

3. I Am the Good Shepherd

John 10.1-11

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Some things never change. Or do they?

[Show the latest and greatest Ranger portable television that was new in 1977 and used in Korea. Show also the small 3” screen handheld television that was the slickest thing going before HD television took over the airwaves.]

These once-great items sure have changed – and now these are useless. Besides, who would want just “television” when with an iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch you can do so much more than just tune in a few television stations! You can send or receive email or go all across the Internet with a device that fits in the palm of your hand.

So what happens to certain professions as times change and life is updated? There isn’t much work for “coopers” that make metal rings and attach them to barrels anymore. In fact, there are many of you that may have made the switch from a telephone instrument in your home to simply using the cell phone you carry with you all the time.

Old professions may be hard to understand in the context of today’s technology. But one profession that is talked about a lot in the Bible is that of a shepherd. Are they still around? Oh, yes.

Still in the Holy Land, the Middle East, and even in parts of Europe and Great Britain the shepherd still has a job. [Give illustrations of the shepherds in Herrieden, Würzburg and Russellville. The shepherds/farmers tended their flock in any kind of weather – and the animals knew the farmer’s voice.]

Jesus refers to himself in our text for today as The Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd is our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer amidst all life brings our way – lost or found.

The theme of the shepherd is the basis for a large area of biblical literature and Christian art.

In what we know as the Old Testament God is depicted as the shepherd, and the sheep represent Israel and all persons in history, the present and the future (e.g., Psalm 23).

Israel’s greatest leaders, David and Moses, were both shepherds.

In this same chapter Jesus says (verse 27), “My sheep recognize my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” Because of the tenor of the familiarity of their shepherd’s voice, two sheep herds or more could be separated by the voice of their own shepherd. In verse 7 of this chapter Jesus made one of his great “I am” statements when he said, “I am the gate [the door] of the sheep.” In the city the gate was a part of the sheepfold. The sheep were herded in and the gate closed for protection and comfort. In the countryside there were no fences; rather there were closed in places, or the shepherd built a horseshoe-shaped abattoir to contain the sheep for the night; then the shepherd would lie down across the opening and became “the door” to the protected environment. There was no access except by him, over his body.

The shepherd would literally risk his life for the sheep. His job description was to shield the sheep from thieves and robbers, and protect them from predatory animals with the sling and his staff (both weapons).

Verse 12 speaks of the false shepherd who flees in the sight of danger. The hireling has no vested interest in the flock and is interested only in earning money; therefore, he runs away from thieves and wild animals leaving the sheep unprotected and vulnerable.

This leads us to think of what Jesus meant in our text when he speaks of “laying his life down for his sheep [verses 11, 15, 17 and 18].”

The PURPOSE is that the flock would have life. [Verses 10 and 11]

The BENEFICIARIES are “other sheep” as well [verse 16].

The CONSEQUENCE of the willingness to surrender life for the sheep depicts God’s love [verse 17].

The EFFICACY of the entire process portrays voluntary sacrifice [verse 18].

Behind the shepherd’s *peaceful* approach is a cool *courage* in the face of danger and opposition.

The result of Jesus’ words and actions was that *many people believed in him* at that time. [The word “believe” is one of John’s key words, and it is used 96 times within his gospel.]

How do we discern God’s voice from all the others that voice for our attention?

What do the voices of the world call us to do? What are the benefits/results of what the world offers?

What does the voice of God, through the words of Jesus, invite us toward?

Why did those who listened to Jesus that day respond in a positive manner – belief?

What causes us to believe?

What causes us, or *the other sheep*, to turn away?

How do we respond today to the words of Jesus in the last verse of our text? – *No one can take my life from me. I lay down my life voluntarily. For I have the right to lay it down when I want to and also the power to take it again. For my Father has given me this command.*

Gentle Shepherd, come and lead us,
For we need you to help us find our way.
Gentle Shepherd come and feed us,
For we need your strength from day to day.
There's no other we can turn to
Who can help us face another day.
Gentle Shepherd come and lead us,
For we need you to help us find our way.

Amen.