



January 1, 2023

“The Shepherd’s Voice”

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

News:

Wednesday Evening Classes 6:30-8:00 resume January 11

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John 10:1-5 ~ ¹“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. ²“But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. ³“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴“When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵“A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

This is not a parable, nor is it an allegory. To interpret it as either is to start off on the wrong foot. This is defined as a *παροιμία* (pā-roy-mē-ä) in John 10:6 (English “paroemia”). It is an extended proverb, very similar to a Greek fable.

Why does it matter?

In verse 1, Jesus abruptly declared “Ἀμήν ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν,” “Amen, amen, I say to y’all.” That declaration without any scene setup tells us this is directly connected to what just happened.

Why does it matter?

There was hostility from the Jewish leaders towards the formerly blind man and his parents. What kind of shepherds did that show them to be?

They had said to Jesus, “We are not blind too, are we?” It’s not a real question. It’s rhetorical and, in the language of rhetoric, the answer is already stated in the question itself. What then was the tenor of their “question”?

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

The story itself is simple and straightforward, and as a non-parable, non-allegory, extended proverb, sort of fable, it was not intended to get anyone thinking about shepherds, sheep, sheepfolds, or thieving robbers, but to paint a general picture of a scene in your mind giving you a single overarching theme. Jesus wants us to get the difference between a shepherd and thieving robber.

It's not as easy to ignore the details today because they are unfamiliar to us. The key to this type of story example is to make it about something that is so familiar to the audience that they see through the story to the main point. How does that make the point more impactful?

What all the folds had in common was a high wall all around. Usually there was a single point of access for security reasons. While there were folds out in the countryside, Jesus was primarily alluding to those in town, within a home complex.

That outer wall served as exterior walls for many of the rooms and courtyards of the home. The door to gain access to the sheepfold was a door into the complex itself. What does that have to do with Jesus' birth?

To gain access to the sheep one would have to be granted access to enter the home – that's the legitimate way. Or one could break in and take the sheep by force – that's the robber's way. Or one could climb up over and across the outer wall – that's the thieves' way. What did Jesus mean with "he is a thief and a robber"?

Even now, there are two basic ways to shepherd sheep.

- 1) Driving them with a goad – what does that look like?
- 2) Leading them by example – what does that look like?

That's the contrast. True shepherds approach the flock and treat the sheep far differently than a thieving robber does.

People are just as easy to manipulate as sheep because we too have a herd mentality, we are far too trusting of others, we are greedy, and we cannot believe the worst is happening.

Training and a different attitude can go a long way in mitigating the risk. Yes, you can go to Heaven with poor theology and really bad eggs, but you will be a sitting sheep for a ravenous wolf or a Judas goat.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

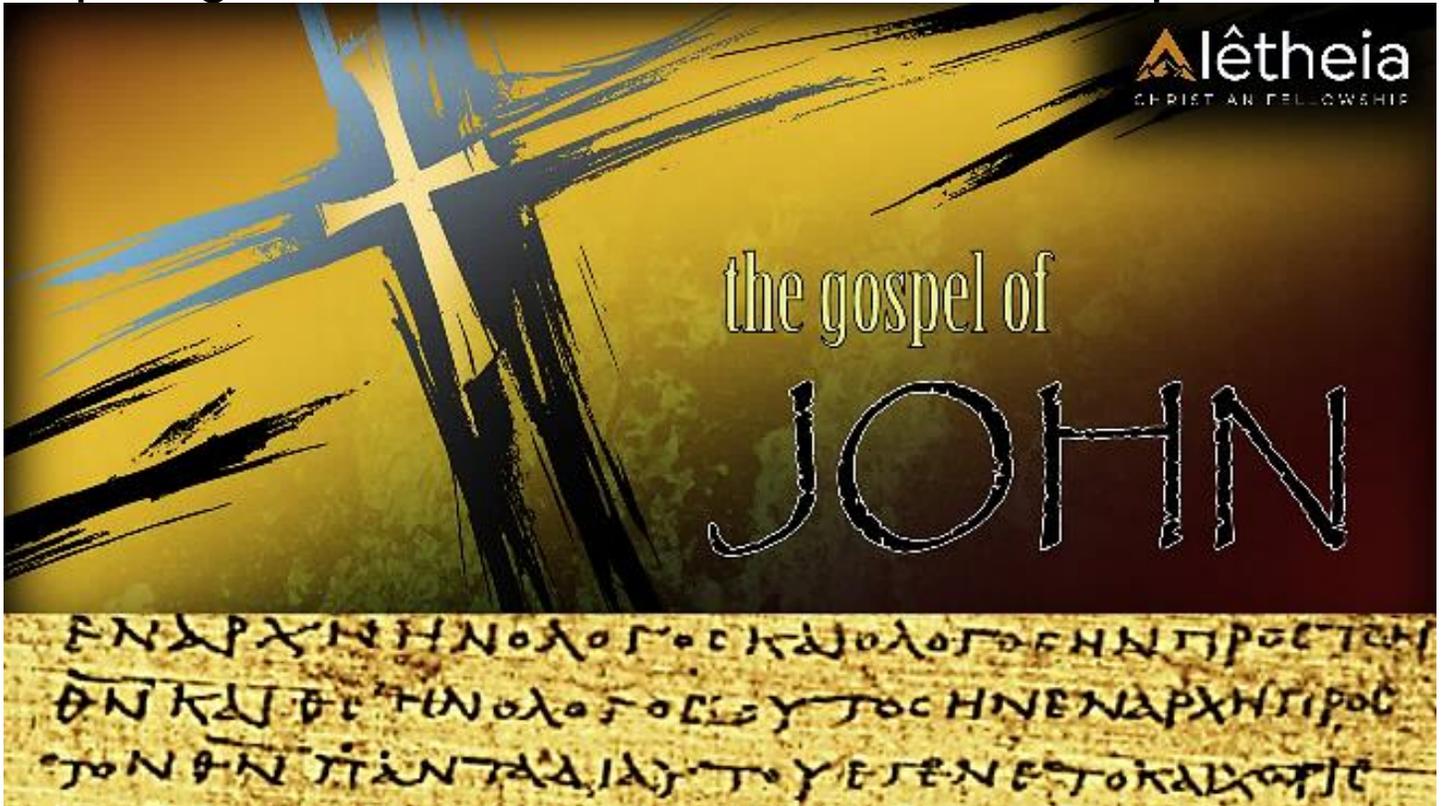
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Phone _____ Email _____

lêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



Alêtheia Christmas for the Jessop family in the Bitterroot. Saulamon (8) has a rare cardiac condition requiring treatment at Seattle Children's Hospital.



We begin 2023 with the Lord Jesus speaking to us... what better way to kick off the new year?



John 10:1–21, 1“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. 2“But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. 3“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4“When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5“A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

How awesome to listen to Jesus teach? There are some important interpretation issues going on behind

the scenes that have caused some subtle variation in the way this passage has been understood over the centuries.

Today, with the incredible research of so many experts in a wide variety of fields, we can be far more precise with those underlying issues and therefore far more accurate in our interpretation.



This 5-verse example is specifically not a parable, nor is it an allegory. To interpret it as either is to start off on the wrong foot. This section is defined by John as a type of mini rhetorical story called a παροιμία (pä-roy-mē-ä) in Greek, in English “paroemia” (pä-rē-mē-ä).

This is the Greek word describing what's going on in verse 6, that we'll get to later, that the NASB translates as a "figure of speech." Other translations call it an "illustration," or a "short story." The KJV and NET wrongly call it a "parable," which the NKJV corrects. By whatever name, it was not a parable, and it was not an allegory; it was essentially an extended proverb, very similar to a Greek fable.

Why does it matter? Each type of story comes with its own unique rules for interpretation. As an example, if it were an allegory, we would need to break down every aspect of these five verses and assign each item some hidden meaning. That's precisely what some preachers do, and it is wrong. Their message might be theologically sound, but if so, it is only because they are shoehorning correct beliefs into the elements that were never intended to mean that. In other words, it could be good stuff, but it wouldn't be what Jesus was driving at here.

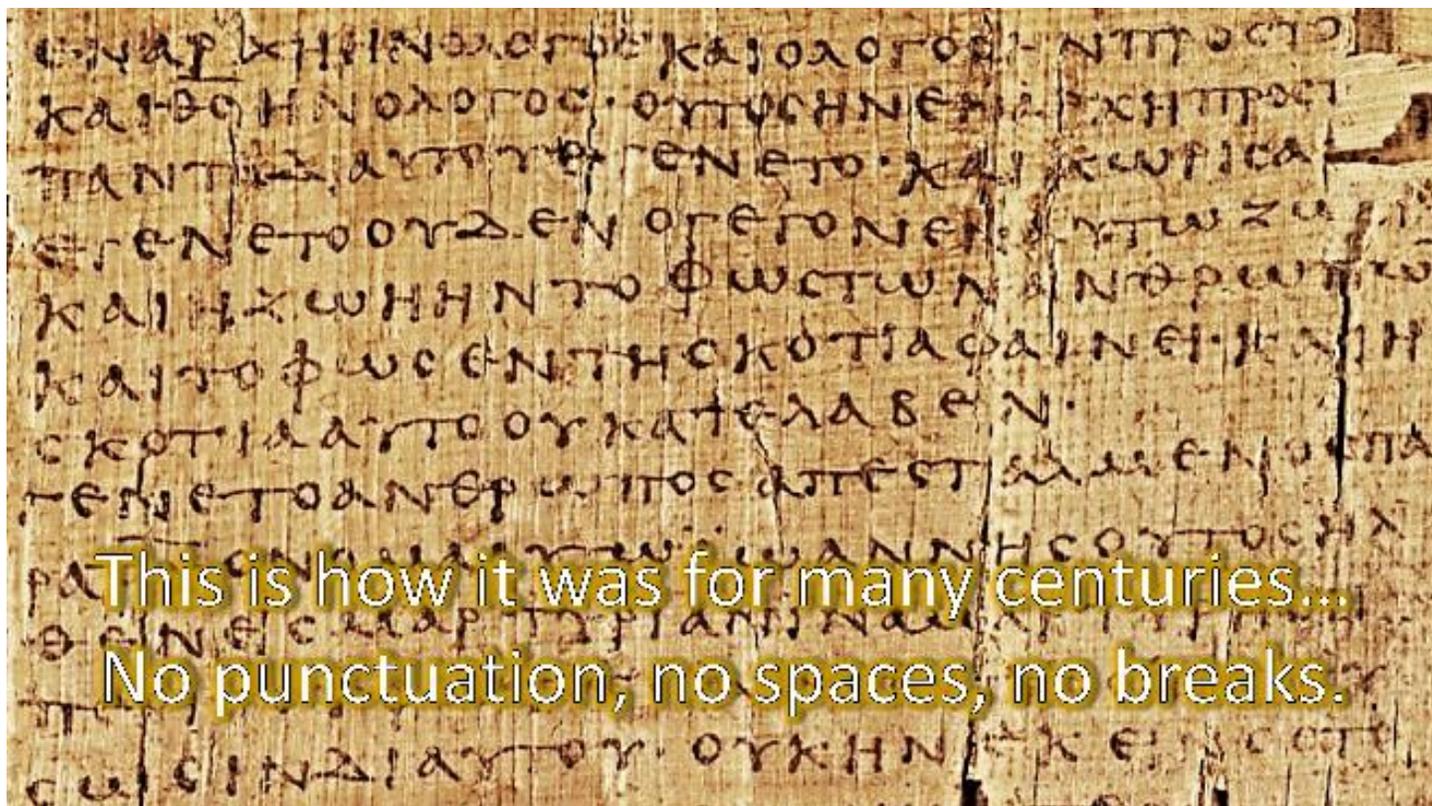
The interpretive rules for this type of rhetorical example are simple - find the primary point that the story evokes. When I read it, there was one primary concept that should have stood out to you. We are to take that point and extrapolate it out to find the similar point that

