

John 10:11-14

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[0 : 00] Our text for today as we continue our study of John's gospel is John chapter 10 verses 11 through 14. Help us as we take up your word together this morning.

We recognize that it was written for your glory and for our good and we rightly want to understand it and we recognize that we humbly need your help to do so.

So I pray that you'd work in us and through us for the praise of Christ and we pray this in his name.

Amen. So 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.

[1 : 31] 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.

All who came 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 has 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.

[2 : 34] 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.

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.

Now, in case that you are just joining us in our study of John's gospel or that you, like me, easily forget the details, I want to remind us where we find ourselves in this narrative of Jesus' life, just like I did last week.

In fact, word for word, copy and pasted as I did from last week. So, in chapter 9, Jesus heals a man who was born blind.

And this causes a lot of confusion and commotion. So the man is brought before the Pharisees and put through a series of examinations. Two, there's one, then his parents come, and then he comes again.

[3 : 43] And at the end of that second interrogation, the man says, and this is John 9, verse 33 and following. Sorry. They say of the man, if this man were, oh, sorry, he says, if this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

And then they answer him, you were born in utter sin. And would you teach us? And they cast him out. So they throw him out of the synagogue.

And then verse 35 says, Jesus heard that they had cast him out. And having found him, he said, do you believe in the son of man? A reference to a vision of Daniel.

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 worshiped him. Jesus said, for judgment I came into this world that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.

[4 : 44] 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 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 with a massive amount of irony here. It is the men who think they see who are truly the blind ones. And it is into this context that Jesus goes on in chapter 10.

He is speaking to the Pharisees, blind men who were thrown out of the synagogue, a seeing man. And he switches from sight language to hearing language, and then this rich shepherding metaphor.

He has presented himself as the shepherd of the sheep in verses 1 through 6, we looked at a couple of weeks ago. And as the door of the sheep in verses 7 through 10, as he's expanding his explanation and indictment of these men, these Pharisees that he's speaking to.

[6 : 03] Before we consider any of the specifics of this text, I want to take a moment to show you its literary structure. Verses 7 through 10 are the chiasmic center of chapter 10 and are themselves chiasmic.

Now, some of you are probably tired of the word chiasmic or chiasm. But if you're new, let me explain briefly what a chiasm is. Because all over the scripture, it's a mnemonic device.

It's designed to help memorize and to draw our attention within a text. So the word chiasm is from the Greek letter chi, which is the X.

And the idea here is that the text can be folded on itself with a center point and the beginning and end, and then as you step in, corresponding to one another.

Again, meant to draw us to the center of that text as an interpretive tool. The structure of this text is so easily discernible that I want to show it to you.

[7 : 13] From time to time, I've given you the outline in your notes. But I actually want to walk it through as you're looking at your Bible to show you how you can recognize, at least in this case, a very evident chiasmic structure.

And then we'll note what it says to us. So take a look in your Bibles at verses 11 through 14 and note the characters that we find in those four verses.

So firstly, Jesus speaks of himself as the good shepherd. He says, I am the good shepherd. Look down at verse 14.

Not just an allusion to that, but we see the exact same sentence. I am the good shepherd. So note, verse 11 and verse 14 correspond to one another.

If you step in towards the center, you see at the beginning of verse 12, a hired hand. What else do you see?

[8 : 16] That exact same character. Verse 13, he flees because he is a hired hand. So there's a B and a B prime.

Then you step in a little bit more. Notice in the next part of verse 12, a wolf. The wolf comes. And then later on in that verse, the wolf snatches.

Are you seeing it? The good shepherd, the good shepherd. The hired hand, the hired hand. The wolf, the wolf. Leaves at the center of the chiasmic structure, a phrase, which is, he leaves the sheep and flees.

Hmm. He leaves the sheep and flees. Is that the most important phrase of these four verses?

Is Jesus speaking and John recording for us here trying to draw our attention to this particular phrase because it matters most? Well, certainly not.

[9 : 25] Certainly not the most important thing that's being communicated in these verses. So how then does the structure serve us? It's an interpretive lens.

