

The “I Am” Sayings of Jesus

I Am the Good Shepherd

John 10:1-30

Introduction

The fourth “I Am” statement of John’s Gospel takes place once again during the Feast of Tabernacles (or “booths”), shortly following Jesus’s healing of the blind man (John 9). Recall that this festival was a commemoration of God’s guiding his people through the wilderness to the “good pasture” of the Promised Land—a land flowing with milk and honey. It is in this context that Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd.” He is the one promised by God to lead us into eternal rest.

Read John 10:1-30

- 1: **When might it be important to *follow* someone? What might happen if you don’t follow carefully?**

- 2: **The metaphor of God as a shepherd is common in the Old Testament. What passages can you think of where God is described as a shepherd?**

- 3: **Take a look at Ezekiel 34:11–24. Who is Jesus claiming to be based on this prophecy?**

- 4: **According to John 10:25–27, why do the Pharisees not believe Jesus?**

- 5: **This raises an interesting question: how do we know if we are Jesus’s sheep?**

- 6: **What is the biggest difference between those who *are* Jesus’s sheep and those who are *not*? (See vv. 3–5, 25–27)**

- 7: **What do you think it means to “hear” Jesus’s voice? How can we grow in our ability to hear him?**

- 8: **In verses 8–13, Jesus contrasts himself with two people dangerous to the sheep: the thief and the hired hand. What are their distinguishing marks? Who was Jesus talking about?**
 - The thief:
 - The hired hand:

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9: How does Jesus describe himself in comparison to these other two figures?

- Verses 2–4:
- Verse 11:
- Verse 14:
- Verse 28:

10: What is the primary mark of the Good Shepherd? (v. 11)

11: What about this relationship between the Good Shepherd and his sheep is unique or ironic?

12: What is the “Promised Land” that Jesus is leading us to, and how does he get us there? (v. 28)

Closing Thoughts

All of us are following someone. It may be a friend, a parent, or a coach. There is someone we look to for advice and protection. Yet, we like to be the one who gets to make the final decision about what we do. If we want to follow Jesus, however, we have to let go of that need to be in control. Jesus calls us to depend on him completely and follow him fully. This may mean that Jesus brings us to places we don't really want to go.

Nonetheless, wherever Jesus takes us, he will take care of us. “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me” (Psalm 23:4). “For we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, and for those who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). Part of the reason we know that Jesus will take care of us through the dark places is because he has taken a dark path himself. His defining mark as our good shepherd is that he was willing to die for us. The good shepherd laid down his life for his sheep. “But God demonstrates his own love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

This is the opposite of the way man naturally thinks. Shepherds and priests make sacrifices of the sheep. The sheep is supposed to die for man's sins. But here in the gospel, Jesus—the good shepherd and high priest—dies for the sins of the sheep. The relationship is inverted and counter-intuitive. The strong gives life to the weak rather than the weak being consumed by the strong.

The only way to benefit from Christ's grace here—the only way to benefit from the saving work of Jesus' death—is to admit we are weak. “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31–32). How about you? Do you hold onto your “goodness” or your “strength”? Do you hold onto your own ability to figure life out? If you do, you won't ever really be ready to follow Jesus and listen for his voice.