

HANDOUT: The Gospel of John chapter 10

Holy men in the Old Testament who were shepherds and who were especially close to God

- 1) Abel, son of Adam was a shepherd who “*found favor with God*” (Genesis 4)
- 2) Abraham in Genesis 21 is described as a chieftain with many herds of sheep
- 3) Jacob is a shepherd for his uncle Laban in Genesis 30
- 4) Joseph was shepherding his father Jacob’s flocks in Genesis 37
- 5) Moses went from prince of Egypt to shepherd of Midian in Exodus 3
- 6) David was a shepherd of his father’s flocks in 1 Samuel 16:11
- 7) Amos the Judean shepherd was God’s prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel in Amos 1:1

In Weldon Keller’s book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalms 23* [Zondervan Publishing, 1997], he gives some very interesting insights into the habits of sheep of a flock that can be compared to Jesus and His representatives the priests who shepherd His flock, the Church:

- Sheep depend on the shepherd for their wellbeing.
- Sheep are sociable animals who travel together in a large flock but not too close together; they like their personal space.
- Sometimes they loose their connection to the flock and tend to stray which can lead to disaster.
- Often sheep are unaware of the dangers of the world. At the beginning of the spring just before sheering when the streams and rivers are full and running deep the shepherd must keep the sheep away from swiftly moving water. Sometimes it is even necessary for the shepherd to dam up a portion of the stream so his animals can drink [Psalms 23:2b “*He leads me beside streams of still water...*”]. If the shepherd doesn’t protect them in this way the sheep in their thirst will wade out into the swiftly moving water and when their thick wool coats absorb too much water they will fall over and drown.
- The sheep learn the sound of the voice of their shepherd so that when he calls to them they will come only to him but will run from the voice of a stranger.

In John 10:11-13 Jesus identifies Himself as the “good shepherd”:

I AM the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and runs away, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; he runs away because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep.

This is the first of 5 times that St. John will repeat Christ’s willingness to lay down His life for His sheep:

1) 10:11	“ <i>I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.</i> ”
2) 10:15	“ <i>I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep.</i> ”
3) 10:17	“ <i>The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.</i> ”
4) 10: 18a	“ <i>No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will.</i> ”
5) 10: 18b	“ <i>and as I have power to lay it down so I have power to take it up again...</i> ”