

February 27, 2013

I Am the Gate/Good Shepherd

John 10:1-21

## LESSON FOCUS

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

## Today's Bible Lesson:

## Jesus tells a story about a Shepherd and his sheep

## John 10:1-10

*1 Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth. Only thieves climb over the fence of a sheepfold. Someone who does not enter through the gate is certainly a thief. 2 But the person who enters through the gate is the shepherd. He takes care of the sheep. 3 The person who guards the gate opens it for the shepherd. The sheep know their shepherd's voice. When he calls them, he uses each sheep's own name. And he leads them out. 4 When he has led all his sheep out, he walks in front of them. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 The sheep will not follow a person that they do not know. They will run away from a stranger, because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.'*

*6 Jesus told this story to the people. But they did not understand what the story really meant.*

*7 So Jesus explained it to them. He said, 'I tell you the truth. I am like the gate for the sheep. 8 All those who came before me were like thieves. But the sheep (God's people) did not listen to them. 9 I am like the gate. Everybody who comes in by means of me will receive \*salvation. Such people will go in and out. And they will be like sheep that find green fields with grass. 10 The thief (the devil) comes only to steal and to kill. He comes only to destroy. I have come so that people can have life. They can have it completely.'*

Jesus told many stories that would help people to understand about spiritual truths. The other three Gospels contain most of these stories. The stories were about familiar situations in people's daily lives.

**Verses 1-5** at night, shepherds put their sheep into a sheepfold. This kept the sheep safe from dangers, for example wild animals and thieves. Often, the shepherd slept in the sheepfold in order to guard his sheep.

Shepherds often spent all day and all night with their sheep. They were able to identify each one. Each sheep had a name. The shepherd used their names to call them in and out of the sheepfold. This was necessary because sometimes several shepherds used the same sheepfold. Always the shepherd walked in front of his sheep and they followed him. He could watch out for any dangers ahead. The sheep followed the shepherd because they knew his voice. They would never follow a stranger, because they did not recognise a stranger's voice. A stranger's voice made them afraid.

The Old Testament writers often referred to a shepherd and his sheep when they wrote about the ideal king. An ideal king knows all his people really well. He protects them from dangers and from their enemies. He guides them and he leads them. They follow him because they trust him. In *Psalm 23*, David wrote the words: *'The Lord is my shepherd.'* He compared God's care for people to a shepherd's care for his sheep.

Jesus did not actually refer to himself as the shepherd in verses 1-5. But he was comparing himself with the shepherd. The thieves and strangers meant evil leaders who did not care about the people.

**Verse 6** However, the people did not understand what this story meant. So Jesus explained it further.

**Verses 7-8** He said, 'I am like the gate for the sheep.' This was because the shepherd was the means by which the sheep could enter the sheepfold. The shepherd provided the way to safety, away from danger. In the same way, Jesus is the only means by which people can come to God. He is the only way to receive salvation and to be safe from the results of sin.

False leaders may pretend to know other ways to come to God. But these false leaders are like thieves. Only Jesus can offer salvation to us.

**Verse 10** Jesus gives life to us. He gives it to us immediately. This life makes us content inside our minds, even when bad things happen to us. This life continues even after we die.

The devil is like a thief. His purpose is to spoil and to ruin people's lives. His plan is to deceive people. So he tries to convince them that Jesus is not the only way to receive salvation.

## **Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd**

### **John 10:11-21**

*11 Jesus said, 'I am like the good shepherd. The good shepherd is ready to die on behalf of his sheep. 12 A worker who receives wages to look after the sheep is not like the shepherd. That worker does not own the sheep. So if he sees a wolf (wild dog), he will leave the sheep. He will run away. Then the wolf will attack the sheep. And the sheep will scatter. 13 This is because such a worker only cares about his wages. He does not really care about the sheep.*

*14 I describe myself as the good shepherd. I know my sheep (my people) and my sheep know me. 15 This is like my relationship with the Father. The Father knows me, and I know the \*Father. And I am ready to die on behalf of the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, too. They belong to me, but they are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock (group of sheep) with one shepherd.*

