

## **I am The Good Shepherd**

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John 10; Revelation

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### **John 10:1-18 ESV**

There is little doubt this passage is familiar to those who have spent any time at all with their Bibles. After all, many of us when we were still outside of Christ were directed by some caring brother or sister to begin our inquiries into Jesus by reading the Gospel of John.

Happily so.

As we come to these verses today, I want to make just a few prefacing comments, and then, tease out a series of observations, followed by only 2 additional applications.

2 things then to note at the outset:

1 - Chap. 10 follows hard on Ch. 9.

While that seems obvious, it becomes very important in really getting at what Jesus was getting at in the discourse. He wasn't just telling a quaint story.

2 - If you are not paying close attention, it is easy to miss how Jesus switches up His metaphors and how they apply to and reveal - Him.

We'll see that in due course, but let's begin with the backdrop that is chapter 9.

9 begins with Jesus and the disciples - probably in Jerusalem - passing by a man who was born blind. His disciples ask: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

It was common for Jews of that day to assume a one-for-one correspondence between anyone's misfortunes, and sin.

The person must have sinned a particular sin that produced this particular problem. Especially the impoverished or severely disabled like this man. Some Rabbis even taught that if a pregnant woman had engaged in some form of idol worship, then the fetus also participated in the act. It's why they could ask if the man's own sin could be the cause of his being born blind.

While Scripture is clear that all pain, suffering and disease has issued generally from the Fall - it does not - except in rare examples tie specific woes to specific sins.

Jesus answers that personal sin is not the issue here - but rather, how it is that He - as the Father's anointed agent - is sent to use this as an opportunity to show God's glory in overcoming sin's global consequences. To demonstrate something of the Kingdom He is ushering in. And more specifically - that He is the light of the World and brings sight - sight enabling us to see God's reality in the face of the World's fallen darkness.

To bring us into God's "real reality" as Francis Schaeffer called it.

Don Carson notes: "It is not just a miracle; it is a sign, the work of the Father, mediated through the sent one, to shed light on those who live in darkness." Carson, D. A. *The Gospel according to John*. Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991, p. 363.

So Jesus spits on the ground, makes a little mud with the saliva, anoints the eyes of the blind man with the mud - and commands him to go wash in the pool of Siloam - after which the man returns seeing.

Just why Jesus healed this way is the subject of endless speculation. But the text simply never tells us. It's not the point of the account.

Now this miracle really stirs up the people, especially those who have known the man and his family all along - which stir causes the Pharisees to investigate. Such a miracle raises questions as to the possibility of Jesus being a prophet or even more, the Messiah. And this is problematic because the Pharisees had already ruled that if anyone claimed Jesus WAS the Messiah - they were to be put out of the synagogue. To top it all off - all of this happened on a sabbath. And what Jesus had done would have been looked upon as unlawful work.

So the Pharisees interrogate the healed man; then his parents; and then the man once again. They simply can't wrap their heads around it. No matter what, no matter how obvious, they are unwilling to accept what this must imply about Jesus' identity.

In the midst of it all, the healed man quips: "this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were

not from God, he could do nothing.” (9:30-33) At which point, exasperated, they throw the guy out.

Jesus and he meet up again, and when the man worships Jesus, Jesus remarks: “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”

When Noah built and entered the Ark, it was built to save, but in their refusal to hear his preaching and warning - as [Heb. 11:7](#) says, “he condemned the world.” Jesus had come to show grace, but in the process, we see that those who reject this demonstration of grace, suffer judicial blindness to further revelation. This principle remains true. One cannot reject God’s revelation, and then expect not to suffer the consequences. If we refuse God’s Word AS God’s Word for instance, we close ourselves off to seeing anything God reveals.

If you don’t like what’s playing on the radio for instance, and turn the volume down to avoid it - the end result is that you turn the volume down on the whole radio - on every station at once. And when we reject anything from God’s Word because we don’t like it, we end up shutting our eyes and ears to everything it reveals - not just that one thing.

Some of the Pharisees overhearing Jesus’ statement shot back - “Are we also blind?”

Jesus responds that had they known their blindness, like the healed man originally did, they could seek for healing too - but since they claim to not need Him, they remain unforgiven and in their blindness still.

No one is saved, until they come to know their need of salvation. They must confess to being a lost sinner, before they can have the forgiveness of sins found in the Cross.

This was part of the scandal of John’s baptism. Baptism was well known in Judaism before John. One was baptized when they were in some way ritually unclean; as when a leper was to be cleansed so as to be allowed back into the worshiping community; or when a Gentile, converted to Judaism. In all cases, it was a confession of needing cleansing from sin and defilement. As all sorts of sinners were flocking to John, confessing their sins and being baptized - confessing they knew they needed to be cleansed, so it is those who refused to come - in effect claimed they didn’t need cleansing - and so were not.