Jesus was actually making... It will be obvious once we get going.

As an example, Aesop's fable of the race between the tortoise and the hare has only one main point. Steady plodding over time will overcome far greater skill that is inconsistent. That point is applied then to real life situations. Putting a little money in your retirement account every paycheck over a career will generally yield more than putting in huge sums once in a while. Jesus' story functions similarly.

In verse 1, Jesus started off with His quite common "Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, verily, verily, I say unto ye, truly, truly, I tell all y'all," address. It's the ultimate attention getter that was intended to really focus the audience on some vital piece of information that He was about to share.

Notice that there is no set up for that address, such as... "After these things Jesus was walking," or "Early in the morning He came again into the temple" (John 7:1, 8:2).



This abrupt beginning means that this is not a new section, but a continuation of what just transpired – don't be misled by the chapter break that was put in place hundreds of years after John wrote. We are still in the same flow.

That's another area where people start their interpretation of Scripture from the wrong basis. Context is king, and the context for what I just read is intricately connected to what we were talking about before Christmas. To fully understand Jesus' point here, you must see the relationship of it with what just happened. Jesus gave sight to a man born blind, and

as a result hostility and retribution from the religious leaders ensued. That's our proper context.



There was hostility from the Pharisees towards the formerly blind man and his parents. Those religious leaders made demands, they threatened and abused, they terrified and intimidated those poor people, and then they booted the formerly blind man out of the Jewish community by excommunicating him. As far as they were concerned, they were evicting him from everyday life among the people, but also, they were actively consigning him to eternal damnation outside of Judaism. That's the kind of shepherds over the people that the Jewish leaders had become. That's why Jesus solemnly declared this proverb. That's the context.

Jesus didn't start his address only to get everyone's attention, He was angry. He had just finished slamming the Pharisees following their snotty retort to Him. They had said to Jesus, "We are not blind too, are we?"

It's not a real question. It's a rhetorical question and in the language of rhetoric the answer is already stated in the question itself. It's difficult to convey in English, but in Greek the very first word in their rhetorical question means that what they are about to ask cannot possibly be true. It prefaces the question. It would be like "hey dummy, there is no way that you can be insane enough to say that we are blind too, right?" I actually like the way the NIV renders it, "What? Are we blind too?"

To this Jesus slammed them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains." Immediately, Jesus went on with our passage today. He was directly confronting the Pharisees demonstrated shepherding performance.

AN ARMY OF
SHEEP LED
BY A LION
CAN DEFEAT
AN ARMY OF
LIONS LED
BY A SHEEP —

ALEXANDER THE GREAT



The story itself is simple and straightforward, and as a non-parable, non-allegory, extended proverb, sort of fable, it was not intended to get anyone thinking about shepherds, sheep, or sheepfolds, or about fold gates, thieving robbers, or voices, but to paint a general picture of a scene in your mind giving you a single overarching theme. As with Alexander's proverb. It isn't about lions, sheep, or animal armies – it's just supposed to point to the idea that brave leadership is vital. In this Biblical case, Jesus wants us to get the difference between a shepherd and thieving robber.

To focus on that single big picture concept is why I presented it without going into a lot of first century

Middle East customs. The original audience never got bogged down in the particulars of the story because the story elements were everyday commonplace realities that they all knew intimately.

They saw straight to the heart of the matter, but for us living in the 21st century, it's not nearly as easy to ignore the details because they are unfamiliar to us. In order for Jesus to make the exact same point for us today, His extended proverb would go something like this:



“If someone avoids entering a boarding kennel through the entrance and instead tries to gain access to the dogs inside by another way, they are a thief or a

robber. The person who enters through the actual door is the owner of a dog, or dogs, kept there. The kennel attendant happily opens the facility up to him. His dogs listen to his voice as He calls each of them by their own name. He leads them out to his vehicle, going on ahead of them and his dogs follow him because they know his voice. They will never follow a stranger. In fact, they will run away from him, because they don't recognize a stranger's voice."

When I tell the story that way, none of you are bogging down on the details of the kennel, the owner, the thieving robber, or the dogs – you get the scene and because you are far less distracted by the particulars, you aren't trying to assign meaning to each thing and so you can more easily see the point shining through the story details.

Because of that, I'll now give some of the background information to make us more comfortable with the details of the proverb that Jesus actually told.

Back then there were all kinds of sheep pens, or sheepfolds and nearly every family had one, since nearly every family had at least a couple of sheep or similar animals.



What all the folds had in common was a high wall, often 8 or more feet tall, on all sides to keep the sheep in and the sheep-killing, sheep-stealing animals, and people out. Usually there was a single point of access for security reasons. The door or gate in a wall is always the weakest link.



