

John 10:1-10

Of Thieves, Robbers, and Abundant Joy!

Introduction

One of the greatest joys of being a brand-new parent and figuring out this whole parenting ordeal – is **being able to** introduce your children to the **movies & shows** that **you loved watching** as a kid when your parents introduced them to you...

Now sometimes this **doesn't always work** – sometimes we remember a movie or a show being **better than** what it actually was – and sometimes it has a **scary** or **even inappropriate scene** that you just **forgot about** or maybe **suppressed from** your childhood nightmarish dreams...

But this week I was able to reach **a new level of parenting** by introducing my 3-year-old son to the 1995 family hit classic:

Babe...

It's a movie about a pig – that **thinks it's a dog** – and wants to herd a lot of sheep!

And far as I'm aware – it's **NOT based** on a true story, since it has talking animals & pigs that heard sheep – but it is a movie that has **real animals & real people!**

But the whole point of the story is basically to say that **against all odds...** Babe (the main character) wins a **sheep herding contest** right here in Australia – and everyone cheers, and there's this **feel good moment**, and the man **at the end of the movie** looks at the pig and says:

That'll do, pig... that'll do...

And everyone cheers and feels good because they know that Babe has saved the day!

And it's this really wonderful **story and illustration** of a gentle sheep farmer, raising a pig to **care for** his sheep, and **to speak to** his sheep, and to love his sheep **even as his very own!**

And this in **a lot of ways** is a wonderful illustration and metaphor for what we read **NOT** just in the scope of the entire bible – but specifically these verses here in John chapter 10!

John 10

John 10 is **generally** seen to be the **great shepherding passage** of all of the New Testament Scriptures...

There are many places in the bible that speak of God **promising to be** the Good Shepherd of His sheep (Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34; Isaiah chapter 40; and so on)...

But nowhere is this imagery so **robustly brought forth** than here in John chapter 10 with Jesus our Good and faithful Shepherd!

John 10 speaks of how God in Christ is tenderly **loving & caring & protecting & guiding** His chosen people away from the **wolves**, & away from the **thieves**, and away from the **crooks**, and the robbers of **this world** – and the sheep (according to John 10) **joyfully come and enter into** the arms of the Good, loving, and tender Good Shepherd of their souls:

Jesus Christ!

And so we're gonna spend several weeks in this chapter of John looking at **all of the ways** that Jesus tenderly cares for, and **loves**, and **guides** and **seeks** and **saves** and **secures**, and **redeems** His little lambs because He really is the Good Shepherd of His Sheep!

Main Point

And so this morning as we come to the **first 10 verses** of John chapter 10 – here's what I want us to see:

The Good Shepherd joyfully leads and loves His sheep into the saving fold of eternal life...

And so this passage acts as **a bit of an overview** to all of John chapter 10 and so we're gonna see **pieces of this scene** unpacked and explained over the next several weeks in this chapter!

Outline

But today here's what we're gonna see:

Jesus is the Shepherd of His people (1-5)

&

Jesus is the doorway of His people (6-10)

John 10

So let's begin John chapter 10 – beginning at verse 1:

Truly I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate but climbs in some other way is a thief and a robber. ² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ They will never follow a stranger; instead they will run away from him, because they don't know the voice of strangers...

Opening Gambit

Strictly speaking these verses present to us an **allegory** rather than a **parable**...

A parable **generally speaking** has a plotline – a story – a beginning – a middle – and an end!

But **an allegory** is more of this kind of thing – it's a:

Point-by-point **examination...** that uses specific **metaphors**, & **similes**, & **images**, and **expressions**!

And in the case of John 10 Jesus was identifying Himself as the good and faithful Shepherd of the sheep – and by Jesus using this language He was **really drawing** on a rich & robust **theological history** that has its origins **rooted in** the very first pages of the Bible!

You see God on the very first pages of His bible creates & fashions for Himself **a people** and **a Kingdom** – where He is going to watch over & guard, & protect, & care for His people all the days of their lives!

And then that theme **runs throughout all of Scripture**!

