

**Series: The Glory of the One and Only**

Message: The Good Shepherd / Jeff Kennedy Jan. 5, 2020

**Introduction:** Last week Pastor Ryan helped us to see how it is that some men who are blind can see, and those think they can see clearly, are really blind to the Truth.

**That story ended with a blind man receiving his sight by a miracle of Jesus and being excommunicated—kicked out of the synagogue.**

**Illus.** The protestant Reformation in the church began not as a march, or a protest, or even a debate. The foundation of the Reformation was a document called **The 95 Theses**. Every thesis statement—every proposition posted to the Wittenberg door—written in a humble, unassuming and academic tone—full of questions rather than accusations. Why, asked Luther, are believers not encouraged to Repent and receive salvation by grace through faith alone—as Paul had taught in Romans and Galatians. Why, asked Luther, does the pope have more wealth than the richest Crassus? Why, he asked, doesn't the **Pope build St. Peter's basilica** with his own money, instead of using money gotten from the poorest of believers?

The document circulated throughout **Germany and in 1518, Luther was summoned to Augsburg, Germany** to defend his propositions before the Imperial Assembly. The **debate** lasted three days between Luther and **Cardinal Thomas Cajetan**—by **1520 Pope Leo X declared that Luther's writings and ideas were "scandalous and offensive to pious ears."** He gave Luther 120 days to renounce his Protests against Papal Rome or face excommunication. For the sake of the church, for the sake of God's Gospel of grace, and for the sake of those lost in their sins who needed God's free gift of salvation—Luther chose exile and expulsion.

In the years to come Luther would not only produce a German translation of Scripture widely read, but Luther's small Catechism—a discipleship manual for new Christians which has been published and read by more people than any other book in history—except for the Bible itself.

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**Segue:** Today we are looking at a story where Jesus chooses not to identify with the religious elite—the scholars and popular preachers of Jewish tradition—the Pharisees. He instead chooses to identify with the man born blind, who now can see and who has put his faith in Jesus. That man is now exiled and excommunicated from the religious community because of a gift from God on the sabbath. **Jn. 10:1-21** “Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup>The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup>The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” <sup>6</sup>Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

<sup>7</sup>Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. <sup>9</sup>I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. <sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

<sup>11</sup>“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. <sup>13</sup>The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. <sup>14</sup>“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— <sup>15</sup>just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup>I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. <sup>17</sup>The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. <sup>18</sup>No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” <sup>19</sup>The Jews who heard these words were again divided. <sup>20</sup>Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him? <sup>21</sup>But others said, “These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

The narrative tells us about three groups: The Shepherd, the Thieves and the Sheep.

## 1. Jesus is the Shepherd-King of Israel and the nations (10:2, 11, 12, 14).

Other than tax collectors, Shepherds were some of the most reviled people. But only by the religious elites.

Historians tell us that shepherds, as a group, were excommunicated from the Jerusalem Synagogue.

Jesus gets wind of the Pharisees excommunication and exclusion of the Blind Man healed on the sabbath, and he confronts the Pharisees by brazenly identifying himself as the Shepherd of the people. Jesus fulfills Ezek. 34.

Jesus reclaims and rehabilitates the Shepherd-king imagery.

- **Ezek. 34:1-4** God's indictment of the false shepherds The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: **Woe to you shepherds of Israel** who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? <sup>3</sup> You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. <sup>4</sup> **You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.** You have not **brought back the strays or searched for the lost.** You have **ruled them harshly and brutally.** Jesus looks at masses of Jews crowding the hillsides and sees them as harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.
- **Ezek. 34:11, 15, 20, 23-24** <sup>11</sup>“For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: **I myself (Heb. anni; “I alone” “I myself”)** will search for my sheep and look after them. <sup>12</sup> As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep...<sup>15</sup> **I myself** will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord...<sup>20</sup>“Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says to them: See, **I myself** will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep...<sup>23</sup> I will place over them **one shepherd, my servant David,** and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup> I the Lord will be their **God,** and my servant David will be **prince** among them. I the Lord have spoken.”

Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep—who has authority to lay it down and take it up.

Jesus also calls himself the Gate (Jn 10:1, 2, 3, 7, 9)—The shepherd would use his body to lie down in the entrance of the sheep pen/fold—ancient sources call the Shepherd himself the gate. It was his way of laying down his life—as the human gate to the pen. **He cares for the sheep, he gives his life for them, he protects them and identifies them.**

## 2. The religious leaders are thieves and robbers.

10:1b “Very truly I tell **you Pharisees**, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber...<sup>7</sup> Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All **who have come before** me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them...<sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

**The only group of people more reviled/detested than tax collectors and shepherds were thieves and robbers.**

○ **The Pharisees are put on the spot here**, because unlike their coworkers the Scribes, and their political rivals, the priests (Sadducees), their order is not explicitly OT. Historically we know that the Pharisees came to political prominence during the Hasmonean Revolt against Greece—they are separatists, religious hyper-purity, and with that distinction came an abhorrent pride of position and superiority which they wield in the first century as a political weapon. As a religious order, they are a relative novelty. This has also led them to concoct a whole body of Oral tradition which they would later call “The Oral Torah”—this unwritten tradition (at that time) was taught to many disciples and governed the practice of the Written Torah (written by Moses and Joshua). They mythologized the tradition and taught the people that it went back to Moses, which was not true. Jesus does not recognize their Oral tradition as authoritative—and here he takes issue with their origin. **They have become a political group who did not come by way of Scripture (the door)—the only prophecies that relate to them are Isaiah’s prophecies of “a stiff necked people”, a group of hypocrites who would reject the messiah. “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you...”**

○ **The Scribes who are complicit with the Pharisees**, enabling them to exert political influence and siding with them on matters of faith and practice. But the Scribes are an explicitly OT office.