There were folds out in the countryside, but they were rare. Most often the fold was an open-air courtyard within a housing complex. Typically, a wall was built enclosing a large area and then rooms for living, cooking, eating, sleeping, and the keeping of animals, were built extending from that protective outer wall using it as part of the interior rooms as you can see in this picture. (Note the single entrance).

No sense wasting a wall. Within the complex there were open-air courtyards, some for gatherings and others for the animals. These complexes generally housed a single highly extended multi-generational family.

The door to gain access to the sheepfold was a door into the complex itself. Normally the door would open into a foyer type room and from there into another room that served as an enclosed barn-like stable for the sheep when the weather was bad. That room had access to the pen-like courtyard when the weather was better.

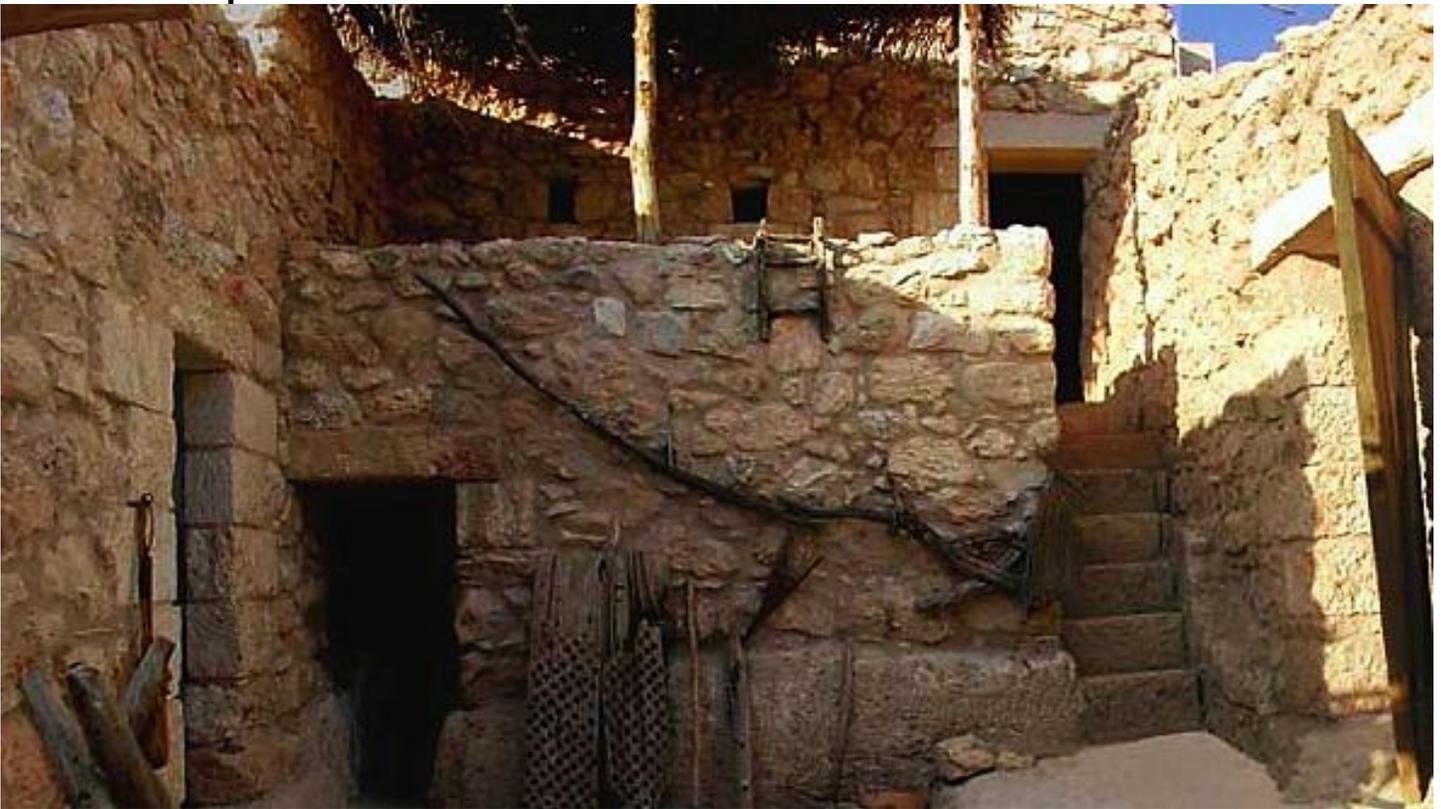
It was in such a barn-like stable room inside a housing complex where Jesus was born. There wasn't space for Mary and Joe in the common rooms, so they had to make a spot in the room used by the animals during stormy weather. They were still inside the walls of the housing complex.



This is the excavated foundation wall of the housing complex next to the one Jesus used as His ministry headquarters in Capernaum. So, to gain access to the sheep one would essentially have to be granted access to enter the home – that’s the legitimate way. The only other ways were to break in and take the sheep by force – that’s the robber’s way. Or to climb up over the exterior wall of the complex, cross over the roof of an outer room, drop down into the proper courtyard, and reverse the process with sheep in tow. – that’s the thieves’ way. No one would do either of those things with innocent intentions.

The phrase “he is a thief and a robber,” is both negative and emphatic. It is “that one,” not “he.” “That one” who barges in as a robber, or who sneaks up and over as a thief. Jesus lumps them both together in a single meaning best translated as a “thieving robber.”

Jesus is unconcerned about the criminal technique employed by the stranger – by whatever means and by whatever name, they cannot be the true shepherd of the sheep.



The “Doorkeeper” is a generic term covering a wide variety of possibilities from the owner of the house to a servant working there, to a security person guarding the fold. It is simply the one who is authorized to invite

people into the pen. The true shepherd is recognized by the doorkeeper and invited into where the sheep are kept. The sheep also recognize the shepherd.

