

That You May Continue to Believe...



AN EXPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The Good Shepherd John 10:1-42

He was not a very good shepherd.

Twelve years before he was finally convicted in court for his outrageous misconduct, Pastor Terry Hornbuckle was approached and reproached by a number of other ministers for his sexual misconduct and abusive treatment of a number of women in his congregation. But that didn't stop him.

Part of the reason he didn't stop was because he was enormously successful in growing the Agape Fellowship over on Mayfield Road in Arlington. He reasoned, I think, that success earns privilege. His church typically averaged around 2,500 on Sunday morning. The money probably had something to do with his not stopping as well. He was making about a quarter of a million dollars a year. He thought he was worth it, and so did his congregation. They admired his marvelous stage presence, I can't call it preaching ability, and the way the people flocked to listen to him so they simply turned their heads when several of

the young women in the congregation began to describe their experiences with Hornbuckle.

One member of the church decided to follow Matthew 18 and asked three other ministers to join in him in confronting Hornbuckle. Hornbuckle denied any wrong doing even though the evidence was overwhelming. Only one of the three ministers that joined joining in the confrontation mustered the courage to suggest that Hornbuckle step down. But he refused.

He was not a very good shepherd.

Hornbuckle continued to grow worse and worse fuelling his vanity and his lusts with methamphetamines he eventually sunk so low he found it necessary to lure some of the younger, more troubled women in his church into private counseling sessions in order to satisfy his prurient appetite.

When he got a couple of them alone he drugged and raped them, and then he tried to force their silence by blaming them for his misconduct. When that didn't work, he tried to buy their silence with a couple of hundred bucks. Eventually one of the girls mustered the courage to go to the police and the whole sordid story came spewing into the public eye, emptying the congregation and Agape's offering plates. It also defamed the name of Christ and gave gossip tabloids and unbelievers everywhere one more opportunity to blaspheme.

Terry Hornbuckle was the perfect storm of pulpit skill, narcissistic self-indulgence, drug addiction, deviancy, and pastoral privilege.

Like I said, **"He was not a very good shepherd."**

Now, that is a terrible story. As a teaching and pastor and as a husband, father and grandfather, it is about the worse kind of story I can imagine. To think that some huckster and charlatan was out there taking no thought for the precious souls under their charge grieves me to no end. But having said, it is in many ways parallel to the story of the man born blind and to the treatment he received at the hands of the Pharisees and Sadducees. **You see, and I want this thought to permeate your minds this morning, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were not very good shepherds.**

They should have been very good shepherds indeed. They knew what it meant to be good shepherds. It was an idea that permeated the Scripture they read and the stories they told. Their greatest heroes were shepherds. In fact, the great heroic paradigm for the nation was that of the shepherd king, especially the shepherd king David. They learned about him and about their God through the metaphor or idea of the shepherd king.

Moses had made reference to the idea of the shepherd when God chose Joshua to lead the nation...

^{NIV} Numbers 27:16..."May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community (in Greek synagogue)¹⁷ to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd."¹⁸ So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him."

The nation made reference to the shepherd motif when they saw God's hand on David as their king....

NIV 2 Samuel 5:2...In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, **'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'**"

NIV Psalm 78:70...He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; ⁷¹ from tending the sheep he brought him to be the **shepherd** of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. ⁷² And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.

In particular, I love that passage. Do you get the point? David, the great shepherd king, learned how to shepherd the nation by shepherding sheep.

But the shepherd motif extended even beyond David. It extended to how the nation understood its God. The shepherd motif played an important role in how the nation worshipped YHWH...One of their favorite psalms began with these words...

NIV Psalm 23:1...The LORD is my **shepherd**, I shall not be in want.

They even made reference to this shepherd motif when they referred to the coming Messiah...