**Summary:** The thieves and robbers are the false teachers who rob God’s people of the opportunity to worship in Spirit and in Truth—who blind them to the light of God’s Word in the Torah, by perpetuating a man-made tradition that in many cases took the place of the Sacred Scriptures.

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- The evidence against them was their treatment of the blind man healed on the Sabbath. Excommunicating him from the Jerusalem Synagogue. This was evidence that they cared nothing for God's sheep.

**How did the religious leaders steal and pillage the life of the people?**

**They kept them from Christ.** They clearly tried to influence their disciples to reject Jesus' claims.

**They kept them busy with religion.** If the devil can't make you bad he'll make you busy. Too preoccupied to be still and know, know that HE is God. Too preoccupied with the dizzying requirements of fastidious and tedious empty religion.

**They shifted the people's focus from honoring God to honoring their leaders.** Jesus excoriated them for seeking the honor of Moses, or seeking the glory of men. When a leader is pushing and promoting himself for the purpose of drawing attention to his accomplishments or his righteousness, then people are not apt to being atuned to God's righteousness. **This is definitely a problem with the celebrity pastor phenomenon that is occurring today.** All too often young men soar too high, become too famous too fast—and then the character flaws that can only be addressed in the cauldron of experience, trial and error, seeking correction through mentors and caring peers—those lessons become neglected and the celebrity pastor doesn't have the character to match his talent. Talent can only take you so far. **Your talent and natural acumen for something, like public speaking or organizational leadership—those skills will not keep you from lusting after your neighbor's wife. Those talents don't have the moral power to rescue you in the hour of temptation—or the pride that comes with accomplishment.** **A key feature of godly leadership is humility in spirit.** The humble man does not think he is less than he is, but also does not think he is more than he is. **The humble man is in tune with his faults, his "switches" and triggers—and keeps his heart broken before the Lord crying out for help in the Spirit.**

### 3. The Sheep never leave the Shepherd.

- **(v3) The sheep “listen” to the Shepherd’s voice.** They hear the message of Jesus—God’s only Son from eternity, incarnate in human flesh, who lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death, and rose victoriously over sin, death, and Hell. When the true followers of Christ hear that message they don’t argue with it, they don’t push back on it, they don’t say “hey give me a sign and I’ll believe”, they don’t try to change Jesus to fit their preconceived theology—the true sheep listen to his message because it resonates in their very souls.
- **(v4, 26) The sheep follow him in faith.** And the sheep hear that message and they respond in faith. Trusting obedience to the call. Remember we said following Jesus means to believe what is true, and trust yourself to it. When they hear false teaching about Jesus, when they are enticed by false shepherds promising health and wealth, everything now—they won’t follow a false warped view of Jesus because they know the real one.
- **(v5) The sheep know Jesus.** They do not just study about him, learn rightly about him, they know him. They walk in relationship with him. They share in his life, and he walks with us through the trials and attacks in this life. **Illus. When Kerri and I dated in College.** I received lots of letters from her that summer. I would pour over the lines, read between the lines, and imagine what else she might say to me if she had been physically present. Now, I also have my grandfather’s and grandmother’s letters from their dating years as well. I never met my grandfather because he died in a building fire before I was born. Now, I’m intrigued by his sentiments in the letter. I’ve studied the contents of his heart on many occasions. But, I don’t even know what his voice sounds like. I don’t know how or what sort of man he really was. Because, while I have his words, I never knew him, no memories, no sentiments to share of my own. **The fact is, I’ve never heard his voice. I wouldn’t recognize it if I did hear it.**

Jesus is telling these men that the true sheep will respond to his words because they know Jesus—and when you know Jesus you know the Heavenly Father—because the Father is in Him, and he is In the Father. And

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their words warm your heart, bring tears to your eyes, leave you in wonder and awe because you know him. The sheep don't just read the words, they know the person—and it is the person of Jesus who arouses and stirs the sentiments of the heart—who awakens us to the reality of his truth.

**Questions for application:**

1. **“Hearing” denotes/signifies “heeding.” Are you hearing God’s Word, familiar with His voice above all others, and heeding his Word?** Folks we do this by familiarizing ourselves with God’s Written Word. The more familiar we are with it, the more we can distinguish truth from a counterfeit voice from God.
2. **Are we endeavoring to follow him in faith?** A year and a half ago, I could not have predicted what trials and victories 2019 would bring. But I could only predict 2 things: (1) That Lord is my shepherd, and (2) I’m going to follow the Lord my shepherd come what may.
3. **Do we know Jesus?** Or do we just think we know him?