This, the majority of the Pharisees and Sadducees simply could not admit to. It meant all of their Law keeping was insufficient. That they needed more to be right with God.

So all of this is what leads up to Ch. 10 - and the need for Jesus to begin unpacking the difference between Himself as the True Shepherd of God’s people, and the corrupt and spiritually blind Jewish leaders who were SUPPOSED to be shepherding God’s people until

Messiah - but in denying Jesus as the Messiah, actually led the people away from Him and to condemnation.

Now this figure of the Jewish leadership being referred to as shepherds - is a well known Old Testament trope.

You can find it in Isaiah, Jeremiah & Zechariah among other places - and especially in a passage like [Ezekiel 34:1-6](#) "The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them."

This is what gives Jesus' words in vss. 11 & 14 their full force - that He is the "good shepherd" - over and against the wicked and derelict shepherds - the religious leadership of [Ezekiel 34](#) - and now exemplified in the Pharisee/shepherds of ch. 9 who were so bent on retaining their power and position - that they would deny the obvious and in turning men away from Christ - doing the worst possible damage to their souls.

And thus Jesus begins with His first metaphor - couched in the pictures of shepherding.

His remarks divide into 3 sections:

In vss. 1-5, He paints the picture of Himself as not just "a" shepherd - but THE Shepherd.

In 7-9, He changes the metaphor, showing how He is "the door" of the sheepfold.

Then in 10-16 He emphasizes His role as "The GOOD Shepherd."

In all of it, He gives us some wonderful things to consider about Himself as The Good Shepherd of God's Flock.

We can only tease them out briefly, but they are a most wonderful and sweet revelation.

So: [John 10:1-3](#)

JOHN 10:1-3 JOHN

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

JOHN 10:1-3 JOHN

But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

This gives us our first consideration.

**1. (vss. 1-3) JESUS IS GOD'S ONLY AUTHORIZED SHEPHERD**

**1. (vss. 1-3) JESUS IS GOD'S ONLY AUTHORIZED SHEPHERD** - Jesus is the one, the only one with the absolute right to God's flock.

There probably aren't too many here who have much direct experience with sheep herding, but for Jesus' audience - all these things would have been both highly familiar, and highly suggestive.

So it is with this idea of the "gatekeeper". It was common - especially in the outlying villages that a number of families would gather their various flocks together into one large enclosure at the end of the day - and hire someone to watch over them until morning - when the individual shepherds would come and get their family's flock to lead them out to pasture for the day. The gatekeeper was there to be sure thieves and robbers didn't have access to the sheep without resistance, and sounding an alarm.

So the point Jesus is making here, and that we really don't want to miss is this: He is the only one who is authorized to Shepherd God's flock.

Jesus is not putting the spotlight on the gatekeeper here, but upon Himself in His role as “The” Shepherd of God’s flock.

Going back to Ezek. 34, we see that He alone is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises we just saw in [Ezek. 34](#). He alone can be the “Great Shepherd” of [Hebrews 13:20-21](#) Jesus is the fulfillment of : [Ezek. 34:11-16](#)

**Ezekiel 34:11–16 ESV** “For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

Christian - this is your Savior - the one who as the Great Shepherd of God takes responsibility for you, for your soul, for all your eternal provision; for your life both now and eternally.

You will never - ever be without the ministrations of the Great Shepherd.

This is the first and great point Jesus is making: He alone has the right to Shepherd God’s flock, and as God’s Shepherd, He takes full responsibility for her. In contrast to those temporary shepherds who fully defiled their office - He is the TRUE Shepherd who fulfills all.

He is the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies in this regard. Jesus is God Himself searching for and seeking out His sheep; Rescuing them from all the places they’ve been scattered; Gathering them out from the nations; Feeding them with good pasture; Binding up the injured; Strengthening the weak; And destroying those who would harm them.

Then, Jesus begins to unpack just what His Shepherding entails. With His singular divine access and right to God’s flock, He...

**2. (vs. 3) HE CALLS HIS OWN BY  
NAME**

**2. (vs. 3) HE CALLS HIS OWN BY NAME:** “He calls His own sheep by name.”

What a wonder this is! Jesus knows us each. Personally. Indeed, He is the one who names us for Himself, and then calls us each individually.

We are a large flock, mingled in the world with numberless others, but He never loses sight of each and every one of His own. And in saving us, out of the billions in this world, He calls us each by name into new life in Himself - the same as He called Lazarus out of the grave by name.

