep because he has the authority to come into the sheep. He is the shepherd and so it is to him the gatekeeper, this under-shepherd opens.

He comes and knocks and the gate is opened for the shepherd. At once, the gate is opened. And what is it that the shepherd does when the gate is opened?

He calls his sheep. What the shepherd does is he gathers to himself his sheep. The job of a shepherd is to lead sheep. But notice, not every sheep in the sheepfold.

Therein lies the inferred warning. Jesus calls his sheep.

[ 22 : 50 ] Verse 3 goes on, the sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. sheep. Now, sheep are not the brightest of animals.

They desperately need shepherding as they will not stay alive long without someone watching over them. I challenge you, and you may know of one, I've never heard of wild sheep.

I don't think they exist. I think they will get eaten and wiped out. However, to the sheep's credit, sheep can and do learn the voice of their shepherd and will loyally follow his voice.

This is still a Near East shepherding practice, to gather small flocks into larger flocks for protection at night. Shepherds will team up together to help protect one another's sheep.

And in the morning, each shepherd calls to their sheep, and as they go their separate ways, the sheep will follow their shepherd. There is not confusion about which sheep belong to whom.

[ 24 : 00 ] They don't have to brand them and figure out how to sort them out. Again, the sheep know who they are to follow. The Bible, as we have already noted, uses this sheep metaphor for God's people.

I think it's very healthy for us to push against a highly individualized version of Christianity. We get that me and Jesus type of culture.

Most of you here are members of our church and we've pressed upon you the need for that. It's a biblical command that you be joined to a group of Christians. This is part of God's design for healthy Christian living.

I want you, when you think of your salvation, to be caught up into thoughts that are much grander than just you. I want you to think of peoples saved for the glory of God. Peoples from all over the world called into local assemblies to love and serve one another.

But, when the Bible individualizes our salvation, we should pause, just for a moment, to do the very same.

[ 25 : 10 ] people, I find these words just incredible. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

This is a variance on the picture of a shepherd. In reality, he would say something. I don't know what shepherds say to sheep. He'd give some kind of a command or a noise or something, and they would hear him and they would know it's time to move.

But here, Jesus presents himself as calling them individually by name. His sheep, drawing them together into a flock and leading them out.

Now, if at this point the question enters your mind, am I one of his sheep? I want you to know that I do not think that question unfair, but I do think that it is the wrong question.

I would say to you rather, if you're unsure, has Jesus called me by name, you should ask the question, do I hear him calling? If so, follow.

[ 26 : 28 ] Don't ask the other question. Do you hear him calling? Follow. You may find that you are sitting here this morning as a means of Jesus calling your name. I'm not asking you to audibly hear him call your name.

You're in church this morning, hearing the gospel and our prayers and our singing, read, preached. You may have been born into a family with Christian parents as a means of Jesus calling your name.

Jesus delights in using ordinary means for extraordinary ends. do you hear him calling your name?

Do you find yourself hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ? Repent and believe. Follow. Follow. He goes on in verse 4, when he has brought out all his own, he goes before them and the sheep follow him for they know his voice.

sheep. Now I learned something this week about shepherding that I was unaware of. I thought I had my head wrapped around it. This is what I learned. Sheep that are led back and forth from familiar pasture to familiar pens or enclosures back to the barn are typically led from behind.

[ 27 : 52 ] Kind of the normal picture, at least in my head, that we have of shepherds walking along behind with the staff, right, giving little corrections as they go, but from behind.

That's the picture that comes into your mind or not. The shepherd's concern is for that occasional straggler, right, that wanders off, is distracted by something.

But the sheep generally know the way they are to go. Some of them get out in front and lead, they know the place they're going to, and so off places are led from the front.

Sheep don't naturally trust a pathway. You can't put them on a road and just expect them to walk down the road, or can they comprehend a destination?

You can't tell them, hey, we're going over there. They don't understand what you might be saying. So the shepherd sets the example and goes before them, leads out ahead of them.