In the early chapters of Genesis, we see God making a covenant with **Abraham** that he will be a father of many nations – and then that covenant continues **through his descendants!**

And then Jacob (**one of those descents**) calls God a shepherd in Genesis 48:15:

God has been my shepherd all the days of my life...

And so even from the **start of the bible** we see this theme of shepherding that is near & dear to the heart of God!

David

And then the bible **unfolds** and it **explodes** in this expansive picture in one of the **most famous Psalms** – Psalm 23 where David says:

The LORD is MY shepherd..

And then that same Shepherd (who is the shepherd of David) talks to David and says:

David you will be the shepherd of my people – 2nd Samuel chapter 5

And so it's gone from God as a shepherd to God extending His care **through other people** to be shepherds!

Ezekiel 34

And if you know your bibles – you would know Ezekiel 34 later on in the Prophets Ezekiel is scorning the **bad shepherds** of Israel – saying:

*Woe to the shepherds of Israel, who have been feeding themselves... **You do NOT** tend to the flock. You **have NOT** strengthened the weak, you **have NOT** healed the sick, **bandaged** the injured, you **haven't brought back** the strays, and you've **NOT sought** the lost sheep of Israel!*

So everything a shepherd should be doing **you leaders have failed to do!**

David's Descendent

And then in that chapter of Ezekiel 34 (where He's scorning the bad shepherds) God gives this incredible promise **in the midst** of these tyrannical **leaders** where He says:

I myself will do it!

I will search for my flock and I myself will look for them. As a shepherd looks for His scattered sheep, so I will look for my flock...and I will set my servant David over them, and he will feed them and will be their shepherd!

Now what's incredible about **this promise** in Ezekiel 34 is that David is **actually dead at this point in history!**

He's been gone a long time at the time of Ezekiel 34!

And so, he **can't be** referring to King David – cause King David is long gone!

But rather a descendent of David **will rise up** – and **will NOT be like** these bad Shepherds found in Ezekiel 34...

John 10

So that we you get to John chapter 10 – you see Jesus talking to the **bad shepherds of Israel** – and the **bad religious** leaders **saying emphatically** in the Greek:

I am the Good Shepherd – the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep!

And now everyone has **ringing in their ears:**

Ezekiel 34!

And Psalm 23!

And Genesis 48!

And a whole host of biblical scripture that emphatically declares:

He's the descendant of David!

He's The Good Shepherd of God!

He's the One that Ezekiel promised all those years ago!

This is God's servant David caring for His people **over and against** the bad shepherds of Israel's religious leaders!

And so this chapter is set **in the context** of God's redemptive story!

Eyes of the Blind

But the question remains why doesn't it...

Why did Jesus choose to use this **particular metaphor** – at **this particular moment** – with these **particular people?!?!?**

I mean out of all the times He could have brought up being the Good Shepherd of the sheep – why did Jesus choose to **bring it up here** at this **particular moment** in John chapter 10?!?!?

Well, **the clue comes** in verse 21 of John 10 – where the religious leaders are **once again debating** the identity of Jesus and some of them accuse Him of being a demon-possessed man – but others were saying:

*These are not the words of someone possessed by a demon – for how can a demon **open the eyes of the blind?***

John 9

Friends remember what happened last week in John chapter 9 – after Jesus had **healed a man** born blind from birth – the man then confronted the Pharisees on their interpretation of who Christ is! And after a **long and heated discussion** on the identity of Jesus these “*Shepherds of Israel*” **threw him out** of the synagogue for trying to teach them about the things of God!

And so Jesus comes along and finds him in John 9 and says to him:

Do you believe in the Son of Man X2

And the man **there and then** declares his allegiance to Christ as the Shepherd of his soul!

Verse 1

And so Jesus **now comes along** here in John 10 (remember there is no break from John 9 to John 10 – it's just **one continuous story** in the Greek) – and Jesus **now contrasts** Himself to the **false shepherds** of Israel to the true and loving Shepherd...

And **the first thing** He says there – is that **unlike a True and faithful Shepherd:**

*The false Shepherds do **NOT enter** by the appropriate gate of the fold, but will enter into the pen by **some other way!***

So have a look at verse 1:

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

Now we have to remember that Jesus is using a metaphor here – it's **NOT** a 1/1 correlation of a **literal sheep & a literal shepherd:**

But it's very very close!