*17 The Father loves me because I give my life. But I will receive my life back again. 18 Nobody takes my life from me. I give my life because I want to give it. I have the authority both to give my life and to receive it back again. My Father has ordered me to do this.'*

*19 When he said this, the people had different opinions about him again.*

*20 Many people said, 'He has an evil spirit in him! He is mad! We should not listen to him.'*

*21 But other people said, 'A person with an evil spirit in them could not say these things! An evil spirit cannot make a blind person see!'*

**Verses 11-13** A person who receives wages to look after sheep does not really care about them. The sheep do not belong to him. He is doing the job just to get money. He cares more about his own safety. So if there is danger, he will leave the sheep. But the shepherd, who owns the sheep, really cares about them. When a wild animal attacks, the shepherd will protect the sheep. The shepherd will risk his own life so that his sheep will be safe.

Jesus used these familiar ideas to show how much he loved people. He loved them so much that he was ready to die instead of them.

**Verses 14-16** The Greek word 'good' meant also 'beautiful' or 'attractive'. This did not refer to physical beauty. It meant that Jesus had qualities that attracted people to him.

When we \*believe in Jesus, we belong to him. He is like our shepherd. When Jesus referred to 'sheep' in the previous verses, he was talking about the Jews. His audience would already be familiar with this idea from the scriptures (see note on 10:1-5).

But Jesus came also to save the Gentiles. The Gentiles were the meaning of the 'other sheep' (verse 16).

**Verses 17-18** The Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus. And Jesus knew that he had to die as a sacrifice to save people.

**Verses 19-21** C.S. Lewis, a 20<sup>th</sup> century writer, said that we can believe only one of three things about Jesus. Jesus said that he was God's Son. If this was not true, then Jesus was either mad or wicked. A mad

person believes things that are not true. A wicked person lies about something very important in order to deceive people on purpose. (To deceive means to persuade people that a lie is the truth.) So if Jesus was not mad or wicked, he was telling the truth. He was God's Son.

Jesus' audience had to make a decision about him, too. Some people in the audience said that he was mad or wicked. But other people recognized the truth about him. They believed him because of the miracle that they had seen. Only God's power could cure a man who was born blind.

## **BIBLE STORY**

### **John 10**

Read from your Bible. Ask students to find it in a Bible too. Those that can read can follow along. Choose the passages you would like to read aloud. Use visuals to help tell the story.

### **Jesus the Good Shepherd**

What do you know about sheep? (Allow your students to answer.)

What sound do they make?

Did you know that sheep's wool is scratchy and gets really heavy when it is wet? So, if they go to the stream to get a drink, they need someone to help them find still water, not gushing water, because they could drown if they fall in.

And did you know that sheep sometimes like to wander off? If they wander off and get into trouble, they do not know how to fight back.

Sheep will also just eat and eat and eat some more. They need someone to help them and to find new grass when they have eaten all there is.

They need protection. Sheep are not very smart. They need someone to show them where to go and to watch them very closely.

The people who take care of sheep are called "shepherds." Even though sheep are not very smart about many things, they learn the sound of their shepherd's voice and will not follow a stranger. In fact they run from strangers. Not all of the people who care for sheep are good, but a good shepherd knows every one of his sheep, not just as a group, but individually. A good shepherd needs to be strong; there are bears and wolves to fight! A good shepherd needs to be willing to risk his life for his sheep; sometimes, the bears and wolves win. A good shepherd needs to be alert; people will even come at night and try to take their sheep. A good shepherd needs to be smart; all of his sheep are different. A good shepherd needs to be patient; some sheep like to wander away. A good shepherd needs to be caring; sheep can easily become sick from pests.

So, how important do you think it is that sheep have a good shepherd? Do you think they could survive very long on their own? Probably not!

In John, chapter ten, Jesus says that He is the Good Shepherd! Jesus also says that He is the door to the sheepfold or pen. Anyone who comes to the sheepfold through Him will be saved and will have an amazing, abundant life. So, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. What does that mean? It means that those who believe in Him are His sheep. That does not mean that we become sheep when we believe in Jesus, it is a way to explain the kind of relationship we have with Him.