One wag once quipped that if Jesus had just cried “COME FORTH”, and not “**Lazarus**, come forth” - every grave that day would have yielded up its dead.

So know this believer, you are not some faceless, nameless by-product of an impersonal saving act. You are saved and safe today - because as [Rom. 8:29-30](#) says:

ROMANS 8:29–30 ROMANS

For **THOSE** whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ESV

ROMANS 8:29–30 ROMANS

And **THOSE** whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. ESV

What a wonderful word that word “those” is. He called YOU Christian, BY NAME! And so you were delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the Beloved Son. ([Col. 1:13](#))

**3. (vs. 3) HE LEADS US:** Notice 3rd that He does not just call us out - He “leads” us out.

### 3. (vs. 3) HE LEADS US

And how precious it is that He indeed leads us. Jesus never leaves His sheep to their own devices to find their own way. He is always calling to us and guiding us through His Word, and pricking our ears by His Spirit. He leads us out from the constraints of the Law to the joy and freedom of cleansed consciences, forgiven sins, full justification, and the unbreakable promise of the resurrection. And as [Ps. 23](#) reminds - He leads us in paths of righteousness, for His own name's sake. By His Word and by His Spirit He is always leading us on toward holiness, and the life and existence we will have with Him in glory.

After His resurrection, Jesus was with the Disciples when He told Peter he was going to suffer a martyr's death. Peter, looking over his shoulder at John asked - what about him? To which Jesus replied: "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? YOU FOLLOW ME."

And do you remember the exchange with the Disciples in [John 14:2-12](#)? Jesus says:

[John 14:2-12](#) (ESV) In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

Thomas, not quite getting it says: "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" To which Jesus replies, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Where does Jesus lead? To the Father! Never into sin, and ever and always, to The Father.

**4. (vs. 4) HE GOES BEFORE US:** "When He has brought out all His own, He goes before them."



#### 4. (vs. 4) HE GOES BEFORE US

He goes before us. Christ never sends us where He is unwilling to go Himself. Even to the cross. And He goes before us even there that we might know that in Him, our safety is assured.

There is something so sweet in this that appears from the whole context of the sheep/Shepherd metaphor that He is using.

One commentator writes: “Unlike Western shepherds who drive the sheep, often using a sheep dog, the shepherds of the Near East, both now and in Jesus’ day, lead their flocks, their voice calling them on.” Carson, D. A. *The Gospel according to John*. Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991, p. 383.

He is a leading Christ. The Lord is our Shepherd - that is why we will want for nothing. Because He is the One who leads us beside the still, safe and refreshing waters; and leads us in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. He never leads us into danger unprotected. Even when we have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death itself - His shepherd’s rod and staff, His tools of herdsman-ship will comfort us. In every distress.

And as [Heb. 9:12](#) tells us: “He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by the means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” - so that as 10:19 goes on to say - we too, may have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus.

Where He leads, we can follow. He is always going on before us - to the Cross, to the grave, and to resurrection. He never just “sends us” - but goes before us to prepare the way.

Now as if all of this were not enough, Jesus goes on to explicate it even more.

#### 5. (vs. 10) HE GIVES ABUNDANT LIFE

**5. (vs. 10) HE GIVES ABUNDANT LIFE:** Unlike those false shepherds, who had no right to the sheep like He has - whom He styles thieves who only come to steal and destroy because they deny Him His rightful place - He came to grant us abundant life.

Life in the reality of God's creation, plans and purposes. Not mere existence, but plunged into the meaning of life itself - in Him.

Sadly, in our day and culture, some teach that the abundant life Christ gives is nothing other than material wealth and worldly success. How tragic. And tragically wrong. Really? He went to the cross so we could have better cars, more cash, prettier wives, nicer children, higher paying jobs and bigger houses? How obscene that is.

"If in Christ" Paul writes - "we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied." ([1 Cor. 15:19](#))

Christ died just to get me more of what everyone has, only to leave it all here when I die?! What would such a "gospel", such a vision of the Good Shepherd mean to those countless Believers throughout history who have been marginalized, persecuted and even martyred.

If "good stuff" now like everybody else strives after where His mission, what does it say to those whose lives are literally in danger for simply owning a Bible as in North Korea? Or to the millions in the slums of Bombay and Calcutta, or Rochester NY? To those who have no conceivable hope of changing their lot in life? Does it mean that the super-rich who spurn God somehow have this "abundant life"?

The abundant life He grants to us is coming into the reality of the cosmos, in living, vital relationship with the God who has spoken it all into existence, and being restored to His plans and purposes for all of life and creation - all with an eternal destiny in Him.

