

Bible Stories for Adults

Jesus - The Good Shepherd

John 10

Opening

Gathering: Why do people need the care and love of a good shepherd?

Today's Focus: God showed His love to us by giving us the Good Shepherd – Jesus.

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

My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. John 10:27-28

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Farming in Palestine

The land east of the Jordan River was cattle country (like US Southwest) - little land was farmed

Cattle and other livestock were raised for meat, milk and hides

The land west of the Jordan River was too valuable for farming to allow cattle pastures

Livestock was limited to herds of sheep and goats grazing in uncleared wilderness

Sheep and goats fit well with steep slopes & crags and hard to reach ravines

Raised for wool, milk and offspring, typically not slaughtered for meat

A significant part of the population kept such flocks, A dozen up to a hundred per flock

The Shepherd's Baggage

Shepherds had to travel light to walk the long distances in difficult places

Scrip - A bag or purse of animal skin holding his lunch (bread, dried fruit, olives, cheese)

Water Jug - Either a pottery flask or hollow gourd hung from his sash

Horn of Oil - Carried on sash to mend wounds on injured sheep

Sling - Weapon of both offense and defense, normally tied to belt

Judges 20:16 = Many were able to *sling a stone at a hair and not miss*

Shepherds would sling a stone just in front of the nose of a sheep beginning to stray

Rod - A 24-30 inch wooden club with a lump of wood at one end, often studded with nails

Normally hung on sash by a leather cord on the other end

Used to protect shepherd and sheep from robbers and wild animals

Staff - A straight sapling 6-7 feet long (shepherd's crook used in Europe, not Palestine)

Used to guide sheep, knock leaves from trees for sheep to eat, help in climbing

Pipe - A simple musical instrument played to pass time and keep sheep calm

Cloak - Heavy coat of sheepskin or homespun wool, used as a cover at night

Worn draped over the shoulders and held in by a sash at the waist

A sick or injured lamb would fit in the fold above the sash

The Shepherd Knows His Sheep and the Sheep Know Him

Since sheep usually weren't raised for meat, they lived with families and shepherds for years

Shepherds gave descriptive names to their sheep like "Brown-leg", "White-nose", "Long-ears" ...

Shepherds intimately knew each sheep, its individual traits and its special needs

Sheep recognized the shepherd's voice, shepherds could often call and sheep would come

If a stranger called, sheep lifted their heads in alarm and, if repeated, ran away

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A Shepherd's Job is Never Done

During the day a shepherd would search for the best pasture, often hidden in mountains
He would look for still waters - sheep wouldn't drink from flowing streams
He would find shade from trees or rock for the sheep to rest in the shadows
Shepherd would go before his sheep finding the best pathways
A shepherd led his sheep, he didn't drive them - the sheep would follow
With little grass, sheep were bound to wander
With the rest of the flock together and safe, the shepherd would go find a missing sheep
Hired shepherds had to pay for any missing sheep unless they had proof it was killed
Family shepherds would risk their own lives to save a sheep from attack
1 Samuel 17:34-36 = David killed a lion and a bear while protecting his father's sheep
Hired shepherds would run away if the danger got too serious
Sheep will not lie down when they sense danger, threat, hunger or agitation from pests
If sheep turn over on their backs, they are "cast down" and need help to be restored

The Sheepfold

By midafternoon or at the first sign of a storm, the shepherd led the sheep back to the sheepfold
The shepherd stood in the sheepfold doorway and named off the sheep as they entered
Sheepfold - A walled off area with one door and 6-ft tall walls of rock
Protected the sheep at night from robbers and wild animals
A cave or covered area provided shelter during bad weather
Sheep normally stayed in open area in pleasant weather
Village sheepfolds - Communal folds where flocks of sheep & goats were brought together
Strong keyed door was guarded by the porter, who knew the shepherds
Shepherds gathered in morning and gave their own calls to separate their sheep
Hillside sheepfolds - Used by shepherds when far from town during good, warm weather
Shepherd lay down across doorway so nothing could get in or out except over his body
The shepherd was literally the door

Psalms From the Shepherd

With this new understanding of shepherd life, what new things do you see in Psalm 23?
Psalm 23 = Write input on board
How do you feel knowing that you are loved and protected by God as a shepherd to his sheep?
Psalm 100 = We want to worship and praise our good and loving Shepherd

Like Sheep Without a Shepherd (*Mark 6:34*)

Why did Jesus continue to teach and care for people despite being physically tired and hungry?
Mark 6:31-34 = *He had compassion - they were like sheep without a shepherd*
Weren't they being cared for by the leaders that were there to shepherd them?
Jeremiah 50:6 = They are lost sheep, led astray by their shepherds
What happened in last week's story that showed the people's need for a shepherd?
John 9:17, 33-34 = Pharisees excommunicated healed blind man who called Jesus a prophet

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Thieves and Robbers (*John 10:1-6*)

How did Jesus describe these Pharisee's relation to the Lord's sheep?