See back in these days many of the towns possessed **2 different kinds** of **corrals** or **sheep-pens** to which the shepherds would **store their sheep** at night!

One was a **corral** that was used in **the middle of a field** – usually made from **stone or brick** – and sometimes the **shepherds got creative** and used the **side of a cave or rocks** and covered it with leaves!

Now these pens did **NOT tend to** have a door or a gate attached to the entrance of them – and so a **good shepherd** would literally lay himself down in front of the entrance to **literally become the door** to the sheep!

And this pen would provide protection for the sheep & safety for the sheep – and would **keep them safe** from various robbers & thieves & wolves & attackers...

Town Pen

But the **other kind of corral** were the ones used in a city or a town to store multiple sheep and multiple flocks – usually attached to the side of house or a barn!

These pens were **sometimes owned by multiple people!**

In the case of multiple shepherds – the sheep **wouldn't necessarily** belong to **just one person** but sometimes it was a **shared accommodation** for the sheep...

And so **with multiple families** came **multiple flocks!**

And **multiple flocks** came **multiple shepherds!**

Which is why **the sheep** needed to hear their particular voice of **their particular shepherd!**

Hired-Hands

Now the **other thing** to keep in mind is that these pens would **often have** a hired-hand or a **keeper of the gate** (what Jesus refers to there in verse 3) because sometimes the Shepherd **needed a break** when tending to their sheep!

And so one of the things that these **hired-hands** were **commanded to do** was:

1. Number one: They needed to keep watch for the *“Thieves & Robbers” climbing over the walls at night!*

These pens had only one door – but there were other ways these thieves and robbers could get in!

2. But secondly – they were commanded to **only open** the pen if the **true shepherd** of the sheep finally appeared!

See there were **many false shepherds** and **men** in these days – but there was **only one voice** that the sheep would listen and respond to!

The Shepherd's Voice

And so Jesus taps into this metaphor of shepherding here **in verse 1** and he calls the religious leaders: “*Thieves and Robbers – Crooks and Criminals*” who climb over the walls...trying to harm the sheep!

But the true Shepherd **Jesus says** enters by the gate...and the sheep hear His voice!

In his commentary on this passage J.C Ryle explains **so vividly**:

*The whole point of this **object lesson** was to show the **entire unfitness** of the Pharisaical system to be pastors and teachers of the Jews. They had not taken up their office in the right spirit, and with a right understanding of the work they had to do...*

*Nothing seems so offensive to Christ [He says] as a false teacher of religion...and nothing ought to be **so much dreaded** in the church, and if needed, to be **so plainly rebuked**, opposed, and exposed...*

In fact the word Jesus uses to describe these **Thieves & Robbers** is the Greek word *Kleptas*:

Which means “*to steal...*”

And the Greek word *Laystes*:

Which means to rob or “*one who uses violence...*”

And so Jesus is clear that when it comes to the **Jews & the Pharisees** of His day – they are like *thieves and robbers* devoted to the harm of the people for their **own personal gain!**

These men are cowards *sneaking over the walls* and stealing the sheep at night to symbolise their **illegitimate use** of authority & religion to cast the people away!

I mean this is exactly what we saw **last week** with the man born blind **and his parents** – his parents refused to acknowledge Jesus for fear of being **cast out** of the synagogue – but this man heard the voice of the shepherd and **gladly followed His voice!**

Verse 2

Which is exactly what we happening there in verse 2:

*The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. And the gatekeeper **opens it for him**, and the sheep hear **his voice**. And he calls **his own sheep** by name and leads them out. And when he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. And the sheep follow him because they know his voice...*

His Voice

So, **2 simple truths** we have in contrast to the **false shepherds** of Israel – and Jesus **as the Good Shepherd**:

Jesus **Loves** His sheep!

&

Jesus **leads** His sheep!

The Good Shepherd loves His sheep & the Good Shepherd leads His sheep – and this is seen **primarily** in the fact that:

The Sheep hear His voice, as He calls them all by name!

