

John 10:1-15

¹“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.

²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.

³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

⁵But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”

⁶Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

⁷Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.

⁸All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them.

⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.

¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

¹²The 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.

¹³The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

¹⁴“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—

¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends! I don't know what you have come to do, but I have come to praise the Lord. Praise Him for protecting our children, especially during prom weekends. Praise Him for taking care of all our students as the academic year draws to a close. Praise Him for our coming out and going in. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

I need to spend some time setting the stage for the sermon this morning. Because of the use of chapters and verses¹ we sometimes do not realize that the selected scripture may not be the beginning of a new thought, but rather a continuation of a previous conversation. That is the case this morning. John, the author of the fourth gospel, often used a structural pattern to help us see Jesus more clearly. First, John would relate a sign/miracle of Jesus; secondly John told how those who witnessed the sign/miracle reacted; and finally, Jesus' discourse or interpretation of the miracle. Those who assigned the chapters and numbers often did not take this into consideration and so a conversation may flow into another chapter. Look with me at John's gospel beginning with chapter 9:

9:1-7 sign/miracle

9:8-39 dialogue with the onlookers

9:40 – 10:18 Jesus explains the sign He has performed²

There are several ways then in which to approach the preaching moment. We could concentrate on the people/things in the story: such as sheep, shepherd, wolves, thieves. We could preach the entire pericope/selection in front of us. Or we could concentrate on just a few verses. I have chosen to do the latter for I believe that is where the Holy Spirit is leading me. Listen again to the passage from The Message:

¹ The system we see today was put into place by Robert Estienne, or Stephanus who used the numbered verse system when printing the Bible in 1555 or 1551. Since the time of the Geneva translation (an English version published in Paris, 1560), which preceded the famous King James Version, nearly all Bible versions have used this same numbering system.

² http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=931

11-13 "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd puts the sheep before himself, sacrifices himself if necessary. A hired man is not a real shepherd. The sheep mean nothing to him. He sees a wolf come and runs for it, leaving the sheep to be ravaged and scattered by the wolf. He's only in it for the money. The sheep don't matter to him.

14-18 "I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me. In the same way, the Father knows me and I know the Father. I put the sheep before myself, sacrificing myself if necessary. You need to know that I have other sheep in addition to those in this pen. I need to gather and bring them, too. They'll also recognize my voice. Then it will be one flock, one Shepherd. This is why the Father loves me: because I freely lay down my life. And so I am free to take it up again. No one takes it from me. I lay it down of my own free will. I have the right to lay it down; I also have the right to take it up again. I received this authority personally from my Father."

With that as background I want to raise this question:

WHO DO YOU HEAR AND WHO HEARS YOU?

SHALL WE PRAY

Father God, thank you for keeping us last night and waking us this morning. Each new day provides another opportunity to draw nearer to you, thank you. You have told us in your Word that we are to be more like your Son Jesus the Christ. Your Son told us before returning to you that we were to go and make disciples. The Holy Spirit guides us to opportunities to do as you have commanded. So, Lord, we ask that you help us to view ourselves honestly and accept constructive criticism; not be afraid to admit a mistake; and when needed shake the dust from our feet and move forward. Abba, thank you for keeping us for this day. Please be with us during the preaching moment and allow your light to shine through me. In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen and Amen.

WHO DO YOU HEAR AND WHO HEARS YOU?

The original audience to hear Jesus speak on being The Good Shepherd included the disciples, the blind man, the Pharisees, the Jews and maybe even a few Gentiles. They made up the crowd that followed Jesus. We should note however, that they followed Jesus for different reasons:

- Some were waiting to be entertained
- Some were hoping for lunch (loaves and fish)

Some were hoping to be healed

Some wanted to learn **from** Him

Some wanted to learn **about** Him

Some wanted to be able to brag they had been there

Some following were looking for find fault

Some following were looking to see if He was the real deal

Some following were looking for ways to put Him out of town

That crowd following Jesus was very similar to the crowds that come to church. Well, someone might be thinking that can't be all bad. If they are here, they might get something out of the music, kids time, prayer/scripture reading, or the sermon. That can be and is often true. But there is another side! If you don't come with the right Spirit you may miss all the messages God sends your way. Let me give three examples of what I mean.