John 10:1 = They are thieves and robbers who don't enter by the gate

How did the Pharisees differ from the shepherd God wants for His sheep?

John 10:2-5 = Pharisees tried to drive the sheep because they couldn't lead them

Did the Pharisees understand this analogy?

John 10:6 = No, so Jesus continued by explaining it

Who was the watchman who opened the gate for the shepherd in verse 3?

John 1:29-30, 34 = John the Baptist, He recognized Jesus as the Shepherd

How did Jesus "enter by the gate"?

Luke 18:31 = He came in the way God had revealed that His Shepherd would come

I Am The Door (*John 10:7-10*)

How did Jesus begin His explanation?

John 10:7, 9 = I am the gate, the sheep who enter by the gate will be kept safe

We can go in and come out - Hebrew phrase describing absolute security and safety

Inside is safety and salvation; We can follow Him for pasture (to meet our needs)

How did Jesus contrast Himself with these false shepherds?

John 10:8, 10 = They are thieves coming to kill; Jesus brings full and abundant life

I Am The Good Shepherd (*John 10:11-21*)

How did Jesus further describe that He is not just a regular shepherd?

John 10:11-13 = He will even lay down His life for His sheep, not like a hired hand

How else is Jesus like a Good and Loving Shepherd?

John 10:14-15 = He intimately knows His sheep, and they know Him

How did Jesus further differentiate Himself from the hired shepherd?

John 10:17-18 = He lays His life down voluntarily and has authority to take it up again

How did the people respond to this statement that could only be true if Jesus were God?

John 10:19-21 = Some thought He was demon-possessed, others confused

The Sheep of His Pasture (*John 10:16*)

If Jesus' sheep know Him, who are those who don't know Him?

Matthew 25:32-33 = They are the goats who will be separated from His sheep

Who are these sheep that belong to Jesus' flock?

John 10:16 = Some from the pen of Israel, some from other pens of the world

What shepherd did God use to begin gathering His sheep from other folds?

Acts 9:11, 15 = Saul, later called Paul

Who are the shepherds of this new flock?

Acts 20:28 = The leaders of His Church

Pastor (Ephesians 4:11) - Latin for *shepherd*

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The Shepherd is the Son of God (*John 10:21-42*)

Where was Jesus 2.5 months later when the Good Shepherd theme was further explained?

John 10:22-23 = Jerusalem Temple for Hanukkah (also called Feast of Lights)

Temple's Court of the Gentiles was between the Royal Porch and Solomon's Porch

Porches were 40 ft tall and roofed over, People prayed and rabbis taught there

Jesus walked through Solomon's Porch to keep out of wintry weather

Had the Jews finally realized who this Good Shepherd really was?

John 10:24 = No, they asked Him to plainly tell them who He was

Why had they not been able to understand despite the evidence of His words and works?

John 10:25-26 = They weren't His sheep and didn't listen to His voice or recognize Him

What more did Jesus have to say about His sheep?

John 10:27-28 = I give them eternal life and no one can take them from Me

Why is no one able to steal these sheep from Jesus?

John 10:29-30 = The Father won't allow it, and Jesus and the Father are one

How did the Jews respond to His direct answer?

John 10:31-33, 38-39 (31-42) = They tried to stone Him for blasphemy

God's Eternal Plan For His Sheep (*Jeremiah 23:1-4; Ezekiel 34:1-16*)

How did God feel about the false shepherds who abused His flock?

Jeremiah 23:1-2 = He would punish them for destroying and scattering His sheep

How would God shepherd these people?

Jeremiah 23:3-4 = He'd find His scattered sheep and place loyal shepherds over them

How did the shepherds over God's flock act as hired hands?

Ezekiel 34:1-10 = They cared for themselves, not the flock - They are held accountable

How would God take care of the problem?

Ezekiel 34:11-16 = He would search for His sheep and shepherd them Himself

How sincerely would He search for His sheep?

Luke 15:1-10 = Like a shepherd would leave 99 to find one lost sheep

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. In what ways do I recognize and follow Jesus' voice?
(*John 10:2-4; Psalm 23; 28:8-9; Ezekiel 34:25-31; Matthew 23:1-4, 13-15*)
2. How have I listened to and followed the voices of thieves and robbers?
(*John 10:1, 5; Psalm 119:176; Jeremiah 23:30-40; 50:6-7; Ezekiel 13:10-12; Matthew 7:15-23; 1 Peter 2:25*)
3. How do I try to enter through the gate of Jesus?
(*John 10:7-9; Psalm 100; Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23; Luke 13:23-30; Rev. 21:10, 25-27; 22:14-15*)
4. Does Jesus recognize and accept me as one of His sheep or as a goat?
(*John 10:25-28; Ezekiel 34:17-24; Matthew 25:31-46*)
5. Would Jesus recognize me as a shepherd, as a hired hand or as a thief to others?
(*John 10:1-13; Numbers 27:16-17; Jer. 23:1-4; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Matthew 18:10-14; 1 Peter 5:1-4*)