I heard a wonderful story this week about people who fly in the **British and American Forces as pilots...** apparently **one of the most difficult parts** of being a pilot **in the sky** is that there are just **so many noises & verbal signals** coming to you **all at once** that it's **sometimes hard – almost impossible** to identity what signal is **saying what**:

And so your **weapons system** will beep & **start going off** – and your **temperature gauge** starts to beep and make funny noises – and your **warning light** start to flash and to warn of impending doom – and the **ground officer** is trying to speak and tell you **how to manoeuvre** and fly out of this dangerous situation:

And so there are just **so many voices & sounds** coming that **at times** pilots tend to just phase-out!

They ignore the **important sounds** because they're mixed with so many **other voices & noises!**

And in fact pilots have been known to **stall planes** and **NOT even realize** because they're just **so distracted** by all of the noise

And so **one of the things** that the air-force **tried to do** many years ago was to **find a way** to break through the noise...

And so the British installed **a woman's voice** to signal the pilots – and she was known as:

Nagging Nelly!

And Nelly would **warn the pilots**:

You're stalling...you're stalling...pull up...you're stalling!

American

But the Americans tried **something a little different** – for a while the American's introduced **into the system** of the plane:

The voice of the **Pilot's child!**

So that **no matter** how many **voices** – or how many **noises** – or **sounds** – or **systems** – or **distractions** were going on **all at once** – the **voice of the child** would **always break through** to the pilot's ear!

The Shepherd's Voice

And here we're told simply that the sheep hear the shepherd's voice...

With all the **noise** – and all of the **sounds** – and all the **distractions** – and all of the **bleating** – and **screaming** sheep:

The sheep hear their Shepherd's voice and they follow Him out!

By Name

But see **NOT only** do the sheep hear the voice of the Shepherd – but the Shepherd calls them all **by name!**

Shepherds were known to do this **by the way** – in the ancient world they were known to give their sheep **silly & unique names** to call them out of the pen:

*Stubby – and Curly – and Jumpy – and Hoppy – and Clutz – and Frizbo – and nay nay – and all of these **silly but intimate** names for the sheep to listen!*

And this I think shows the **deep** and **personal** affection that the shepherd had for His sheep – and the sheep would always come **jumping** and **prancing** for joy **at the sound of** the Shepherd's voice!

His Own

And notice **the intimacy** of language being used in verse 3:

*The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. And He calls **his own** by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought all **his own** outside, he goes ahead of them...*

And now look down in verse 14:

*I am the Good Shepherd. And I know **my own**, and **my own** know me...*

Friends you cannot get **anymore intimate** than what Jesus does here with His own sheep!

They belong to Him – they listen to Him – and they follow Him – because **NOT only** do the sheep love the voice of the Shepherd...but the Shepherd **loves His sheep** and He calls them all **by name!**

John 13

In just a few weeks' time we're gonna get to John chapter 13 – where Jesus is speaking **to His disciples** in the upper room discourse of John...

And John opens up that **entire section** with these astounding words in verse 1:

*...Having loved **his own** who were in the world, He loved them to the very end...*

Now let me tell to you why that's such a remarkable statement for us to read...

Because – *He loved His own who were **in the world**...*

And perhaps you're sitting there going:

Uhhhh yeah where else could they be – they're right in front of Him in the upper room – of course they're in the world where else could they possibly be?!?!

But remember **world** in John's gospel **doesn't always mean** the **physical cosmos** of the world in which we live – but world **can be also be** a euphemism for the **dark and sinful** location of man's **moral rebellion** against His Creator God!

And so I think this is John's way of highlighting the **love of Christ** by highlighting the **unloveliness** of His people!

And that He loves them **right then and there** while they are yet **still in this world!**

And the same is true for you and me!

That is to say:

He doesn't love a future version of us – that He will **finally love us** one day when we finally get a **better version** of ourselves... when we finally move out of our **immaturity** – and finally get over

our **addictions** – and finally deal with our **besetting sins** – and finally **start to walk** the path of righteousness – and finally start to **clean up** our lives...

But rather He says *having loved His own* who were in the world, He loved them to **the very end....**

He loves them right now as they are in this world!