Sheep are entirely helpless to defend themselves from a wolf. They have no strategy for an attack from a wolf. The only possible thing that they can do is bunch together and hope that they're not the one who's going to get picked off.

That's all they've got. Become a mass and somehow hope that you're not at the edges and the prey. They need protection from another if they are to be preserved. God's people are the sheep of this metaphor. Vulnerable. Helpless. In imminent danger. Unable to save ourselves.

And at the center of this text, this phrase, he leaves the sheep and flees, is meant to have us looking for one who will not abandon us to the wolf.

[10:31] That's the tension. That's the interpretive lens that it sets for us here. So, and I would encourage this. I'm going to encourage it for my own sake. This would be a great four verses to memorize.

And it's laid out for us in a way that should be relatively easy to do so. And this centerpiece of it is for, to move a desire in us not to be abandoned.

Not to be abandoned and helpless and vulnerable and then ultimately destroyed. So you see how it serves in this way. The structure highlights.

It magnifies and communicates something significant about the claim that Jesus makes at the beginning and at the end of the text. Which is the most important part of these verses.

Do you see this? I hope you won't get tired of me pointing it out. We've got a lot of verses to go in John's gospel. The hired hand cares nothing for the sheep.

[11:37] Because they do not belong to him, he cares nothing for them. So when they see the wolf coming, he sees no need to risk his life for the sheep and abandons them to be devoured and scattered.

Which makes them all the more vulnerable. In verses 7 through 10, we see a thief and a robber coming in, certainly to work an evil. And now Jesus turns the lens a little bit and says, there's also this hired hand who just cares nothing for them.

He's willing to be self-interested and to abandon the task because they don't belong to him. Verses 12 and 13 show us the goodness of the good shepherd.

Verses 11 and 14. Chiastic structure. Pretty cool, I think. So we're going to spend most of our time looking at verses 11 and 14.

14. Where Jesus declares, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Right? In juxtaposition to the hired hand.

[12:50] Then verse 14. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. If you don't memorize the entirety of these verses, just those two would be good for your soul.

Jesus here makes the fourth of his seven I am statements that John records. First he says, I am the bread of life in chapter 6.

Then I am the light of the world in chapters 8 and 9. Then I am the door of the sheep in chapter 10, verse 7 and 9. We looked at last week.

And here the fourth. I am the good shepherd. These statements are extraordinarily significant because the I am phrase declares Jesus' deity in relation to God's name as revealed to Moses in Exodus 3.

And then adds some quality of his deity. Here, repeated twice. Yes, I am the good shepherd. This may be lost on you, but it certainly was not lost on his original hearers.

[14:05] They fully recognized what he was declaring when he said, I am the good shepherd. Now, the word kalos, here translated good, needs a little bit of work.

It's a good and fair translation to use the word good here. But in other places in the New Testament, it's translated better, right, honorable, beautiful, noble.

And then there's some other really minor translations as well. In the same translation, in these different ways. So, it's a word that has a bit more semantic range than we might initially assign just the word good.

This adjective carries the idea of having positive qualities suitable for a thing specified. Good for something.

Now, without spending a bunch of time walking us through all of the various texts that use this same word, I just want to maximize this word in your thinking. I thought, as I sat down to prepare for this sermon, I thought, why only good?

[15:23] Why not great? There's the inclination of our English language. After all, the author of Hebrews calls Jesus the great shepherd. You think, well, why does Jesus only call himself good?

If I try a new food and I call it good, I typically don't mean much with that adjective. Good versus not bad.

Edible, maybe, I mean. I will find a different adjective altogether if I really want to express my appreciation for something. And so, good feels insufficient to speak of Jesus as our shepherd. So, what is he doing here, calling himself the good shepherd? Well, I suggest that he is showing himself to be the fitting shepherd.

The right shepherd for the sheep of this context. He's expanding on his exclusive claim to be the door of the sheep in verse 7.

[16:30] Note verse 9, John 10. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

This idea of being the good shepherd is unrolling that. Note that Jesus is not a door, not a singular option, but he is the door. However, if the sheep have any hope of being saved, it will be because the good shepherd, the fitting shepherd will save them.

In declaring this title, I suggest that he certainly has in mind the worthless shepherd of Zechariah chapter 11. Even though the character he is juxtaposing himself with is a hired hand.

