

Series – What has John seen?**11. The Good Shepherd - John 10: 1-11**

“I am the good shepherd”. The picture of a shepherd symbolising God as the loving caretaker can be found throughout the Bible. False shepherds can also be found (eg Isaiah 56: 9-12), as can the promise of God to provide the true shepherd to care for his sheep (eg Ezekiel 43: 22-24).

Read John 10: 1-11

1. Let us first look at ‘the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate’. Jesus is almost certainly referring to those people who spiritually mislead the sheep, at that time the religious leaders, ie false teaching.

1a. Do you have examples of where you might find false teaching today? Do you have any examples? Have you been misled at any time?

1b. Verse 5. ‘They will never follow a stranger, in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognise a stranger’s voice’. How easy is it to test whether a teaching is true or false? Who or what would you turn to in order to test a teaching?

2. The picture Jesus paints here in this passage is one of total security and safety for the sheep of the shepherd despite surrounding dangers. Those who enter in, hear his voice and begin to follow him will be safe from “the thief and robber ... who comes only to steal and kill and destroy”. He identifies himself within the story as both the good shepherd and the gate. “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”.

2a. When Jesus says “I am the gate for the sheep”, what is he explaining? What functions or characteristics does this gate have?

2b. “I am the good shepherd”. How is this different from the gate? Is it possible today for one individual to be both the gate and the shepherd? What, if anything, does this say about ‘church’?

2c. “That they may have life, and have it to the full”. We know that Christians are not exempt from all the ups and downs, all the joys and sadness’s of life today. When Jesus says life to the full, what does he mean?

3. Today in our society, sheep are considered, perhaps unfairly, to be animals of low intelligence and easily led or misled, which could lead to a misunderstanding of this story. If you were tasked to update the story without changing the meaning, what depictions would you use?

4. “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”. It is easy to immediately jump to the conclusion that Jesus is referring to his subsequent crucifixion, which in one sense he is. But I think he means more than that. Can you see more meaning here?



Prayer. O Lord Jesus Christ, good shepherd of the sheep, you came to seek the lost and gather them to your fold. Have compassion on those who have wandered from you. Feed those who hunger, make the weary lie down in your pastures, bind up those who are broken in heart, and strengthen those who are weak, that we rely on your care, find comfort in your love and abide in your guidance to our lives’ end. For your name’s sake. Amen.