Even now, there are two basic ways to shepherd sheep. The most common, particularly today, is to drive the sheep before you with a goad of some kind. We talked about goads last week. The shepherd goads his sheep where he wants them to go with a stick, or a staff, or better yet, a Border Collie.



This is the easiest and most expedient way to move sheep. The sheep don't like it and so, it shows that the shepherd isn't too interested in the sheep's feelings on

the matter. They're just sheep – the shepherd and the sheep are not close, they're not pals.



The other method is for the shepherd to lead the way and have the sheep follow. It takes tremendous time and patience to earn that much trust with the sheep. In this method the sheep are basically friends who will come when called by the one they know and believe in.

Each one of the sheep is likewise known personally by the shepherd – he gives them names showing both authority and intimacy – the shepherd knows his friends and calls them each by name. They know Him and trustingly follow His voice. He leads by example, and they follow his lead.

That is the method employed in Jesus' proverbial story and it is contrasted by the stranger who is a thieving robber. Once the criminal gets the sheep outside of the fold, he cannot possibly hope to use Jesus' method to move them – they will not follow. He must use force – he must abuse the sheep to get them to do what he wants.

That's the contrast. True shepherds approach the flock and treat the sheep far differently than a thieving robber does. Jesus approaches and treats the people far differently than the Pharisees because He is a pastor, and they are predators.

Once we understand the scope, we can delve deeper into other principles at work.



As an example, when I was in Marine Corps Boot Camp in the 1970's we would often be in situations where several platoons of recruits would be gathered in an area. we'd be standing at attention in our own formations. next to several others.

Nearly every time some drill instructor from another platoon would come up behind a formation and shout a command to them. Woe to the recruits in that formation if they even flinched. All of us were required to know the voice of our own drill instructors and respond only to their commands, ignoring all false drill instructors.

Now, imagine how easy it would be for a false drill instructor to steal the platoon if they walked up in front and presented themselves with confidence telling the recruits some plausible story about how their drill instructor was called away on an emergency and that they were ordered to get the recruits where they needed to go next.

A thieving robber must control the captive sheep in some way. He must goad them, through fear and intimidation sure, but also through far more subtle means. Perhaps using some irresistible special food, or by wearing some of the shepherd's stolen garments and pretending to be him, or by using a Judas goat.



You're no doubt aware of the Judas goat. The sheep are in an unfamiliar place and the trained Judas goat says to them, "follow me, I know the way." Sure enough, all the sheep eagerly follow the Judas goat up the ramp and to their slaughter because it never occurs to them that the Judas goat is not their friend. In a way he has convinced the sheep that he's leading them to greener pasture – to someplace better, when he's really only leading them for his own reward.

Now think about how that could apply to humans. People are just as easy to manipulate as sheep because we too have a herd mentality and are far too trusting of others. The reason that phone scams, internet hoaxes, confidence games, Ponzi schemes, pyramid frauds, and every other manner of rip-off, works is because people are too trusting, and we could add to that too greedy as well – we want something for nothing – we want a deal – we want greener pastures, just lead on.



An additional quality beyond a herd mentality, a trusting nature and greed, is our inability to believe that the worst is happening. It's no coincidence that denial is the first stage of grief.

The reason that mass shooters cause as much devastation as they do, is that people can't believe such evil is happening and they will just stand there in unbelief, or cower, hoping for the best, instead of fighting back.



A human Judas goat can lead other people to their slaughter because the people cannot believe that he would do that.

Now think about the religious arena. It is unbelievable how incredibly easy it is to lead Christians astray. To distract them, to distract us, with a coffee bar here and a light show there, with a spectacular facility and a vibrant children's ministry, with an army of friendly staffers and a charismatic preacher in flashy clothes, with all manner of smoke and mirrors, both real and metaphorical.

Tell the people what they want to hear, give the people what they want to have, and a mega church is born. The Roman poet Juvenal said, "Give them bread and circuses and they will never revolt." P.T. Barnum said, "There's a sucker born every minute."

As with an active shooter, so with a religious charlatan, training and a different attitude can go a long way in mitigating the risk. What kind of training and attitude? Obviously, it's not the same for combating a demented gunman and rejecting a false prophet. What both have in common is the need to be alert to the threat. Beyond vigilance, to combat being led astray religiously, theologically, doctrinally, spiritually, one must be trained in the Bible.

Dig Deep



It is foolish enough to think that becoming knowledgeable in any area doesn't take time and effort, but how incredibly astoundingly foolish for someone to think that becoming knowledgeable about our infinite God and His revelation of Himself to mankind, wouldn't require a good teacher, some focus and diligence. That's another way of saying it's a lot of work.

This Biblical information about Who God is, what God has done, and what God now requires, would have to be graduate level stuff – at the very least. Yet, people want to dumb the material down, so they don't have to study that hard. Well, instead of dumbing down the

material, let's pray that the Holy Spirit smarts us up. Let's put forth a little effort and rise to the challenge.

Because here's the lie that has shipwrecked so many well-intentioned people over the centuries, the Gospel is simple enough for a child to understand and because that's true and God wants everyone to know Him anyone can read and understand the Bible for themselves. "We don't need no education – We don't need no thought control." "Hey, preacher leave those people alone!" All we need is a jolt from the Holy Spirit to know all that we should know.

All lies contain enough truth to make them believable and this great lie is no exception. Any small child can understand the Gospel enough to accept Jesus and be Saved. That's absolutely true, but it does not then follow that anyone can grasp the complexities beyond the basic Gospel without a good teacher and a lot of conscientious study.