Listen to Zechariah chapter 11. This is verse 16 and following. God says, I think that Jesus has this. This shepherd in mind as he calls himself good and declares that he will not abandon his sheep. The self-interested, only concerned with preserving their own good, uninterested in caring for the flock of God.

[18:09] This is not Jesus. Jesus is the good shepherd. And what is it that makes him the fitting shepherd, the right shepherd for the sheep?

And he tells us, and he tells us two things. The first in verse 11, the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

And the second, I know my own and my own know me. He does something very intriguing here in this first one.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A shepherd who would sufficiently protect their sheep certainly would have had to be willing to die for their sheep.

To place themselves in harm's way to protect the vulnerables. Part of the job requirement. You had to be tough. Have a measure of machismo.

[19:09] You had to be willing to take on the wolf or the bear. He'd have to be brave. In 1 Samuel, David defends his bravery as a shepherd, as a qualification to face Goliath.

1 Samuel 17, verse 34 and following, David said to Saul, Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion or a bear and took a lamb from his flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth.

And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears. And this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defiled the armies of the living God.

Brave, a shepherd, had to be willing to die for the sake of the sheep. But Jesus doesn't say the good shepherd is willing to lay down his life for the sheep.

But that he does. But that he does. Speaking about his death on the cross. A dead shepherd, in temporal terms, is no longer any help to the sheep.

[20:25] The shepherd lays his life down. If he goes and sacrifices himself to the wolf, then the wolf is free to devour the sheep. And that's what's so intriguing about what he's doing with this metaphor.

Teaching what will be necessary to accomplish the safety of his flock. He will die so that they will live.

Perhaps it is this very text that the author of Hebrews has in mind in writing the benediction at the close of his letter. I mentioned it in brief earlier.

This is Hebrews 13, verse 20 and 21. Now, may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus.

So the God of peace, who has made peace between God and man, through the death of Jesus, has brought him back alive again.

[21:23] And then he says, The great shepherd of the sheep. The great shepherd of the sheep. By the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen. So Jesus is the good shepherd. He declares of himself, I am the good shepherd, because the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

He also tells us that he's the good shepherd, and that he knows his own, and that his own know him. In verse 11, Jesus says the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Not my sheep, but that they are his sheep, is clearly implied, for these sheep, but they're his. We know they're his, because the hired hand does not own them, verse 12 says, and is made unmistakably clear in verse 14.

Why is it that the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep? Because they are his. They're valuable to him. Now this should be familiar language, as we have studied chapter 10 so far.

[22 : 52] Verse 2 through 4 of chapter 10, 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.

And we talked about the picture of this sheep fold, that most often this would have been a group of families partnering together to put their sheep away at night, and hiring somebody to keep that gate secure, to only let the shepherd in through that gate.

And so Jesus calls out from amongst those sheep, his sheep. And then verse 4 says, when he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

And there's this picture, a reality in this day, that the sheep knew the voice of their shepherd, and a shepherd could call them out, and they would follow him.

Not another shepherd, but their shepherd. And I have shared with you, this metaphor would have been vivid in the minds of Jesus' original audience. We considered Ezekiel 34, and Psalm 23, which once again was read this morning.

[24 : 04] Listen now to another text. This is Jeremiah chapter 23, verse 1 through 5. There Jeremiah says, Woe to the shepherd to destroy and shatter the sheep of my pasture, declares the Lord.

Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people, you have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them.

Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the Lord.

Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord.

Right? So, all of this sheep metaphor. Right? Very alive in the Old Testament. It would have been in their minds. And then verse 5 of Jeremiah 23 says, Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and he shall reign as king, and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

Right? Jesus, the good shepherd. And Psalm 100 and verse 3, Know that the Lord, he is God, it is he who made us, and we are his.

[25 : 36] We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Jesus is both exposing the hypocrisy of these religious leaders who should have known their Bibles, seen Jesus as the Messiah, heard and heeded his words.

And he's also making claim to accomplish without variance exactly what God says that Jesus speaks to this reality as John presents his words to us.

So go back to John chapter 6 with me. Verse 37 and following.