Jesus' Mind

See I imagine Peter... always the verbal clutz... always putting his foot in his mouth... always impulsive... always so stupid...

And I imagine Jesus sitting there in that upper room thinking to Himself:

*Well, there's **Peter**... oh Peter he's getting ready to deny me 3 times... and to fall back on his pride and sinful heart as he often does... what a talented young man but he's just so prideful... **man I love that guy!***

*And look there's **Matthew**... probably still bitter about the fact that I took him away from such a lucrative business as a tax collector... in fact I **still think** there's a little bit of **greed** and **envy** left in his heart...*

*And of course there's **Andrew**... oh Andrew (Peter brother) still jealous that Peter's on the inner circle... still resentful of his brother's talents... and prominence within the disciples... **doesn't he know that I love him!***

*And of course there's **Phillip**... the dull one of the group... always saying something stupid... always trying to overthink it... and **never cluing on** to the simple fact that I love him and that he's my sheep!*

And then Jesus stops to pray and to look to His Father and He says:

*Father I thank you... I thank you for such **simple** and **sinful** sheep you've given me to love... I wouldn't have it any other way!*

Transition

Friends this is the picture that is being **painted for us** here in John chapter 10:

Jesus is the Shepherd who **leads** His sheep!

Jesus is the Shepherd who **loves** His Sheep!

And Jesus is the Shepherd who **calls** His sheep by name!

And if He calls His sheep **by name** – then **you had better believe** that the Good Shepherd **certainly knows**:

Each and every one of their **sins**!

Each and everyone of their **weaknesses**!

And each and every one of their **fears** – their **failings** – their **flesh** & their **hearts**!

And He still calls them all **by name**!

Because He loves us and leads us into the door of abundant joy!

Point 2

And this is what's **so astonishing** about what Jesus goes on **to say next** in the second half our text – that **NOT only** does the Good Shepherd **know us** and **lead us** – and **love us** and **care for us** – but secondly:

Jesus is the gate into which He gives us the joy of abundant life **X2**

Have a look at verse 6 – John writes:

Now Jesus gave them this figure of speech, but they did not understand what He was telling them...

So Jesus speaks to them in **metaphor** – they **don't understand** what He's saying and so He speaks to them **again plainly!**

Verse 7:

*Jesus said again, Truly I tell you, **I AM** the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn't listen to them. ⁹ **I AM** the gate. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰ A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance...*

I AM

So, this is now the **third time** Jesus uses the famous ***Ego Eimi*** – that is the emphatic Greek saying:

I AM

And remember there are **Seven *I Am*** statements in the Gospel of John – and **you'll actually notice** that with **each & every** one of these sayings there's a certain **theological promise** attached to every one of them:

So, In **John chapter 6** when Jesus says:

*I am the **bread** of life...*

He was saying that with **the promise** that:

Whosoever believes in me shall never be thirsty again!

And then in **John chapter 8** Jesus says:

*I am the **light** of the world...*

The promise is that:

*Whosoever **follows after me** will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life...*

And now **here in John chapter 10** Jesus says:

I am the gate of the sheep...

And the promise is that:

*Whosoever enters by me **shall be saved** and go in and out and find green pastures...*

And next week **we're gonna see** Jesus saying:

I Am the Good Shepherd...

And **the promise** is that:

*The Good Shepherd **lays down His life** for the sheep...*

And so the whole point of all of these ***I AM sayings*** is that **if we can grasp** the heart of their meanings – if we can understand **what Jesus was trying** to communicate – then **we have grasped** the Christian faith – we have seized the Christian message – and **the very heart** of John's Gospel!

Old Testament Texts

Now Jesus probably had a **whole host** of Old Testament texts in mind when He was saying *I am the Gate...*

For instance, He may have been thinking of Psalm 118 – where the Psalmist writes:

*This is **the gate** of the LORD through which the righteous may enter... Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may come through and give thanks to the LORD...*

So He may have been thinking of that...

Maybe He was thinking of **Genesis chapter 28** where Jacob has this dream at Bethel (which means *the house of God*) and he says upon awakening from that dream:

*Surely the Lord is in this place...this is none other than the house of God. This is **the gate** of heaven...*

So heaven – gate – door – home – salvation!