Religionists can only offer what this world already has. He offers the sum of ALL things as found in Himself.

**6. (vs. 11) HE SACRIFICES HIMSELF:** The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the Sheep.



**6. (vs. 11) HE SACRIFICES  
HIMSELF**

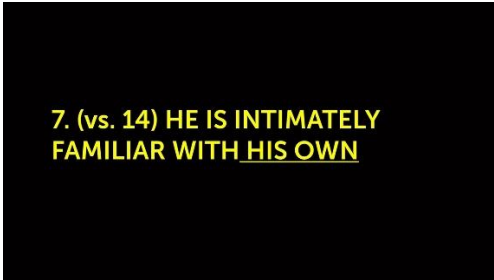
And isn't this the very heart of the Gospel? Christ didn't come to bring a system, some new way for men and women to claw their way back up to God in an endless labor of works. No!

The Good Shepherd, The Divine Son, so loving the Father and those the Father loves, agrees to give up all the eternal felicities of Heaven, to come and live among us in our depravity - to suffer His holiness to be offended by the stench of our collective sin, and love us and die in our place, suffering the just wrath of God we deserved, making an atonement for sin in His own blood - for His enemies!

False Shepherds, other supposed spiritual leaders - none have even remotely claimed let alone actually done such a thing.

The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He dies in our place. He spares nothing, not even His own life to rescue us from sin and condemnation. He bears the wrath of God justly due us for our sin - that we might be blessed according to what He deserved. And He also ever lives to make intercession for us.

#### **7. (vs. 14) HE IS INTIMATELY FAMILIAR WITH HIS OWN:**



7. (vs. 14) HE IS INTIMATELY  
FAMILIAR WITH HIS OWN

He **knows** His own. He is not just acquainted with us - He *knows* us. Every doubt, fear, foible, weakness, failing and concern. Nothing troubles our heart or mind that He is not immediately aware of, and present to meet us in. If no one else in all the world *really* knows us - He does. Nothing is hidden from Him. And nothing He knows alters His love.

And if I might add, He knew us even before He saved us - and STILL He came and gave Himself for us. Nothing He found in us - knowing as He did every time we would fail Him and every egregious way we would do so. He can never stumble on some new information about us which could in any way diminish or modify His tender love toward us, and His desire for us to be with Him.

All of us seek to really, really REALLY be deeply, thoroughly, truly known by someone to the depths of our souls. And at the same time - we still hide some things because we're sure if people knew the REAL us, they would ultimately reject us. But not our Savior. [Heb. 4:13](#) reads:

“And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

Our Good Shepherd knows us well. And so He can truly meet every need in the most perfect of ways.

**8. (vs. 16) HE IS STILL GATHERING:** He will bring in His sheep from all corners to make us into one flock.



8. (vs. 16) HE IS STILL  
GATHERING

None will be left out, passed over or missed. He goes out of His way to find the Samaritan woman by the well. He gives Peter a vision to get the Gospel to Cornelius' house. And He commissions His disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

And what marks them all out as truly being His own? All of His sheep listen to His voice. His global work culminates in joining all His into one. This is what makes true Christians: Being His Sheep, who know and follow His voice.

**9. (vs. 28) HE GIVES ETERNAL LIFE:** He gives to each of His sheep - eternal life.

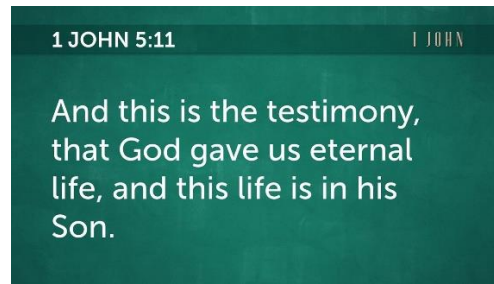


9. (vs. 28) HE GIVES ETERNAL  
LIFE

*Eternal*, not temporary. They will never perish. They cannot perish. The very nature of the life He gives is that it is an everlasting, imperishable life. We can't kill it. It can't be taken from us. We cannot give it away. It is ETERNAL - everlasting life.

If words mean anything it means that such life will never cease. Never! Eternal life is not a possession, it is a state of being.

