

OUR GOOD SHEPHERD'S UNIQUENESS

John 10:11-21 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Every one of us has a shepherd. Each of us has a ruling, guiding belief or direction that we follow. Some people have heroes they follow. Some people follow a destructive addiction. Other people conclude early on in life that they will be their own shepherd--masters of their own destiny so they're able to run their own lives. Who is your shepherd today? What care does your shepherd provide for you? Does your shepherd lead you into green pastures and beside still waters? Does he restore your soul? Does your shepherd guide you into paths of righteousness?

Sometimes, the best place to begin a Bible text is at the end. Today, let's look at John 10:19-21. Who was Jesus talking to? The blind man must have still been there. Jesus' disciples were there. The crowd of Jews that were following Jesus was still there, And the Pharisees, out to kill Jesus, were still there. As usual, again, there was a division among Jesus' hearers. Truth always divides people. Listen as I read John 10:19-21. Many made a double accusation that Jesus was both demon-possessed and insane, so why listen to Him. Yet, there were others who objected to the double accusation, "Saying. "Can a man with a demon open the eyes of a blind man?" Matthew Henry in the 1600nds said, "The devil will sooner put out men's eyes than open them." I remind us all that demons cannot open blind eyes.

This other group of people knew that Jesus' words and actions were not those of a demon-possessed man. Those many who rejected Jesus showed by their rejection that they were not part of His sheep." Jesus is not merely a great Teacher or a great humanitarian. That is not a sincere option. Either Jesus is our only good Shepherd, uniquely because He is God, or if we deny Jesus' divinity, then He is a liar, and a liar cannot be a great teacher or a great humanitarian. As we examine the division in the responses to Jesus, two contrasts stand out clearly-(1) the contrast between Jesus, the good shepherd, and the Pharisees, the false shepherds and (2) the contrast between Jesus, the good shepherd and all other good human shepherds. Our good Shepherd is unique. Let's discover Jesus' uniqueness today:

LOOK AT THE CONTRAST BETWEEN JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND THE PHARISEES, WHO WERE FALSE SHEPHERDS. (I.)

Notice John 10:11, declares, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for sheep." Then turn to John 10: 13, and notice the contrast with the Pharisees, who were hirelings. What happens when the wolf comes? "He flees because he is a hired shepherd/a hireling. He cares nothing for the sheep." This contrast of Jesus with the Pharisees certainly extends to the contrast between Jesus and any self-proclaimed or self-seeking pastor who despises the truth of God's Word and the truth of who Jesus is—and their tribe are many today. What is the 4-fold contrast?

(1) **The Good Shepherd knows His sheep. He is no stranger to them.** Notice vs. 14-15. "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." This is the ultimate measure of a good shepherd. He is so familiar with his sheep that he knows every trait, habit,

and characteristic they have. He can predict their behavior in every circumstance. Their peculiarities and idiosyncrasies are no surprise to him. The word here for know—**ginosko** means to know with love and see as one's own. Our good Shepherd can see behind every façade or mask, and He says, "I know you." And this knowledge is not just one way. Our knowing Shepherd helps us as His sheep to know Him. (My own know Me.) This fellowship between our Shepherd and us is a fellowship—a **koinonia**—a beautiful reflection of the communion found in heaven between the Father and Jesus, His Son. Jesus can tell His sheep from goats. He knows those who truly trust Him for salvation and those who just play a religious game. He knows who believe in our hearts and does not know those putting on a show on the outside. Jesus knows His sheep and His sheep know Him. For those who refuse to do His will, Jesus says, "I never knew you." (Matthew 7:23)

Have you considered how different were each of Jesus' disciples? Peter was outspoken and impulsive while Thomas was hesitant and doubting. Andrew was out-going, a people person always bringing others to Jesus, while Judas enjoyed using people in order to get their money for himself. Some of us are afraid of high places. Others of us are afraid of shadows, snakes, and spiders. Some of us are zealots, like Simon the Zealot, and we are politically minded. Others of us are thoughtful like Philip who asked Jesus to show him who the Father was. Jesus knows about prodigals like John Mark and Demas.