The response might be, "no one needs to be a theologian to go to Heaven." Right, that's true, but you might need to be at least a bit of a theologian to spot a Judas goat. To avoid a wolf in sheep's clothing. To run from a thieving robber.



Some time ago pollsters found that the Mormon church was growing faster than any other religious group in America. The pollsters conducted a large-scale study to find out more. The biggest source by far for new members of the Mormon church wasn't atheists, or agnostics, or Muslims, or Catholics; it was Evangelical Christians, primarily Southern Baptists.

There were a lot of reasons given such as the church environment. Of people claiming to be Mormon nearly 70% are fully engaged active members in the life of their local church, attending more than once a week, tithing, and volunteering, while it's 30% for Christians as a whole.

One researcher wrote that “compared to the Mormon experience, the evangelical church is a carnival ride of short services, low accountability, and zero church discipline.”

While there were other interesting reasons, that last bit brings us to the part concerning our point here. The study found that “nationally, 84 million people self-report as evangelicals, but of that number only 19 million actually have orthodox evangelical beliefs” (that’s a little over 20% - the article went on...). “In other words, the evangelical church does a pathetic job in transmitting even the most basic Romper Room-simple elements of the Christian faith from generation to generation.”

Yes, you can go to Heaven with poor theology and really bad eggs, but you will be a sitting sheep for a ravenous wolf or a Judas goat.

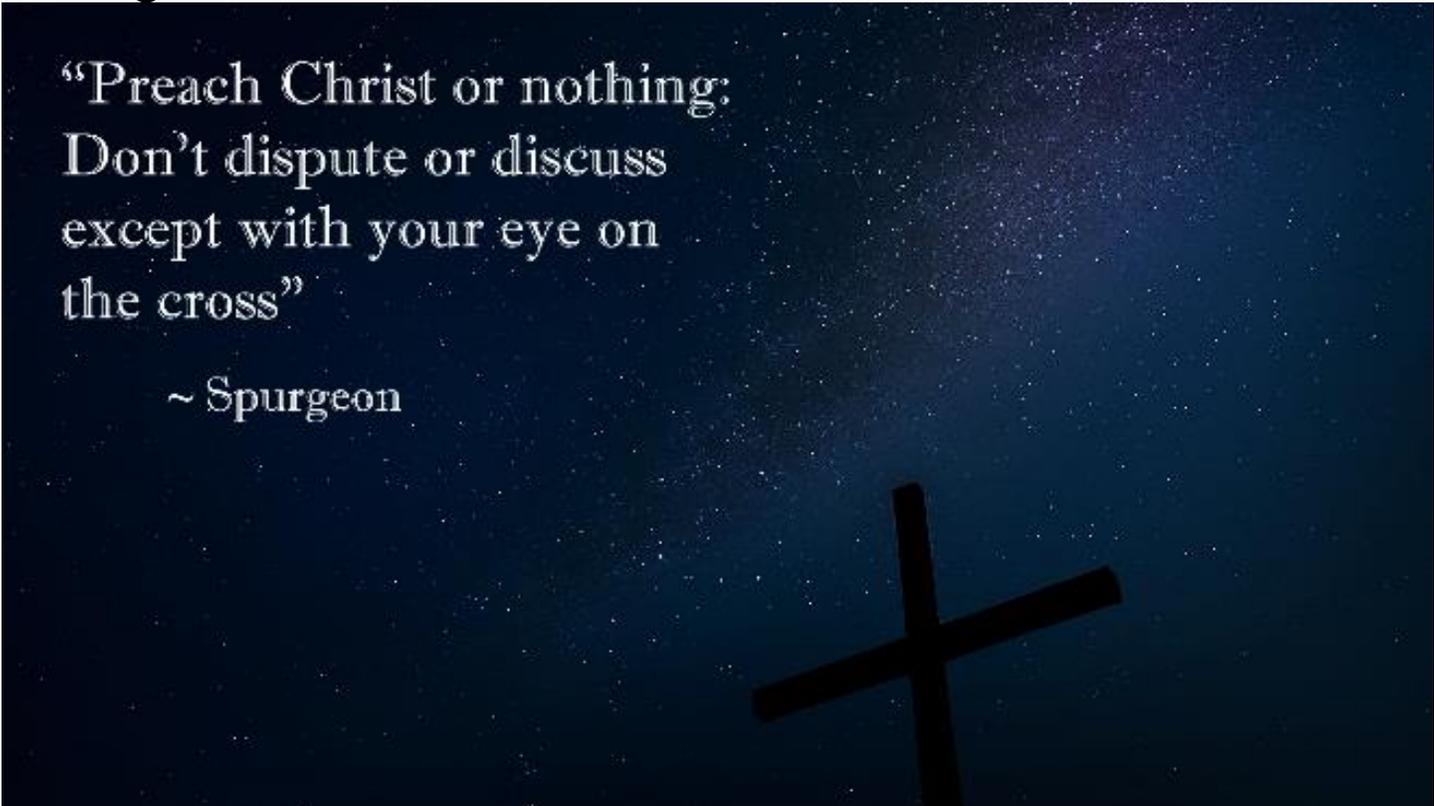


If you're here, or if you regularly attend someplace else where the Bible is taught with rigor, you are on the right track to protecting yourself and your family from a such a fate. You'll know the difference between a thieving robber and a legitimate shepherd.

With all of that understood, let me reread the passage and while I do, think about the central theme it evokes. John 10:1-5, 1“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. 2“But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. 3“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name

and leads them out. 4“When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5“A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

We must know the Shepherd’s voice and immediately follow close at His heels. To guard against following a stranger we must know the difference between the two.



