

# Sermon Starter – Jesus the True Shepherd

*John 10:1-18*

Jesus described the relationship between shepherds and sheep. Sheep recognize the shepherd's voice—they have learned to trust the shepherd's care and will follow the shepherd with confidence. The shepherd takes great risks to protect the sheep. In contrast, thieves enter the fold to steal sheep; hired hands run away when a wolf approaches. Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd and said he would lay down his life for his sheep.

Jesus' reference to himself as the Good Shepherd may allude to Ezekiel 34:11-19, where God says that because Israel's shepherds, or human leaders, have failed, God will care for the flock instead. In this passage, there is an extended meditation on how Jesus is the true Shepherd. Jesus appears to take upon himself all of the positive shepherd imagery from the Old Testament. This is a pattern throughout John's Gospel.

Jesus also speaks of his sheep hearing his voice (vv. 3-5). It was not unusual for a shepherd to have names for each of the sheep in a moderate-size flock. Israel's covenant experience in the Old Testament was sometimes referred to as "knowing" God. Hearing God's voice meant obeying God's word.

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