- If you come jealous of someone's "look"
You spend your time finding fault with that "look"
hair, make-up, clothing, shoes, even colors
- If you come with a chip on your shoulder
You spend your time waiting for an opportunity to speak
looking for someone to share your chip
looking for more stuff to add to your chip
- If you come to be entertained
You spend your time judging the quality of the ministries
ushers out of uniform
praise dancers not doing anything new
music too loud, singers off key

The result, is often at the end of service you don't have anything of value to share with your family and friends because you have not heard anything. The only voice you have heard is the voice in your head, which is probably your own voice.

WHO DO YOU HEAR AND WHO HEARS YOU?

After Jesus had healed the blind man. His **friends and neighbors** first doubted he was the same man and then wondered who had healed him.

- ✓ Have you noticed that when you get serious about Jesus that your friends treat you differently?
- ✓ They don't rejoice with you that you were blind and now can see; they don't throw a party to celebrate your change in status
- ✓ They don't even embrace the new you

The **Pharisees** had a different response, they questioned the man who had been born blind about his healing. They doubted what was in front of their eyes because it did not fit with what they had come to see. Later, when you read the passage you will see that they sent for the man's parents to have them testify to the fact that this was indeed their son and he had been born blind. The Pharisees were even upset that Jesus had done the healing on the Sabbath. For the making of the mud to put on the blind man's eyes was work.

Do you see any similarities in the church today?

- Are we guilty of missing the positive outcome because of the process?
- Do we discount the good because we didn't do?
- Do we work to push our agenda without viewing the big picture?

WHO DO YOU HEAR AND WHO HEARS YOU?

Finally, Jesus speaks, but he does not address their criticism head on instead he uses an example to which they can relate. The relationship of sheep and Shepherd. We often think of sheep as being stupid but they really are not stupid they just have a different set of skills.

Consider again the passage:

Sheep listen – time to go in and time to come

Sheep can distinguish voices – shepherd from stranger

Sheep know when darkness comes they need to be protected

Sheep stay where they are lead

When those listening still did not get it... I mean they heard the words but did not think they applied to them Jesus left the metaphor of Shepherd and sheep and begins to talk about gates.

gate 1 (gāt) n. 1. A structure that can be swung, drawn, or lowered to block an entrance or a passageway. 2. a. An opening in a wall or fence for entrance or exit.³

Shepherd leads to the gate

Sheep enter through the gate

Sheep stay with the fence or wall until the Shepherd opens the gate

Sometimes other sheep come into the fold/pen and they sleep together

Sometimes the gatekeeper checks on them, but they know he is not the Shepherd

WHO DO YOU HEAR AND WHO HEARS YOU?

Are you being a shepherd or gate for anyone?

As a result, 9:1-10:21 is all one massive textual unit that follows the structural pattern used elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel of *sign -- dialogue -- discourse*. Jesus performs a sign (9:1-7), which is followed by a dialogue as its onlookers try to figure out what it means (9:8-39), and concludes with Jesus' discourse or interpretation of the sign he has performed (9:40-10:18). What does this mean for preaching? It means that the preacher must assume and draw on the context of the healing because that is exactly to what Jesus is referring in 10:1-10.

John 10:1 most certainly marks a shift as Jesus moves into his interpretation of the healing and begins to introduce the imagery that will be further unpacked throughout the discourse. John 10:1-5 offers a cast of characters that will receive attention as the chapter unfolds: shepherd, sheep, thieves, bandits, gatekeeper, strangers, and yes, even the gate. Intriguing pictures such as stealth entrance into sheepfolds, knowing the voice of another, being someone's own, and having your name called are presented. John 10:6 is a brief interruption in the flow to note the lack of understanding of the audience, which includes, by the way, the Pharisees, the disciples, and even the blind man.⁴

⁴ http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=931