NIV Micah 5:2..."But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." ³ Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. ⁴ He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the

ends of the earth. ⁵ And he will be their peace. When the Assyrian invades our land and marches through our fortresses, we will raise against him seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men.” (Quoted almost verbatim in Matthew 2:6)

You can see, I think, that the Pharisees should have been familiar with the idea of being faithful shepherds. The allusion was a simple one. Whenever, someone led the nation in a wise, understanding and protective manner they were fulfilling the idea of the great shepherd king, an idea represented perfectly by their great covenant keeping God. Whenever, anyone led the nation in a selfish or self-gratifying way they were **"bad shepherds"**. The nation had known lots of **"bad shepherds"**. They had known kings who had more interest in shearing the sheep than in protecting them. They had known leaders who were more interested in gathering personal wealth than in gathering God's sheep together. God had even spoken prophetically in judgment against such leaders. Ezekiel 34, which contains the title that Jesus liked best, was almost certainly in Jesus' thoughts here. It says this:¹

NIV Ezekiel 34:1 The word of the LORD came to me: ² **"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? ³ You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. ⁴ You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. ⁵ So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. ⁷ "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ⁸ As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, ⁹ therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁰ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against**

the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them. ¹¹ "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. ¹² As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. ¹³ I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. ¹⁴ I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down...¹⁶ I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak...I will shepherd the flock with justice."

Now, what Jesus is doing here in the opening verses of chapter ten is bringing up the idea of faithful and faithful shepherds because He wants to point out the Pharisees lack of affection for one such lamb in God's precious flock.

Think about what they had done to the man born blind. They had maligned him and questioned him and his parents like they were common criminals. Not one single person among them had rejoiced in God's kindness in healing the man of his blindness. Instead, as I said, they maligned him try to coerce him to accuse Jesus before them. But the man was resolute and so they cast him out, which means they excommunicated him from the synagogue and from the flock over which they rode roughshod. They were not very good shepherds. In fact, if Jeremias is right, they didn't even like shepherds². They considered it a dirty trade.

At any rate, if they had been good shepherds they would have rejoiced in the man's healing and they would have faithfully pointed others to Jesus but their interests were elsewhere and in chapter 10 Jesus hammers that truth home.

^{ESV} **John 10:1...**"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 (used of Judas in 12:6) **and a robber** (used of Barabbas in 18:40). ² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

The first thing that I want you to notice about the shepherd that Jesus describes is that he has to do things a certain way. What I mean by that is that there is a specific requirement for a shepherd to be the shepherd of the sheep. The requirement doesn't seem to be overly complicated. In fact, the one determining factor seems to be that the shepherd must enter at the gate. Now let us admit for a moment that we don't know exactly what that means but that we do know this one thing, **"The shepherd of the sheep must enter by the gate."** The whole emphasis of the passage is directed just that way. The passage tells us that if someone enters or tries to enter some other way, "They are definitely not the shepherd; they are, instead, a thief and a robber."

Now what does it mean when it says the shepherd must enter by the gate? I am inclined to think it is talking about what Jesus had to suffer. I am inclined to think it is talking those things that set His ministry apart from and elevated it above all others, and nothing set it apart the way suffering did.

^{NIV} **Mark 14:36...**"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

^{ESV} **John 18:11**...So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

Now look at verse 3...

^{ESV} **John 10:3**...To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

Verse 3, tells us that the watchman opens the gate for the true shepherd who enters where and how He is supposed to enter³. We don't know, of course, exactly who the watchman is but we are beginning I suspect to think that the watchman may be a metaphor for life-giving work of the Holy Spirit or for the sovereign calling and intention of the Father who shows the Son all that He does.

^{NIV} **John 6:44**..."No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. "

^{NIV} **John 8:47**..."He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

On the other hand Morris may be right when he says:

Various attempts have been made to find a meaning for the doorkeeper, but none has won wide acceptance and none, it would seem, should. In an allegory not all details are significant; some are included as necessary parts of the picture even though they have no part to play in the symbolism. So, *it is* here with the doorkeeper⁴.

You see sometimes when interpreting a parable or an allegory it is possible to try to flesh out too many of the details associated with it. Usually, a parable or extended figure like the one Jesus uses here has only one primary idea behind it. Now whether we can rightly identify the doorkeeper or not, it is clear that

because the shepherd enters by the gate and does certain things for His sheep they respond to Him in a certain way. By that, I mean they follow Him.