This week I read words by Dr. Andrew Bonar who told how in the Highlands of Scotland, a sheep will often wander off into the rocks and get into places that they couldn't get out of. The grass on those mountains is very sweet and the sheep like it. They will jump down ten or twelve feet, and then they can't jump back up the cliff again. The shepherd hears them bleating in distress. They may be there for days, until they have eaten all the grass. The shepherd will wait until they are so faint they cannot stand, and then he will put a rope around them, and he will go over and pull that sheep up out of the jaws of death. Why don't they go down there when the sheep first gets there?" The Scottish shepherds answer, "Sheep can be so very foolish they will dash right over a precipice and be killed if the shepherds come for them too early. Andrew Bonar said, "And that is the way with us as disciples of Jesus. If we wander away from Jesus, we often won't go back to God till we have no friends and have lost everything. Then he said, "If you are a wanderer, I tell you the Good Shepherd will bring you back the moment you have given up trying to save yourself and are willing to let Him save you His own way. We read, "Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." (Psalm 100:3) He knows us all.

(2) The Good Shepherd owns His sheep; He is no hireling/hired shepherd.

Notice v. 12 saying, "He who is a hired man 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." Back in John 10:4, Jesus says as our good Shepherd that He puts forth His own, and leads us in and out of the fold to find pasture. Notice John 10:3-4. "He calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out. When He has brought out all His own, He goes before them." Ownership is why

Jesus is our only good Shepherd. He brought us out of sin's slavery; paid for us by the price of His shed blood at Calvary. Norman Clayton wrote, "Now I belong to Jesus; Jesus belongs to me, Not for the years of time alone, but for eternity."

So, what is a hired man or a hireling? He is a drifter, a floater, a transient worker with no stake in the flock. He is after payment, money, and a fast buck. Then, like a dandelion seed, he flies away looking for another soft place to land. The hired man could care less about the welfare of the sheep. Jesus here was speaking directly to the Pharisees who raked off the equivalent today of 35 million a year just in temple taxes and currency exchanges in the temple. When Jesus called them hirelings, inside they should have known they had it coming, especially when Jesus drove them out of the temple calling them a den of thieves. Today, there are still religious thieves and robbers on the radio and television, promising what they have no power to deliver. In this way Jesus said they devour widow's house. (Luke 20:47)

(3) **The Good Shepherd loves His sheep; He is no thief.** Notice vs.10,11/12/13. "The thief comes only to steal, kill, and to destroy...He leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them...The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep..." "He is a hired man and cares nothing for the sheep." The hired man has no concern for the sheep he is paid to shepherd. His concerns are for himself. If a wolf, lion, or bear comes, the hired man has one concern, to save his own neck. Who is the wolf in this allegory? The wolf is the enemy of our souls, the devil himself, the roaring lion, the ravaging wolf. God never leaves us for Satan to devour. It is humbling keep my eyes on Jesus the good shepherd. Our shepherd is fearless in His love and protection. He is not afraid to warn us of wolves that can arise from outside the church and from within the fold of the church. The wolves can also be those who work for the enemy. Listen to the apostle Paul warning the Ephesian elders in Acts 20: 28-32. Paul said, "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves, will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

(4) **The Good Shepherd gathers and unites all His sheep; He does not leave them scattered for the wolf.** Notice v. 12,16. "He sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them...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." Uniting and gathering His sheep has been the energetic enterprise of our Savior since the beginning of human history. We two are either gatherers with Jesus, or scatterers. Jesus said in Luke 11:23 states, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and He who does not gather with me, scatters abroad." One of the hardest lessons in the world to unlearn is exclusiveness. Once we realize, like the Pharisees, that we are special, privileged

people, it can become impossible for us to want to share our privileged place with others. The fold of Judaism originally was to be shared with Gentiles, but the Jews would often not hear of it. Even in the Old Testament, the prophets spoke of God planning to draw all men and women to Himself. God told Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12:3, “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you, I will curse, and in you all families of the earth will be blessed. After Abrahams’ willingness to sacrifice Isaac, but God prevented him, God told Abraham, “In you and in your seed, Isaac, all families of the earth will be blessed.” That means God wouldn’t let the early church stay a Jewish fold. Peter took the Gospel to Gentiles, (Acts 10-11) and Paul carried the Gospel to the Gentiles in the farthest reaches of the Roman Empire. Jesus died for this lost world as the Lamb of God to become the Great Shepherd of the sheep, claiming His sheep from every tongue and tribe and nation, as John told us in Revelation 7:9. Secondly,