“Preach Christ or nothing:
Don’t dispute or discuss
except with your eye on
the cross”

~ Spurgeon

As far as human under-shepherds go, the key is their focus on the True Shepherd. This single test is really all that is needed, but it can be a little tricky in application.

First, it is always all about Jesus – that’s what a focus on the True Shepherd means, but that is not merely how many times a pastor talks about Jesus or says His name. A Judas goat can talk incessantly about Jesus, but the actual focus may be on separating you from your money, of getting you to follow some strange doctrine.

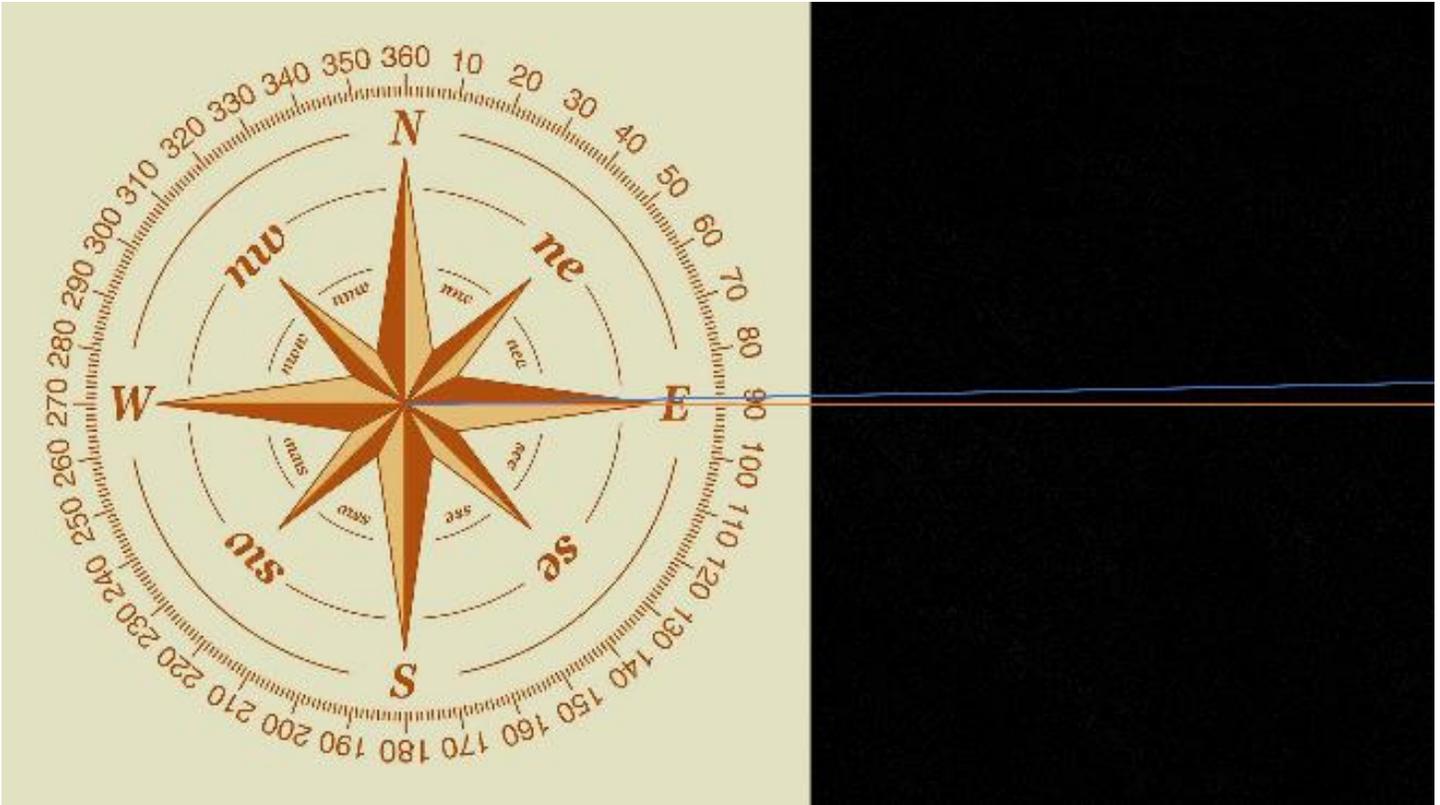
I mentioned Mormons today and what I can tell you for sure is that they talk about Jesus all the time, but upon closer inspection, the Jesus they talk about is nothing remotely like the actual Jesus depicted in the Bible.

The focus on Jesus must be on the real Jesus. Part of that focus must be teaching people Who He is and how they can know Him more correctly. That knowledge can only be found in a plain contextual interpretation that would have been understandable to the people of faith who heard it firsthand.

- American Baptist 1
- Assemblies of God 6
- Baptist Regular 1
- Baptist (SBC) 3
- Calvary Chapel 1
- Catholic 7
- Alliance 4
- Christian Church 1
- Church of Christ 2
- Church of God (CLE) 1
- Church of God Prophecy 1
- Church of the Nazarene 3
- Episcopal 3
- Foursquare 3
- GRB Baptist 4
- Independent Baptist 4
- Lutheran (ELCA) 4
- Lutheran (LCMS) 4
- Mennonite (MCUSA) 1
- Methodist (UMC) 5
- Nondenominational 10
- Pentecostal (UPCI) 2
- Presbyterian (PCUSA) 3
- Salvation Army 1
- Seventh-day Adventist 3
- United Church of Christ 1

The insane number of Christian denominations is due to overly arrogant and underly wise people misinterpreting God's Word and then stubbornly condemning all who disagree with them. This is only a partial listing of so-called Christian churches in Kalispell.

