

Exegesis

Vs. 11-13 – Jesus now says that he is not only the "door of the sheep" (vs. 7) but the "good shepherd" himself! The word "good" is translated from the Greek word **καλός** (*kalos*), and it's a generic term that could imply that the Lord is speaking about his superior nature (cf. 2:10; Mat. 13:45) or, possibly, his moral excellence (cf. vs. 32; Mat. 5:16). But considering that Jesus is comparing the "good shepherd" with the "hirelings" in the next verse, it seems best to understand "good" as referring to genuineness or authenticity.¹ Jesus is the authentic shepherd. And, as we'll soon learn, anyone who runs when threatened yet calls themselves a "shepherd" is one in name only. However, we should be careful not to make too fine a point on the exactness of such a broad term as "good." After all, if anyone embodied all the implications of that word, it would be Jesus. And more important than semantics is the focal point of this verse: sacrifice. Jesus is the "good shepherd" precisely because he gives "his life for the sheep" (cf. 1 Sam. 17:34-37; Zech. 13:7-9). Self-sacrifice is what defines the Lord, not self-preservation (cf. vs. 18).

In contrast to the "good shepherd," Jesus mentions that a "hireling" will flee when he sees a wolf coming, leaving the sheep exposed. And because the "hireling" turns tail, Jesus says that the sheep meet with one of two ends; they're either caught or scattered by the wolf. Whether food for the wolf now or later, death is the same. Interestingly, the verb "scattereth" shows up only one other time in John's account, and it's when Jesus is describing how the disciples will flee once Jesus is taken to be crucified (cf. 16:32).

But why, exactly, does this hired hand flee? Jesus says, "...because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep." The word "careth" is the operative word in that sentence. This employee runs from danger because he has no other bond to the sheep other than being employed by the shepherd. His commitment to the flock and the depth of his care was directly proportionate to his wages. He does not own the sheep, so when he weighs his own life against the lives of the sheep, there is no incentive to stay. He might've even thought, "The shepherd isn't paying me enough to go against a wolf!" What's the worst that could happen? He'd probably lose his position, but he'd still have his life (cf. 15:13; Mat. 16:25). On the other hand, if he tried defending the sheep from a hungry animal, he might die, and the sheep would be

¹ Contra. Köstenberger (2004), p. 304 who thinks it's the "thieves and robbers." Admittedly, Jesus is comparing himself to the religious leaders who are the "thieves and robbers" along with the "hirelings," so, in that sense, Köstenberger's point is valid. However, of the two options, the latter is preferable, given Jesus' claim that he gives his life rather than flee like some hired hand.

picked off anyways. Even though the flock would be decimated in his absence, he must've reasoned that it'd be better to run and live to shepherd another day. Thus, self-preservation took priority over self-sacrifice because the "hireling" didn't care enough for those under his care.

Vs. 14-16 – Jesus reiterates that he is the "good shepherd" and gives another example of how he and the "hirelings" are different. He explains that, unlike the hired hands who care little for the sheep, the Lord knows his sheep "and am known of mine." This is reminiscent of his earlier comments in verses 3-5. The Good Shepherd and his sheep share in a special intimacy through shared knowledge of one another. He knows each by name, and each sheep knows its shepherd's voice.

But even this relationship is reflective of the relationship between the Son of God and his heavenly Father. Or, as Jesus says, "As the Father knoweth me, even so, know I the Father...." As the Shepherd, Jesus *knows* his sheep; likewise, as the Father, God *knows* his Son. How remarkable that Jesus would compare our connection with him to the familial bond he shares with God (cf. 1 Jn. 3:1)! But then Jesus seems to repeat what he said in verse 11 when he says, "...and I lay down my life for the sheep." And while repetition is a favored teaching method for the Messiah, is that case here? Since it comes on the heels of the Lord talking about the shared understanding between the Father and the Son, could Jesus be pointing to God's own sacrificial character rather than reiterating himself? If so, then whatever sacrifice we see demonstrated through the life of Jesus Christ is, itself, a marker pointing us to God's ultimate sacrifice (cf. 3:16). As the Son, Jesus is following in the footsteps of his father, who was, as Ezekiel described him, a shepherd who "seeks out his flock," "delivers" them, feeds them in a "good pasture," and shelters them on the "high mountains" (Ezek. 34:13-14; cf. Psalms 23).

Jesus now moves to something rather remarkable: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." It follows that, up until this point, all the images have been in the realm of God's dealing with his chosen people, Israel. Thus, for Jesus to refer to "other sheep" which are distinct from his present "sheep," i.e., the Jews, must mean that the Lord's mission would be extended to non-Jews, i.e., the Gentiles. Since the beginning, this global focus has been a part of God's plan (cf. Gen. 22:18). Still, it finds a particular expression in Isaiah 56:8, where the prophet wrote, "The Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him." Blessed be the name of the Lord who calls "outcasts" and "others" his sheep! The Jews may have read Isaiah's words and thought they referred to the diaspora, the dispersion of the Jews during the exile. But, as Paul makes

clear in his letter to the believers in Ephesus, God had always intended to bring Gentile and Jew together in one unified “messianic community” (cf. Eph. 2:11-22).² In fact, rather than being “strangers and foreigners,” Paul calls Gentile believers in verse 19 “fellow citizens with the saints, and [members] of the household of God....” Through Jesus, God gives a people without country citizenship, and he makes a home for the homeless.

Vs. 17-18 - “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” These words show us that God's love for His Son was not based solely on the fact that they were kin; instead, God loved Jesus because he obeyed his Father's command to lay down his life for the sheep. Few things win a father's favor more than obedience. Even more so when a son's actions emulate his father's (cf. vs. 15). It may be troubling to hear that a Father would command such a thing of his Son, and that's the point. It should shock us the lengths God went to just to redeem us. However, it is vital to balance our surprise at such a revelation with the reality that God knew that Jesus would not stay dead. This in no way distracts from Jesus' sacrifice, especially when we consider the sort of death he endured. But the takeaway from this point highlights the Messiah's sovereignty over the grave. God was not the only one flexing his powers on Easter morning; a few passages speak of Jesus raising himself (cf. 2:19; Matt. 27:63). Kruse aptly points out that John “portrays Jesus, not as a victim of circumstances, but as one who was in control of his destiny.”³

² Köstenberger (2004), p. 307.

³ Kruse (2017), p. 273.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | John | Week 18

Text: **John 10:11-18**

How many of us have heard about employees who were unfit for whatever task they've been given because they were too self-centered? Jesus had to deal with just such a people. And rather than the people being some grunt worker with little influence, they were the very leaders of Israel. In comparison to the Good Shepherd, who cares so much for the sheep that he'd lay down his own life, these so-called "hirelings" cared so little for the sheep that at the first sign of danger, they turned tail and ran away, leaving the flock to either be devoured or scattered by wolves. When self-preservation takes priority over self-sacrifice, those who cannot flee—i.e., the vulnerable—always get hurt.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: