

SCRIPTURE READING FOR MARCH 6, 2022 @ CAPC OAKLAND

John 10:1-21
COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE

[Jesus said] “¹ I assure you that whoever doesn’t enter into the sheep pen through the gate but climbs over the wall is a **thief** and an *outlaw*.² The one who enters through the gate is the *shepherd* of the sheep.³ The guard at the gate opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

⁴ Whenever he has gathered all of his sheep, he goes before them and they follow him, because they know his voice.⁵ They won’t follow a *stranger* but will run away because they don’t know the *stranger’s* voice.”⁶ Those who heard Jesus *use this analogy* didn’t understand what he was saying.

⁷ So Jesus spoke again, “I assure you that I **AM** the gate of the sheep.⁸ All who came before me were **thieves** and *outlaws*, but the sheep didn’t listen to them.⁹ I **AM** the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and **FIND PASTURE**.¹⁰ The **thief** enters only to steal, kill, and *destroy*. I came so that they could have life—indeed, so that they could live life to the fullest.

¹¹ “I **AM** the good *shepherd*. The good *shepherd* lays down his life for the sheep.¹² When the *hired hand* sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away. That’s because he isn’t the *shepherd*; the sheep aren’t really his. So the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them.¹³ He’s only a *hired hand* and the sheep don’t matter to him.

¹⁴ “I **AM** the good *shepherd*. I know my own sheep and they know me,¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. I give up my life for the sheep.¹⁶ I have other sheep that don’t belong to this sheep pen. I must lead them too. They will listen to my voice and there will be one flock, with one *shepherd*.

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

The gospel of John one of the four stories of the good news of Jesus (Gospel means good news) which tells his life, actions, words and mission. It’s believed that John’s account is the last one written as his retelling of the story reflects considerable theological reflection and uses metaphors and poetic language. One example is the play with light and darkness throughout the story. John’s account also contains only seven miracles – or *signs* as they’re called. A symbolic number in Jewish tradition that represents the divine and also recall the days of creation in the foundational story of Genesis. In this way the John tells the life of Jesus as the recreation of the world.

thief:: the word used here *lestes* for thief or bandit is also used in Mark 11:17 : 17 [Jesus] taught them, “Hasn’t it been written, My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you’ve turned it into a hideout for **thieves**.”

use this analogy:: literally the text says “Jesus spoke this parable...”. They fail to understand what he’s saying, which seem to occur often with the parables.

The people as sheep – a leader [Jesus] as shepherd: this image is used frequently in the Bible, as it was addressed to a pastoral civilization and culrue. Many of the great leaders had been shepherds: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and David. the texts of the Bible. Bad Kings are described as wicked shepherds as in 1 Kings 22:17, and Jeremiah 10:21.

Jesus comments on this understanding of belonging to the people and the lack of quality leadership in his day. “³⁴ When Jesus arrived and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were *like sheep without a shepherd*. Then he began to teach them many things.” - Mark 6:34. A theme echoed in the Hebrew Scriptures too such as Numbers 27: 15-17 15 Moses spoke to the Lord: ¹⁶ “Let the Lord, the God of all living things, appoint someone over the community ¹⁷ who will go out before them and return before them, someone who will lead them out and bring them back, *so that the Lord’s community won’t be like sheep without their shepherd*.”

FIND PASTURE:: we’ve already heard Jesu described as the bread of life and the living water. Now he also offers the pastures of life.

¹⁷ “This is why the Father loves me: I give up my life so that I can take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I give it up because I want to. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it up again. I received this commandment from my Father.”

¹⁹ There was another division among the Jews because of Jesus’ words. ²⁰ Many of them said, “He has a demon and has lost his mind. Why listen to him?” ²¹ Others said, “These aren’t the words of someone who has a demon. Can a demon heal the eyes of people who are blind?”

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- What is the priority of the good, or noble shepherd? What is that of the thief or hired hand?
- Jesus seems to be talking about the religious leaders as thieves and hired hands rather than noble shepherds. It could be that they were so concerned with maintaining tradition by keeping the rules that they are unable to see the miraculous thing that happens right in front of them. Or that they monopolized power, excluding those who did find the main definition of a person – women, foreigners, the poor, the differently abled. When in your life have you struggled to love as God loves? When have you been in a community led by a noble shepherd? How was that different than a community led by thieves or hired hands?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

the good shepherd:: a better translation is actually the *ideal*, the *noble*, or the *model* shepherd. Jesus is a noble shepherd because he knows his sheep intimately, and also because he is willing to give his life so that they might live.

The thief ... destroys:: This same word is used in John 3:16 to describe what Jesus will not do. “¹⁶ God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won’t perish but will have eternal life.”