Maybe He was thinking of that...

Exodus 12

Or maybe He was thinking of **Exodus chapter 12** with the **Passover Lamb** – I like what Kevin DeYoung says at this point – he says:

*We've **already seen** in John's Gospel that **John is filled** with allusions to the book of Exodus!*

Jesus is the manna that comes down from the Father of Lights!

He's **the Pillar of fire** that guides His people in the desert at night!

He's **the water of life** that hydrates the thirsty pilgrim!

He's **the Lamb** of God who takes away the sin of the world!

He's **the better Moses** who leads His people out of the captivity of sin!

He's the better bread – the better wine – the better the shelter – the better High Priest!

And so **could it be** that Jesus was calling Himself *the door* **mainly in part** because He was **in some way** looking back to the **angel of death** passing over the home and killing the sons who did NOT have the blood of the Lamb **covering over the door!**

Faith in Christ

And so whatever He had in mind here – the main thing Jesus was saying is that:

I am the doorway to eternal life!

And all **other doors** – all **other religions** – all other **systems** – **worldviews** – **beliefs & theories** that **deny** the claims of Jesus will lead your soul to eternal hell!

Because you **cannot enter** by **any other means** into the fold of God than through **faith in Jesus Christ!**

Trusting in Jesus Christ!

Clinging to Jesus Christ!

His **blood** – His **death** – His **resurrection** – His **atonement** – His **works** – His **means** – His **merit** – His **righteousness** ALONE is the only hope of **escaping hell** and entering into life!

Eternal life with God & God Himself!

Before Me

And so **it's amazing** what Jesus is saying here:

All who came before me are thieves and robbers, and the sheep did NOT listen to them...

And then in verse 10:

A thief comes only to kill, steal, and destroy...

He's referring to the Pharisees...

He's **NOT** referring to **Abraham** – or **Isaac** – or **Jacob** – or **Moses** who have gone before Him – but the **bad religious leaders** – the Shepherds of Israel who have **forsaken the sheep** of God – and **fed themselves** – and fattened their hearts – and pretty much everything Ezekiel had prophesied!

Contrasts

And this was the whole point of **contrasting Himself** with the zealous religious leaders & the Good Shepherd of the sheep – in fact I wonder if you’ve noticed that this **whole passage** in John 10 is one big **compare & contrast** between **Jesus as the Shepherd** and the **Jews as the robbers**:

The thief comes only to kill, steal, and destroy – but **Jesus has come** to give abundant life!

The thieves and robbers do **NOT listen** to the voice of the Shepherd – but the sheep **hear His voice** and gladly follow Him out!

The thief comes and **climbs over** the walls to **harm** the sheep – but Jesus comes **directly through** the gate to **love** the sheep!

So this **entire passage** in John 10 is one big **compare & contrast** between Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd – and the Jews as **robbers & thieves**!

Spiritual Thieves

And so this is now **Jesus’ definition** of spiritual thieves and robbers:

Anyone who **does NOT use** the door and **does NOT** point you to the door is a thief and robber and a criminal and a crook!

Every religious leader who comes to you this day...and does **NOT** lead people **through Him** – and **in Him** – and **to Him** – and bring glory **for Him**:

Is a **thief** – and a **bandit** – and a **ruffian** – and a **crook**!

And they **do NOT deserve** to have the name of a Shepherd!

Because they **CANNOT** perform the one basic task of a shepherd – leading the sheep to green and lushes pastures!

And it **does NOT matter** their personality, or their degree – or academic standard – or **motives** – or **manner** – or friendly disposition – or humanitarian aid – or the number of people who follow them...

If you do not go through the door you are a thief and a coward!

An anti-Christ!

And a liar from the pit of hell!

Abundant Life

This is strong language...

This is terrifying language...

But it's necessary language...

Because **eternal lives** are at stake here!

Eternal souls are on the line!

Your eternal destiny is at stake in the claims of Christ!

And so yes, Christianity is a narrow door!

Yes the claims of Christ are exclusive!