So much of what Evangelical Christians believe is wrong and so much that is Biblical orthodoxy is not believed. It's a real problem. It stems from generations of misinformation added to misinformation.



I'm convinced that it is the greatest weapon Satan has in his arsenal. He starts with a seemingly harmless little white lie, that over time becomes a cult. Remember the pilot's 1 in 60 rule – with 360 degrees in a circle, if a pilot holds a course that is only 1 degree off, after flying for 60 miles, he'll be an entire mile away from his course laterally. A very small deviation leads to massive errors over time.



The solution? First desire to know the One True Jesus. Be serious about putting in the time and effort to learn. Find a good teacher and ask questions. Pray constantly, read your Bible, worship with abandon, fellowship with the saints, obey what you learn, testify about Who Jesus is to you, give generously, repeat.

In Revelation 3:20, Jesus said, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” Many Evangelicals think that’s a statement concerning unbelievers. How often have you heard someone say, “Jesus is standing at the door of

your heart knocking, if you will just let Him in, you will be Saved”?

While the premise is reasonable, Jesus was actually talking to us – He was addressing the church – His people – Christians. He was saying you are my friends and yet I’m standing on the outside of full fellowship with you. The problem isn’t from my side of the relationship – I’m out here knocking!

What’s the context? It’s nearly identical to what we have going on in Christianity today. Jesus was talking to lukewarm Christians, who were neither hot, nor cold, just lukewarm. Why were they that way – does the Bible give us a clue?

Sure enough, in verse 17 Jesus mimics them, “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’” When I have money, I don’t need God for much. Even if I’m ill, I pay to see a doctor. Oh, I’ll pray too, but not with the fire that I would if there was no doctor, because there was no money.

I’ll say grace when the waiter brings me my food, but it’s a lukewarm prayer, because I have money for that meal and for others in the future. It would be a

seriously fervent prayer if I hadn't eaten in days and had no prospects for chow in the future.

Wealth, and I don't mean millionaire wealth, has the effect of making us lukewarm. It eliminates nearly all needs, it mitigates others, and it allows for all the distractions that money can buy – who needs God?

Well, there's still the looming specter of death. Remarkably we mostly don't believe that death will actually get us, so we don't want to get too carried away, yet it is theoretically possible, so we also don't want to give Jesus a total cold shoulder. We'll still pray on occasion, still read the Bible once in a while, and still attend church when it's convenient, but where is our heart, where is our fiery love for Jesus?

Jesus also said in that letter to the church, "Be earnest and repent." To the one who stays the course Jesus will give the right to sit with Him on His throne in Heaven.



He who has ears... Do you hear only His voice – that's the question.



January 1, 2023

“The Shepherd’s Voice”

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

News:

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330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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John 10:1-5 ~ ¹“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. ²“But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. ³“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴“When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵“A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

This is not a parable, nor is it an allegory. To interpret it as either is to start off on the wrong foot. This is defined as a *παροιμία* (pā-řoy-mē-ä) in John 10:6 (English “paroemia”). It is an extended proverb, very similar to a Greek fable.

Why does it matter? **There are different interpretive rules depending on the type of rhetorical device or story is being employed.**

In verse 1, Jesus abruptly declared “Ἀμήν ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν,” “Amen, amen, I say to y’all.” That declaration without any scene setup tells us this is directly connected to what just happened.

Why does it matter? **Context. How something connects to the material around it changes the meaning.**

There was hostility from the Jewish leaders towards the formerly blind man and his parents. What kind of shepherds did that show them to be? **Obviously, ones unconcerned about the sheep.**

They had said to Jesus, “We are not blind too, are we?” It’s not a real question. It’s rhetorical and, in the language of rhetoric, the answer is already stated in the question itself. What then was the tenor of their “question”? **Condescending hostility.**

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

The story itself is simple and straightforward, and as a non-parable, non-allegory, extended proverb, sort of fable, it was not intended to get anyone thinking about shepherds, sheep, sheepfolds, or thieving robbers, but to paint a general picture of a scene in your mind giving you a single overarching theme. Jesus wants us to get the difference between a shepherd and thieving robber.

It's not as easy to ignore the details today because they are unfamiliar to us. The key to this type of story example is to make it about something that is so familiar to the audience that they see through the story to the main point. How does that make the point more impactful?

The more we think about the story elements the less impact the point makes.

What all the folds had in common was a high wall all around. Usually there was a single point of access for security reasons. While there were folds out in the countryside, Jesus was primarily alluding to those in town, within a home complex.

That outer wall served as exterior walls for many of the rooms and courtyards of the home. The door to gain access to the sheepfold was a door into the complex itself. What does that have to do with Jesus' birth? **He was almost certainly born in a barn-type room within a home complex.**

To gain access to the sheep one would have to be granted access to enter the home – that's the legitimate way. Or one could break in and take the sheep by force – that's the robber's way. Or one could climb up over and across the outer wall – that's the thieves' way. What did Jesus mean with "he is a thief and a robber"? **A nefarious person - a thieving robber.**

Even now, there are two basic ways to shepherd sheep.

- 1) Driving them with a goad – what does that look like? **Pushing from behind in some way**
- 2) Leading them by example – what does that look like? **Leading by example.**

That's the contrast. True shepherds approach the flock and treat the sheep far differently than a thieving robber does.

People are just as easy to manipulate as sheep because we too have a herd mentality, we are far too trusting of others, we are greedy, and we cannot believe the worst is happening.

Training and a different attitude can go a long way in mitigating the risk. Yes, you can go to Heaven with poor theology and really bad eggs, but you will be a sitting sheep for a ravenous wolf or a Judas goat.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
 Phone _____ Email _____