In John 10 Jesus says, ***My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, 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.*** (John 10:27- 30)

When we believe in, and trust in, and follow Jesus, we become His. And once we become His, we are always His. He tells us that nothing can snatch us from His hand—that same hand that measures the great big universe! (Is 40:12)

Our memory verse says that the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. If Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and He says He is, and if we are His sheep, how did He lay down His life for us? He gave Himself to die on the cross for each one of us. Jesus even said that no one took His life from Him; He gave His life and when we believe that He is God's Son, who died for my sin and your sin, we become His sheep. And once we become His sheep, we are safe and secure, and NOTHING can snatch us out of His big hand!

### **Pray**

***Thank you God for Jesus, who is our Good Shepherd, for giving His life for us, and for caring for us.***

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What does a shepherd take care of? (*Sheep.*)
2. Does a good shepherd lay down (or give) his life for the sheep? (*Yes.*)
3. In our Bible story, does the good shepherd know his sheep? (*Yes.*)
4. Do the sheep know the good shepherd? (*Yes.*)
5. Do we have a good shepherd? (*Yes.*) Who is our Good Shepherd? (*Jesus.*)

## **BIBLE CHALLENGE**

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

Talk about shepherds and sheep. Explain to the children how sheep are not very bright, and they need a shepherd to take care of them, to bring them to green grass and pure water to drink. A good shepherd makes sure the sheep are happy and safe. Have the children recite the verse several times. Then ask the following question:

Jesus tells us that He is our Good Shepherd. What does this mean to you?

**Gospel of John DVD**

**Disc 1, Chapter 15**

**Approximately 5 minutes**

**NOTE:**

**You may want to all come together to watch video clip first. Then you can dismiss and continue your classes.**

## GAMES

### **FOLLOWING THE SHEPHERD:**

Play a game with the sheep **FOLLOWING** the shepherd with a reminder to follow **CAREFULLY** no matter what! The "shepherd" could do a few tricky things that the sheep have to do!

### **Sheep and Wolves Skit**

Kids are confronted with temptations from "wolves" among their peers every day. As the teacher and shepherd to your students, you will help them recognize and fight the "wolf" and trust Jesus to care for them. This point is obvious from the skit. The idea is to have fun with it while the skit makes your point.

#### Materials Used

- large, colorful scarf
- 20 sheets of white paper
- string or yarn to tie papers onto students
- marker
- stuffed animal (sheepdog)

#### Preparation

1. Before class begins, read through the skit Assign the roles as listed below:

- Super Shepherd (gets a colorful scarf to wear as a cape, and a sign that says "Super Shepherd")
- Hired hand
- Wolves dressed as sheep (sign that says I AM A SHEEP) - Two students (one boy and one girl)
- Regular sheep: Remaining students
- Sheep dog: Stuffed animal

2. On the paper, make a sign that says "Super Shepherd." Make holes on both sides of the top and tie the string to the sign. Make 2 signs that say "I Am a Sheep" and put yarn or string on them too.

#### Instructions

1. Instruct the two wolves and the Super Shepherd to put on their signs.

2. Give scripts to the two wolves and have them practice their lines. They should begin to get into their parts: (1) being deceitful and (2) trying to get the rest of class to follow them. In the meantime, instruct the rest of the group to pretend to take a test when you give the pretend papers out to them.

3. Super Shepherd should sit at the front of the class, sign hidden.

4. Super Shepherd should introduce the “flock” to the hired hand, Super Shepherd should go out of the room and put on cape (colorful, large scarf or sheet worn over shoulders and back). Also put the “Super Shepherd” sign around neck.

6. After the students do the skit once, allow different ones to take turns playing the different roles.

7. If time permits, allow the students to come up with other scenarios to portray (e.g. someone trying to get them to tell a lie or be disrespectful to the teacher).

### **Sheep and Wolves Skit**

**TEACHER:** Passes out an exam (blank paper). **All right class, start your exam.**

**STUDENTS:** (Begin to take test without talking)

**TEACHER:** **I need to leave the class for a few minutes, but Mr. H. Hand is coming in while I am away.**

**H. HAND:** (Enters the room and sits at teacher’s desk. He looks bored and distracted.)

**TEACHER:** (Exits and puts on cape and “Super Shepherd” sign. While H. Hand is in the room, two wolves enter the class and H. Hand gives each wolf an exam.)

**WOLF #1:** (Pulls out another piece of paper and whispers loudly) **Hey, I have the answer key.**

**WOLF #2:** **All right—let me see.**

(Wolves #1 and #2 start talking, with the students around them.)

**WOLF #2:** **Here are the answers, come on you guys—we’ll all get As.**

**WOLF #1:** **No one is looking.**

**WOLF #2:** **Nobody will find out.**

**TEACHER:** (Walks back into class, looks at students and at H. Hand) **What’s going on? Why are those two (pointing at wolves) in my class?**

**H. HAND:** (stands, shrugging shoulders) **I don’t know. Who cares? I am out of here!**

**TEACHER:** (Confronts two wolves): **What are you two doing in my class? You are not my students. Come to the principal’s office with me right now.** (Teacher takes the wolves firmly by the arm and escorts them out of the room.)

## SCIENCE EXPERIMENT

Dozens of times in the Bible, the people of God are referred to as sheep. A few of the more notable passages that come to mind are the 23rd Psalm, Isa. 53:6 and John 10. There are a couple of good reasons why we are called sheep in the Bible and one of them is because of the nature of the sheep.

1. **Sheep are Dumb** - In other words, they are not the smartest animals in the world. As a result, they are constantly getting into terrible situations.

2. **Sheep are Directionless** - If a sheep wanders off from the rest of the herd, it will have a hard, if not impossible time, finding its way back. They have no sense of direction.

3. **Sheep are Defenseless** - Lions have teeth and claws, bears have the same. Snakes have fangs; even the fowls of the air have some type of defensive mechanism. Not so with sheep. They have absolutely no means of protecting themselves from danger. If they are attacked, they are simply helpless!

People are the same way. There is no way that anyone can protect himself/herself against the attacks of the evil one. We need someone else to protect us.

By their very nature, sheep need a shepherd. The shepherd reaches out to the sheep in its need. He doesn't turn away from it and leave it to languish in its dangerous place. He lovingly lays his hands upon it bringing comfort and hope to the wayward sheep. (Ill. When the Lord comes to a lost sheep, He too lays His hands upon it. He reaches right into the midst of the mess we find ourselves in and by doing so shows us that there is hope and that there is a God in Heaven who loves us.

4. **He Lifts The Sheep** - This shepherd doesn't stop with a mere touch. He reaches down and lifts the sheep out of the place where he finds it. He removes it from the place of danger. (Ill. The Good Shepherd does the same for those He finds wandering the dark hills of sin. He comes alongside them, reaches out to them and when they respond to His touch, He lifts them out of their sin and removes them from the danger they were in. Thank God, when Jesus comes into a heart and life, He delivers us from all danger, Rom. 5:9.)

5. **He Lugs The Sheep Home** - the Bible says that this shepherd lifts the sheep and lays it upon his shoulders. I can picture him taking the front feet in one hand and the hind feet in another. This way, the sheep is draped around the neck of the shepherd and is absolutely safe and secure! Next, the Bible teaches us that the shepherd carries the sheep home. Notice that the sheep is not required to get there under its own power, but it goes there under the power of the shepherd.



## **Make Hand Lotion or Healing Ointment**

One way a shepherd cared for his sheep was to use ointments heal the wounds of the sheep and to protect them from bugs and mites which irritated them.

### **Home Made Hand Lotion**

#### **Ingredients**

- 8 oz petroleum jelly
- 16 oz baby lotion
- 8 oz vitamin E cream

#### **What to Do**

Empty ingredients into bowl. Use electric mixer to whip ingredients together. Lotion should look like frosting.

Scrape lotion into zip lock baggie. Trim end so you can squeeze lotion into container.