And yes people **will NOT like** that we have the **hold on truth** in this world!

But friends God **did NOT make** a narrow door – and He **did NOT make** a high fence – and He **did NOT make** a single gate:

In order to **steal our joy** – but to increase it!

To make it full!

To make it abound in joy and satisfaction!

The fence is there to protect your joy!

And to increase your joy!

This is what the Psalmist says in Psalm 119:

The boundaries have fallen for me in pleasant places...

God's rules, God's commands, God's Laws are there to protect us precisely because He wants what is best for us!

That's what He's saying there in verse 10:

A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. But I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance...

The whole point of Jesus coming into the world is so that He could give you:

The best wine!

And the best bread!

And the best joy!

And the best peace!

The best hope!

Because He is the fulfillment of all of those things!

But see all of those things can **only be had** when we are in a **right relationship** with God the Father **through** Jesus Christ!

Conclusion

And so it **isn't that** Christianity is **an easy life** – it isn't a **prosperity gospel** life – a message that if you believe in Him then your life is gonna get a whole lot better!

That's **NOT** what we're saying!

In fact Christianity **often makes** our lives **far more difficult** than what they were before we came to Christ!

But it is (according to John 10) the **good life** – the **best life** – the **only life** where we can know peace – and joy – and comfort – and rest – in a God who **does NOT fail** – and **does NOT falter** – because:

He is the **GOOD SHEPHERD!**

Do you believe that?

Do you believe He's good when your wife has cancer...

Do you believe that He's good when your family is sick!

Do you believe that He's good when your son is wayward!

When your daughter is harmed!

When your family is **beaten & broken**...

Or when your marriage ends in divorce...

Cause that's what Jesus is saying here – Jesus says He's the Good Shepherd **to His sheep** and He will never lead them into a place that is **NOT ultimately** for their good and for His glory!

I mean think about the picture of the 23rd Psalm – remember the imagery that Jesus uses:

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...

Even if the Good Shepherd leads me through the **deepest** and **darkest** places of pain:

Sometimes the **best food**, the **best drink**, the **best provision** for your soul – is **found** at the bottom of a deep (dark) valley...

Friends sometimes the best moments **of our spiritual walks** have been in the times **when life has stung us** the most!

Because it is only there that (in that place) you recognize **the personal presence of the Saviour is enough for you!!!**

Do you believe that?

Do you cling to that?

Do you believe that with all of your heart?

You know, we can probably believe that He's the Messiah – that doesn't cost us too much...

Maybe we can believe He's the Son of God, He's the Word made flesh. He's divine.

Maybe even we can believe that He's the only gate of the sheep...

But will you believe that He's Good even when life is NOT!

And that all that He has you going through, all of the commands for your life, all of the providential blessings of prosperity and adversity are all because He wants you not to have less, but to have more. More of life that is truly life.

John 10:1-10

Discussion Questions

[Read John 10:1-10]

Main Point: *The Good Shepherd joyfully leads and loves His sheep into the saving fold of eternal life...*

Q1. Describe in your own words the main point of this passage? – Why does Jesus employ this shepherding metaphor here in John 10? – How does the context of John 9 help us to answer this?

Q2. How should we understand the picture of shepherding in the context of the whole bible? – Why is this picture (shepherd/sheep) such a fitting metaphor for God and His people?

Q3. [Read Ezekiel 34]. How is Jesus the fulfilment of what God promises in verses 11-16?

Q4. [Read verses 1; 5; 8; 10]. Who does Jesus refer to as thieves and robbers in this passage? – How do you now that? – Why would He refer to the Pharisees by these titles?

Q5. [Read verses 3-5 of John 10]. What is the promise here in these verses? – In what ways do these verses bring you comfort in life? – In what ways do these verses show the heart of Christ?

Q6. [Read verses 6-10]. What does it mean that Jesus is the gate/door? – What Scripture would he have had in mind? – Why is it significant that Jesus is both the gate and the shepherd?

Q7. What are the characteristics of a thief in verse 10? – What is the characteristic of Jesus? – In what ways does Christianity give us abundant life even when we suffer? – What parallels can you draw in John 10 to Psalm 23?