^{ESV} **John 10:4...** "When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

Now implicit here is Jesus' explanation of why some people respond to Him and others do not. Jesus is making the point that His sheep hear Him and follow Him and are never deceived by false shepherds who really don't have their best interest at heart.

I have been making the point from the beginning of our study that John wrote his gospel to encourage those first century Jewish believers who were straddling the fence between the synagogue and Jesus to continue to believe in Jesus. I have made the point, not a few times, that in that sense John's gospel is very much like the book of Hebrews in that Jesus is compared to and presented as superior to ceremonies, feasts and patriarchs. He is presented as the true temple; He is presented as the fulfillment of the ceremonial law. He is presented as the fulfillment of all that is signified in the Feast of Tabernacles. He is presented as one better than Jacob, better than Moses and even better than Abraham. I think it is part of John's intent here to answer the question, **"If that it is true why didn't more people believe in Him?"** The reason, as simple as it might seem, seems to be **"Because they were not His sheep."**

But the figure is too complex for the Pharisees to follow. Verse six tells us:

^{ESV} **John 10:6**...This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

They don't get it. Their failure to understand causes Jesus to explain this particular dark saying, even as it caused him to explain the Parable of the Sower in the other gospels. In the other Gospels the phrase that stumps the Pharisees is "the kingdom of heaven is like..." In John, it is "I am like..."⁵ So, our Lord in condescending patience backs up and simplifies the figure by using two metaphors. The first metaphor He uses is that of a gate. Here's the point He will make: **"I am the gate to God. Everyone else is interested is hurting my sheep but I am interesting in saving my sheep and giving them fullness of life."**

^{ESV} **John 10:7**...So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

The phrase, **"I tell you the truth"** is emphatic and it is always connected in the gospels to what has gone before. That is how we know that chapter 10 is connected to chapter nine. Remember the first verse of ten contained the same phrase. It is also how we know that that this explanation of Jesus as the gate is an expansion and an explanation of the first six verses.

At any rate, Jesus makes the point that all those who went before Him were thieves and robbers. The reference is hyperbolic. He is not referring, of course, to faithful Old Testament saints like Abraham, Moses or David⁶. He is referring to messianic pretenders⁷. That is, He is referring to those who claimed to be the Messiah or perhaps even to those whose tendency was like that of the Pharisees, to abuse His sheep.⁸

The idea of the gate was not new to Jesus. It had been used in the Psalms.

^{NIV} **Psalm 118:19**...Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD. ²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. ²¹ I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.

The emphasis here is not just that Jesus is the gate for the sheep. The emphasis is that He is the only gate for the sheep.

The second metaphor is that of the good shepherd. Notice, the principal point He is making. The shepherd doesn't desert His sheep. Hirelings run for their lives when there is danger but the good shepherd sticks with His sheep even unto death.

^{ESV} **John 10:11**...I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

I particularly like the Philip Comfort puts it:

Jesus' death was not the demise of a captured martyr, not an accident, not the result of mob violence, not that of a helpless victim, but the voluntary sacrifice of the omnipotent Son of God. Jesus Christ was utterly invincible. No one could take his life from him against his will. Jesus himself had the authority to lay down his life and to take it up again in resurrection. Since a dead man needs a living God to raise him from the dead, Jesus' statement means that he is God. To say, "**I will raise myself from the dead**" is to say, "**I am God.**" This act of Jesus is absolutely without any analogy.⁹

Jesus was by His death going to gather His sheep together and that ingathering was bigger than the Pharisees could imagine.

^{ESV} **John 10:16**...And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

Some have taken this passage to mean other Jews gathered from the nations.

They base such views on passages like...

^{NIV} **Jeremiah 23:3**..."I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. ⁴ I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing," declares the LORD. ⁵ "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land."