Jesus says, All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. The sheep metaphor is not in here, but you can see the connection being made in chapter 10.

[26 : 49] Gathering them together, leading them out, leading them in, because they are mine. The Father has given them to me. Now further on, past today's text, John chapter 10, verse 27 and following.

We'll look at this in a couple of weeks. Lord willing, he says there, My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

I and the Father are one. They're my sheep. They belong to me. I am the Lord of Psalm 23, and no one will subvert that plan.

And then you can go on in John's Gospel, to chapter 17. Jesus prays, To the Father, I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

[28 : 02] Now, they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them, and have come to know in truth that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me.

I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. Beloved, what a thing to belong to God, right?

To be given to Christ, and for Christ to be our good shepherd. Jesus is the good shepherd because he is the redeemer of his people, right?

bought them out of slavery, right? Moved them from death to life. The people who were not his people, now his people. All of this found in these precious words, in this title, I am the good shepherd.

So what are we to do with this? It's good just to reflect upon it, but what does it mean as we move on into our afternoon and into the rest of this week?

[29 : 18] There's three things, points of application here. First, if you are in Christ, you've placed faith in him, rest in the sacrificial love of the good shepherd.

Rest in the sacrificial love of Christ. Jesus does not merely care about his sheep in a general sense. He lays his very life down for them.

His death was intentional and it was voluntary and it was effective to accomplish all that God has purposed for his people.

The believer's assurance is not rooted in the strength of his own grip to hold on to Christ, but in Christ's sacrificial commitment to his people.

The good shepherd holds on to us. When doubts arise, Christians should not look inward, but outward to the finished work of the shepherd who purchased them with his own blood.

[30 : 35] I've been very tired these few days. I've had a lot going on. Most of you know that we're remodeling a house. Just a massive amount of things on my plate.

I could close my eyes and go to sleep at any moment. I don't feel as zealous as I often feel. I just am. Everything is being done in neutral, it feels like, these days.

There could be a temptation in my own heart to then go, I used to be so fervent. What is going on with me? And I'm thankful. I don't have to look within. I can fight unbelief by meditating on the sacrificial work of Jesus on my behalf.

It is finished. The good shepherd has laid down his life for the sheep. I am his and he is mine because he has done the work for me. And while my body may not be getting the rest of these days, my soul can find deep and satisfying rest in Christ.

So remind yourself daily that your salvation rests upon the shepherd's sacrifice and not your own performance.

[31 : 52] Remind one another of that. Come together on the Lord's day. Press the gospel into one another's lives. Secondly, we ought to beware of false teachers and we ought to listen to the voice of Christ.

It's not what we spent most of our time on, but the contrast between the good shepherd and the hired hand should remind us that not all people who claim to be spiritual leaders are trustworthy. Some are serving for personal gain, reputation, platform, some measure of comfort rather than a genuine love for God's people.

A trustworthy Christian leader is going to point you to the good shepherd. It's going to remind you that there is a shepherd who will not abandon you.

evaluate every teacher, pastor, author, YouTube platform by the word of God, the word of Christ.

[33 : 03] Follow leaders only insofar as they faithfully lead you to the good shepherd. thirdly, take a moment to consider that Jesus knows his own and his own know him.

And he's speaking in this case of a positional reality. These are his sheep.

These sheep know who he is. I just want to step out beyond the text just a bit to say in closing that we ought to be cultivating a personal and growing relationship with the good shepherd.

Jesus describes this mutual knowledge that's happening here. Later, John 15 is going to talk about the need for us to abide in him, to tarry with him.

And this is a covenantal relational bond that he has with his people. And because of it, because of the status that we are his and he is ours, we ought to want to know him in growing degree.

[34 : 18] He knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows our great frailty of mind and of body, all of the things that we struggle with, our weaknesses, our great need of him.

He knows how much we need him more than we ever realize how much we need him. We ought to pursue knowledge of him, to take up his word, and to pray, and to gather with his people, and be obedient to all that he commands.

Eternal life is not merely escaping judgment, it is knowing God the Father and Christ who sent him. What a pleasure and joy it is to be a sheep of his pasture.

Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. Let's pray together.