Remember that our previous chapter was about the healing of the man born blind. The story confronts who has sight and who actually doesn’t, ending with a confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees – the Jewish Religious leaders – John 9:39-41

³⁹ Jesus said, “I have come into the world to exercise judgment so that those who don’t see can see and those who see will become blind.”

⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were with him heard what he said and asked, “Surely we aren’t blind, are we?”

⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you wouldn’t have any sin, but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

INETERSECTIONS WITH OTHER SCRIPTURES:

Our text today, this collection of parables of Jesus, intersects with a major text in the Hebrew scriptures in which God through the prophet condemns the bad leaders of the people as inadequate and even evil shepherds. It’s commonly called “the prophecy of the Good Shepherd” and is recorded in Ezekiel 34. It points to Jesus self-identifying as the messiah, the promised – noble shepherd or good shepherd - leader of God.

It's included on the next page.

Ezekiel 34

¹ The Lord's word came to me: ² Human one, prophesy against Israel's *shepherds*. Prophesy and say to them, The Lord God proclaims to the shepherds: Doom to Israel's *shepherds* who tended themselves! Shouldn't shepherds tend the flock? ³ You drink the milk, you wear the wool, and you slaughter the fat animals, but you don't tend the flock. ⁴ You don't strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strays, or seek out the lost; but instead you use force to rule them with injustice. ⁵ Without a *shepherd*, my flock was scattered; and when it was scattered, it became food for all the wild animals. ⁶ My flock strayed on all the mountains and on every high hill throughout all the earth. My flock was scattered, and there was no one to look for them or find them. ⁷ So now *shepherds*, hear the Lord's word! ⁸ This is what the Lord God says: As surely as I live, without a *shepherd*, my flock became prey. My flock became food for all the wild animals. My *shepherds* didn't seek out my flock. They tended themselves, but they didn't tend my flock.

⁹ So, *shepherds*, hear the Lord's word! ¹⁰ The Lord God proclaims: I'm against the *shepherds*! I will hold them accountable for my flock, and I will put an end to their tending the flock. The *shepherds* will no longer tend them, because I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and they will no longer be their food.

¹¹ The Lord God proclaims: I myself will search for my flock and seek them out. ¹² As a *shepherd* seeks out the flock when some in the flock have been scattered, so will I seek out my flock. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered during the time of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³ I will gather and lead them out from the countries and peoples, and I will bring them to their own fertile land. I will feed them on Israel's highlands, along the riverbeds, and in all the inhabited places. ¹⁴ I will feed them in good pasture, and their sheepfold will be there, on Israel's lofty highlands. On Israel's highlands, they will lie down in a secure fold and feed on green pastures. ¹⁵ I myself will feed my flock and make them lie down. This is what the Lord God says. ¹⁶ I will seek out the lost, bring back the strays, bind up the wounded, and strengthen the weak. But the fat and the strong I will destroy, because I will tend my sheep with justice.

¹⁷ As for you, my flock, the Lord God proclaims: I will judge between the rams and the bucks among the sheep and the goats. ¹⁸ Is feeding in good pasture or drinking clear water such a trivial thing that you should trample and muddy what is left with your feet? ¹⁹ But now my flock must feed on what your feet have trampled and drink water that your feet have muddied.

²⁰ So the Lord God proclaims to them: I will judge between the fat and the lean sheep. ²¹ You shove with shoulder and flank, and with your horns you ram all the weak sheep until you've scattered them outside. ²² But I will rescue my flock so that they will never again be prey. I will even judge between the sheep! ²³ I will appoint for them a single *shepherd*, and he will feed them. My servant David will feed them. He will be their *shepherd*. ²⁴ I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David will be their prince. I, the Lord, have spoken. ²⁵ I will make a covenant of peace for them, and I will banish the wild animals from the land. Then they will safely live in the desert and sleep in the forest. ²⁶ I will give them and those around my hill a blessing by sending the rain in its season. They will be rains of blessing. ²⁷ The trees in the field will bear fruit, and the earth will yield its harvest. They will be safe on their fertile land, and they will know that I am the Lord when I break the bars of their yoke and deliver them from those who enslaved them. ²⁸ The nations will no longer prey on them, and wild animals will no longer devour them. They will live in safety, with no one to trouble them. ²⁹ I will establish for them a place famous for what it grows. No longer will they experience famine in the land, nor will they bear the disgrace of the nations. ³⁰ They will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and they, the house of Israel, are my people. This is what the Lord God says. ³¹ You are my flock, the flock of my pasture. You are human, and I am your God. This is what the Lord God says.