And that may be partly in mind but the major idea is that among the Gentiles there are also sheep that must be gathered and added to this one flock. Listen to how Ridderbos puts it:

The closing words, "**so there will be one flock and one shepherd,**" seem to point to a certain expectation or prospect, namely that of the one Shepherd but also of the flock. The main thought here is that with the coming of the good Shepherd there will no longer be any scattered sheep of Israel or any distinction among sheep from whatever "fold" they may have come. The one flock will be as wide as the world. Membership in the people of God will no longer be restricted to one nation or one place of worship but will embrace all who "**worship the Father in spirit and in truth**" (4:23, 24). But there will be no unity other than that of those who belong to the one Shepherd.¹⁰

^{ESV} **John 10:19...** There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰ Many of them said, "He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?" ²¹ Others said, "These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Now, as I understand the passage verse 22 takes place some two to three months later after verse 21. Even though that is true the two sections are thematically connected using the common element of "sheep".

^{ESV} **John 10:22...**At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. ²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

Some commentators understand the allusion to winter to be metaphorical or a use of irony in John. They see the same thing later in John when Judas goes out to carry out his betrayal of Jesus and John says that it was night. If that is the case, John is making the point that Jesus is continually receiving a frosty reception at the hands of the Pharisees. Listen to how Augustine puts it:

It was winter, and Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about Him, and said unto I Him, How long dost thou keep our mind in I suspense? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." They were not desiring the truth, but preparing to slander Him. "It was winter," and they were chilled; mainly because they were slow to approach that divine fire. To approach Him was to believe. The one who believes cannot help but approach; the one who denies cannot help but retire. The soul is not moved by the feet, but by the affections. They had become icy cold to the sweetness of loving Him, and they burned with the desire of doing Him an injury. They were far away, even while they were right there beside Him¹¹.

Now, the Feast of Dedication that is mentioned in the text was the feast that we know today as Hanukkah. It was an important feast in the days of our Lord and

it had very nationalistic origins. It was celebrated in November/December commemorating the recovery and purification of the temple under the Maccabees in 164 BC. Antiochus Epiphanes had defiled the temple in 167 BC. He had defiled the temple more or less as an act of pouting rage after the Romans Senate had sent one aging military officer (Caius Popilius Laenus) to stop his assault on Alexandria in Egypt. Antiochus had fashioned himself to be the new Alexander and part of that image included his consolidation of power in both Syria and Egypt. However, before he was able to take Alexandria Caius Popilius Laenus sailed down to his camp, took a stick and drew a circle around him and warned him that unless he wanted war with Rome he had better not step out of that circle unless it was to head back to Syria¹². Antiochus, humiliated and disappointed in his conquest of Alexandria, decided to take it out on the Jews at Jerusalem and give them a good hiding because of their continual infighting.

What Antiochus actually intended to do was to turn the Jews into good Greeks. He attempted to do that by turning their temple into a temple to Zeus and after he had defiled the inner sanctum of the temple he offered the altar there a young pig in worship to Zeus. He further defiled the temple by invoking temple prostitution within its sacred confines. Of course, such egregious behavior led ultimately to a war between the Jewish faithful, led by the Maccabees, and Antiochus and his minions.

The Feast of Dedication was a celebration of the cleansing and restoration of the temple. It was similar to Tabernacles in that it involved the public display of lights and candles but it was different in that it had a nationalistic, insurrectionist flavor to it. In one sense, it was the perfect feast for a political Messiah to make

His claim. But Jesus explains to the Jews that he had already made His claim and they had missed it.

^{ESV} **John 10:25**...Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock.

I love the way D.A. Carson explains this particular verse:

When Jesus says I *did tell* you, he is not referring to an explicit statement. Had he spoken that plainly, they would have misunderstood him, for their notions of messiahship could not embrace a suffering servant or a kingdom not immediately political and military. If he had tried to speak plainly and publicly both about his messiahship and the necessity of his suffering, he would have been dismissed as a knave and a fool, if we may judge by the confused and dismissive reactions of his closest disciples when he opened up to them. At the same time, his entire ministry, both words and deeds, pointed in the one direction: in that sense he *had* told them. Even his works, done in the Father's name as the revelation of the Father's will and the embodiment of the Father's power, taken cumulatively, testified that the Father has sent him. It is not that miracles could not be performed by others, rather it is that the array of his deeds -including the restoration of a man paralyzed for thirty-eight years, the thoroughly attested healing of a man born blind, and soon to occur resurrection of a man indisputably dead -along with the tone and content of his teaching, spoke deafening volumes on his behalf¹³.