LOOK AT THE CONTRAST BETWEEN JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND OTHER GOOD HUMAN SHEPHERDS. (II.) Notice this contrast with all the shepherds/pastors, who we all are at best under-shepherds. As we sing the chorus, “There is none like You...No one else can touch my heart like You do. I could search for all eternity long and find, there is none like You. How so? 4 ways:

(1) **He voluntarily sacrifices His life; rather than struggle to save His life to save the sheep.** See vs.11,15,17. We read, v. 11, “The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. Verse 15, again, leaving the allegory, Jesus speaks not of the shepherd, but says, “I lay My life down for the sheep.” Then in verse 17, Jesus adds, “For this reason, the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life for the sheep.” The Greek word, **tithysin** means more than give His life, but Jesus lays His life down. This is personal, intentional. Though His life was in His own hands, Jesus purposely laid it down for you and me. He voluntarily sacrificed His life for you and me. Andre Crouch said it well in his mighty song. “I Don’t Know Why Jesus Loved Me. I don't know why Jesus loved me I don't know why He cared I don't know why He sacrificed His life Oh, but I'm glad, so glad He did He left His mighty throne in glory To bring to us redemption's story Then He died but He rose again Just for you and me Oh, but I'm glad, so glad He did. Where would I be if Jesus didn't love me? Where would I be if Jesus didn't care? Where would I be if He hadn't sacrificed His life Oh, but I'm glad, so glad He did.” Paul wrote in Romans 5:7-8, about the difference in good shepherds and our good Shepherd. “For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die, but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

(2) **He actually saves His sheep by dying, while other shepherds’ deaths only mean loss and death for the sheep.** See v. 11. We read, “The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” How does Jesus save our lives by laying down His own life? The answer lies in the words, “for the sheep.” The word **for**—Greek, **uper** means “in place of, instead of. Jesus’ death is in our stead. This is the precious doctrine of Christ’s substitutionary atonement. We deserve to die and go to hell, but Jesus took hell on the cross for us. He died in our place. He took our

sins and bore the punishment for them Himself. Isaiah prophesied what Jesus fulfilled in Isaiah 53:6, “All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned everyone to His own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” No other good shepherd’s death could do anything to save our souls.

(3) He lays down his life in order to take it again; no ordinary shepherd can do this. v. 17-18. Listen to the power in our Lord Jesus Himself. “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.” Jesus knew in coming to earth, many would seek to kill Him, but that it could not or would not happen until His hour had come. He knew that the same life He had the power and authority to lay down, He had the same power and authority to take up again in resurrection. What made Jesus agree in His own free will to die for you and me? He so desired to please His Father that they were one in their love and will to save the world, meaning all who will repent, believe and receive Him. Why didn’t the Father call it all off when Jesus’ hands were trembling before a Roman soldier with a hammer and nails. Why didn’t Jesus walk away from Calvary? He created the world. (Hebrews 1:3) It was because the Father’s heart and the Son’s heart were one in love for us. John 3:16. No other shepherd who has died has ever had the power to raise Himself from the dust of death.

(4) He shepherds all His folds and makes them one flock with one shepherd; no other human shepherd can ever or will ever be able to do this. See v. 16. We read, “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.” I must bring them also—shows Jesus knows even this moment everyone who will be saved. In Acts 18:10, God appeared to Paul in a vision and said, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are My people.” God called them His people before they responded to Paul’s message. There is a sense of urgency here, of compulsion, and we hear it in Jesus’ Great Commission. It is a must—“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation.” (Mark 16:15) No good shepherd on earth can ever shepherd millions of folds in His one flock. One church is hard enough. Jesus can and He does, and He calls His Bride the body of Christ. All true believers are one in Christ Jesus. God hates it when churches talk about their denomination being the one true church. Jesus died for the entire world. Who then are these other sheep not of this Jewish fold of those believing in Jesus? Anyone outside of Israel—the Gentiles, the nations. This is stunning, and it was unacceptable to the Pharisees, and more fuel for animosity. Let’s read the Messianic promise in Isaiah 42:1-9 Listen to Isaiah 49:6. “I will raise up the tribes of Jacob and bring back the preserved of Israel: I will make you as a light for the nations, and My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” Only Christ can break down the middle wall of partition. (Eph.2:13) Only Christ can draw together all born-again believers into His one flock. John says, in Rev. 7:17 “For the Lamb in the midst of throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”