Look at how John himself writes of this life later: **1 John 5:11** ESV

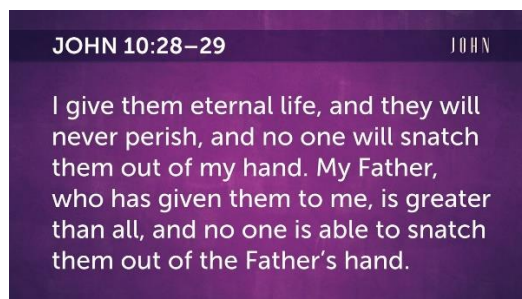


Why is it eternal? Because it is bound up in Christ Himself. For Believers to lose their eternal life - Christ Himself would have to lose His! For He is their Shepherd, their guardian. He will bring them safely home to the Father. Each one will make it. What part of Christ's own Body can He lose?

**10. (vs. 28-29) HE KEEPS US IN ABSOLUTE SAFETY:** No one can snatch His sheep out of His hand.



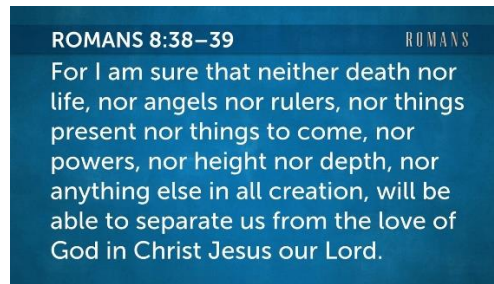
Read those words carefully again - [John 10:28-29](#)



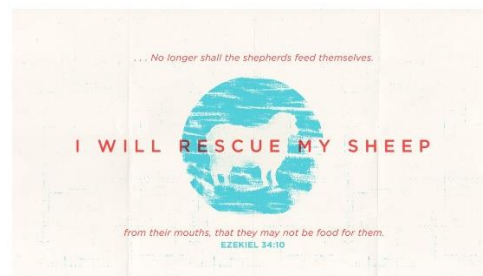
No one. Not Satan. Not the World. Not some other person. Not even ourselves.

Who do we think we are that we can be stronger than the Father and the Son grasping us together? Not only *can* no one snatch us out of His hand, His solemn prophetic word here is - no one *WILL* take us away from Him. For we are a gift to Him from the Father, the Father who is greater than all - God almighty. And none can overcome Him.

So it is the Apostle Paul will write later [Rom. 8:38-39](#)



In closing then - our **1st** and obvious application is to the Church.



And especially to the weary, worn, troubled, tired, faltering, discouraged Christian; look again unto whose nail-scarred hands you've been committed - and take heart.

He is The Good Shepherd - the Great Shepherd of our souls.

And no matter what under-shepherd has failed you or hurt you, or what in life has been of the heaviest griefs to you - He will watch, keep, lead and protect you - and bring you safely home to the Father. You are safe in Him. He cannot fail you.

In the **2nd** place, this is a wonderful primer for those who take leadership in Christ's Church.

Those NT words to Elders, teachers, overseers, pastors and the like all derive their role from this same word and concept - shepherd. And we would do well to re-visit those passages regularly where God censures the shepherds of Israel and mark well the things they are condemned for. To be on the lookout for how our sinful hearts can easily use and abuse God's people. So it is as under-shepherds to the Great and Good Shepherd, we get our marching orders: To lead where Jesus would lead - to the Father; to protect knowing the flock is His; to be careful not to fleece them; to bind up their wounds; to refrain from harshness; to gather and not scatter - to care for them as He does.

And **3rd**, a word to you who know not Christ yet:

The one thing which stands above all as marking out God's own flock, is that they hear Christ's voice, and follow Him in righteousness to the Father's throne.

As I mentioned at the beginning, the shift in Jesus' metaphor from Shepherd to being "the door" in vs. 7-9 must not be overlooked. In it - He marks out His own exclusivity. No one belongs to God's flock but those who find admission to the Father through Christ and Christ alone. He is the exclusive means of access to God.

And what a gut-punch to the Pharisees this must have been. As He will reiterate of Himself a short time later: [John 14:6](#) "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

That said - as the verses above note, all the sheep, the whole world hears His voice.

The question is, in hearing Him call today to come and follow Him - will you? Or will you remain your own, or following the philosophies of this fallen world and the voice of your own passions and remain - left. Abandoned. And set aside to be judged later. He is calling right now, though my voice, as He does with all His preachers. Come away from your sin; away for your pretended right of supremacy over your own life and goods; out from this fallen world and culture and its values - to live in the light of His Word. Away from believing you can be good enough in yourself and need no redeemer from your sin, rebellion, unbelief, pride and passions. Away from self-justification before God, to crying out for the mercy and forgiveness that is found only by trusting His standing in sinner's place at Calvary - taking the full wrath of God upon human sin, that all who look upon Him might be cleansed, and He become their Good Shepherd.

We've labored, however imperfectly to show you something of our precious and Great Shepherd.

Won't you come?

He stands calling to you right now.