The problem was not the clarity of His revelation. The problem was their inability to receive what His works testified to. The problem, of course, is that they were not His sheep, a theme He returns to in verse 27.

^{ESV} **John 10:27**...My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

Do you get the imagery here? It is the imagery of a shepherd dueling with marauding wolves. It is the imagery of a shepherd holding His own precious lambs next to His bosom and having growling, yellow-eyed wolves trying to reach in at just the right moment and jerk His own, precious lambs from His firm hold. I love what Jesus is saying here. He is saying, **“It simply is not going to happen.”**

His reasoning for the security of His sheep is threefold.

- (1) He is not going to allow them to be snatched from His hand.
- (2) The Father is not going to allow them to be snatched from His hand.
- (3) He and the father are united together in their preservation of the sheep.

Now I recognize that they are one in essence or nature. I am ongoingly Trinitarian. The oneness of their nature was set forth early on in John and should never be very far from our minds. But the point here, and this is clearly indicated by the neuter pronoun “one” is that they are united or one in purpose or design¹⁴. Listen to how Calvin puts it:

Jesus testifies that his affairs are so closely united to those of the Father, that the Father's assistance will never be withheld from himself and his *sheep*. The ancients made a wrong use of this passage to prove that Christ is (*homoousias*) of the same essence with the Father. For Christ does not argue *here* about the unity of substance, but rather points out the agreement which he has with the Father, so that whatever is desired by Christ will be confirmed by the power of his Father.¹⁵

Still, the Jews made the connection that He was claiming such a relationship with the Father that His own deity was implied. We know that from their response.

^{ESV} **John 10:31**...The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³² Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?"

Notice here the lack of fear on the part of Jesus. He shows the calm courage of the shepherd He had so eloquently described¹⁶. He doesn't run. Instead, he asks a question and their answer is a very real sense a concession that He had, in fact, done some extraordinary things.

^{ESV} **John 10:33**...The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."

Now the answer Jesus gives these men has been a wellspring of controversy. Let's read it together and see if you can figure out why.

^{ESV} **John 10:34**... Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? ³⁵ If he called them gods to whom the word of God came--and Scripture cannot be broken-- ³⁶ do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

Now, why would that be controversial? Or let me ask the same question another way. How would a cultist like a Jehovah's Witness or Mormon understand the passage?

They would understand it to be a direct denial to any special claim of deity on Jesus part. They would argue that what Jesus was saying here was something like this:

"The Scripture says that God called regular men 'gods'. Therefore, it is all right for me to assume the title "Son of God" even though I am not actual deity."

But here's the problem with that view. You see Jesus is quoting from Psalm 82.

^{NIV} **Psalm 82:1**...A psalm of Asaph. God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the "gods": ² **"How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Selah** ³ **Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.** ⁴ **Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.** ⁵ **"They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.** ⁶ **"I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.'** ⁷ **But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler."** ⁸ Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance.

What Jesus is doing is using a rabbinic style argument, which argues from the lesser to the greater. What He is saying is this.

God called your fathers, who were set apart as judges over His people "gods". He did that even though they were "bad shepherds" or "unfaithful judges". He did that even though they failed to accomplish the tasks that they were assigned. Jesus says that He did that because they were given the Word of God. Now, if they were called "gods" because they were given the Word of God and the Scripture cannot be broken how much more appropriate is for the Jesus, who was set apart by God and sent by God and who was not only given the Word of God but is, in fact, the ultimate expression of God's revelation to men...how much more appropriate is it for Him to be called "god". How much more appropriate is it for Him, the good shepherd, who has been faithful is protecting and garnering His sheep to be called the Son of God. If the one aspect was true...that is, if God could call unfaithful judges "gods" simply because they communicated the Word of God to His people how much more appropriate was it to call Jesus God's Son.