[ 28 : 53 ] this is so astoundingly tender and merciful. Jesus says this with purpose.

He leads them to a place that they have not been, and he goes there first. My mind leapt to Hebrews chapter 6, verse 19 and following.

There the author says, we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.

Jesus goes before us into the presence of God that we might also go there. Jesus does not lead his people anywhere that he has not first gone.

suffered, died, was raised. What a savior. What a shepherd. This reflection, this little piece so far has been worth all the time I have spent on these brief verses.

[ 30 : 06 ] This was the moment that I went, oh, this is a good text. What a blessing it is that I get to open this text and talk about it. This morning, Jesus goes before his sheep.

He doesn't prod us from behind, he leads from the front. And what do the sheep do? Notice, the sheep follow him for they know his voice.

This is a picture of deep trust. The sheep say, this shepherd has always led us, will we will gladly go wherever he leads.

Spurgeon once said, this is also in your bulletin if you care, Jesus is the good shepherd going before his sheep, bidding them follow him, and ever leading them onwards with the sweet word, come.

The obedience of Jesus' sheep trusts that wherever he leads, it will be for their ultimate good.

[ 31 : 16 ] We read earlier, Psalm 23, as I've already mentioned. Jesus is the Lord of Psalm 23. Listen again to these words of David.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and your staff.

They comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Satisfaction, good provision and safe waters, proper paths, but notice that the way is not always easy.

[ 32 : 27 ] However, comfort, goodness, mercy, and God's presence belong to those who belong to him. This is why the sheep follow him for they know his voice.

It bears saying that this is a text about belonging. Remember my reference earlier to the man who was cast out of the synagogue, and Jesus comes and finds him and welcomes him.

It's a text about belonging, not a text about discerning God's will. not at all what Jesus is trying to communicate here.

He's saying you either are my sheep or you are not my sheep. I think we should be careful at this point to not spin the metaphor off in a direction that is not meant.

Some, in an effort to discern the voice of Jesus, have become a thief and a robber, thinking they hear a voice, something that, some truth that exists outside the text of the Bible and the list is endless, it would seem, these days.

[ 33 : 44 ] False teachers, false religion. That's not what Jesus is communicating. He's talking about belonging. Knowing the voice of the shepherd in this context is about hearing and responding to the call of the gospel.

Recognizing our great need of a Savior and him presenting himself to us and us following him because we know his voice.

Be careful not to make it more than that or to make it any less than that. Verse five, a stranger, Jesus says, they will not follow but they will flee from him for they do not know the voice of strangers.

Verse five brings me as a minister of the gospel great comfort. I hope it does the same for you as you seek to share the good news with others. God's people will heed the call of the gospel.

God's people will not follow the voice of strangers but as the gospel call is made, God's people will respond in obedience.

[ 35 : 04 ] And so what are we to do? Be the voice of Jesus. Open up the text, explain the word, share the good news with people and trust God's saving purpose.

This is why I'm grateful things like this bolster our confidence that when we gather together as a church, we should just open and preach the word. Sing the word, pray the word, see the word in the ordinances and just do that week in and week out.

The blessed thing that God is about the work of saving his people. He has sent to us the good shepherd and God's people will hear his voice and they will respond in obedience.

No need to fly me into this room on cables to impress you all, land me on the stage, jump dirt bikes across the stage, or give away a car on Easter Sunday.

He's going to gather and preach the word and send you out to do the very same thing. He's calling people by name and those sheep will know his voice and they will follow.

[ 36 : 22 ] So whether you have confidence this morning that you have been called by name and are following the good shepherd or you don't have confidence that this is true of you, I want you to hear my plea in closing.

He is a good shepherd. He has gone before us. In him there is satisfaction and good provision and safe waters, proper paths that are not always easy but comfort and goodness and mercy and his presence.

So listen and follow. Let's pray.