Still, Jesus goes on that the final proof was in His works. Listen to how He says it.

^{ESV} **John 10:37**...If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸ but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." ³⁹ Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

Notice here the extraordinary irony. Jesus has just commented that His sheep hear His voice and are safe in His hands as they are in the Father's hands¹⁷. No one is able to snatch them away. On the other hand the Pharisees who desperately want to arrest Jesus are unable to lay hands on Him. In both instances, it's the same phrase (evk th/j ceiro.j).

^{ESV} **John 10:40**...He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. ⁴¹ And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true."

Now I want you to consider for a moment the ramifications of what just happened in John 10. They had asked Jesus if He was the Messiah and He admitted that He was. They did not care for His answer and they picked up stones, for the second time, to chase Him out of His own temple. Just as they had failed at Tabernacles to recognize that He was the fulfillment of all that Tabernacles celebrated in its ceremonies of water and light, so they failed here to recognize that He was the fulfillment of the very purity Hanukkah celebrated and exalted. He would only return to Jerusalem one more time and when He did they would kill Him. Still, even after being chased out of the temple verse 42 tells us that His sheep heard His voice.

^{ESV} **John 10:42**...And many believed in him there.

Now I have been harping over and over that John was written to encourage first century Jewish believers to stick with Jesus and to not return to the synagogue. It was written to demonstrate to them the vast superiority of Jesus over all of the forms of Judaism. He is presented as the fulfillment of all that Judaism anticipated. He is presented as the fulfillment of all that the prophets anticipated. He is here in chapter 10 as the ultimate expression of God's affection for His people. He is presented as the gate by which people come to God and He is presented as a faithful shepherd that nurtures, guides and protects His sheep.

He is there to wash away our sins, to lead us out of our own private closets of isolation and defilement. He is there and He is the good shepherd. Now why would you go anywhere else? He is the good shepherd. He is a very good shepherd, indeed.

¹ C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 358. Dodd writes of the connection between chaps. 10 and Ezekiel 34... The resemblance to John x. 1-18 is far-reaching. Jesus speaks of sheep which are preyed upon by robbers, neglected by hireling shepherds, scattered I and tom by wolves. But the good shepherd leads them out (ἐξαγει); they are saved (σωθήσεται); they go in and out and find pasture (νομήν); he rescues them from the wolf; he knows his sheep and they know him (γινώσκουσί με τὰ ἑμα.) he will bring other sheep from a different fold, and there will be (μία ποιμνη, εἰς ποιμήν.)

² Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), 306.

³ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John V.29* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 391. "The point of the parable in 10:1-3a is relatively clear; there is a proper way to approach the sheep, namely through the gate opened by the keeper."

⁴ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John (Rvd.)* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 447. Morris argues that it is unnecessary to fill out every figure in a parable. That is, it is unnecessary to make the parable walk on all fours.

⁵ Brown, 393.

⁶ Philip W. Comfort and Wendell C. Hawley, *Opening the Gospel of John*. (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1994), 169.

⁷ Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 65.

⁸ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction with Notes and Commentary on the Greek Text*, (London: S.P.C.K, 1967), 308. Barrett writes: "It is certainly not intended to dismiss the prophets and other righteous men of the Old Testament as thieves and robbers. The thieves and robbers of this verse must be the same as those of v. a, who climb up some other way", false messianic claimants and bogus "saviors". It is most unlikely that there is a polemical reference to John the Baptist, or sectaries of his... As in v.1 it is not possible to single out particular persons whom John may have had in mind; it is rather his intention to emphasize the unique fulfillment of the Old Testament promises in Jesus, and within the framework of the parable his emphasis had to take this form."

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 171.

¹⁰ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997) p.363.

¹¹ Aurelius Augustine, *Gospel of John* (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers V. 7, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 266.

¹² Moshe Pearlman, *The Maccabees* (New York: MacMillan, 1973), 15.

¹³ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 392-3.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 394.

¹⁵ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel of John. V.17* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 417.

¹⁶ Morris, 466.

¹⁷ B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954), 161.