

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning
Week 23 (May 31-June 6, 2015)

The best way to follow Psalm 23 in my devotions is to use the beautiful lessons from John 10. Allow Jesus to encourage your heart as we study this week's Scriptures.

Sunday, May 31 (read John 10:1-6)

The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. (John 10:2)

The religious leaders of Israel, who were some of the wealthiest Jews, were actually leading their countrymen away from true faith for their own personal gain. Jesus uses metaphors in chapter 10 of John to identify Himself as the one True Shepherd. Shepherds in Israel led their flock instead of driving them from behind. That is the picture Jesus is painting in today's text. The true shepherd always enters the gate ahead of the sheep, protects them during the night and leads them out the next day. The false shepherds find another way in for the purpose of fleecing the flock (v. 1-2). Today, Jesus has entrusted His sheep to churches that are led by pastors and teachers. When we lead by example, the true sheep will follow. We will see how this works out in tomorrow's devotion.

Monday, June 1 (reread John 10:1-6)

When He has brought out all His own, He goes on ahead of them, and His sheep follow Him because they know His voice. (John 10:4)

Like all pastors and teachers, my most important job is that of opening the door for the True Shepherd so that the sheep will hear **His** voice, not mine (v. 3a). My constant goal is to teach the Word of God so clearly that my hearers will recognize the difference between a **Biblical** worldview and a **politically correct** worldview. Jesus knows each sheep intimately and calls each one by name (v. 3b). True believers quickly learn to distinguish His voice from the voice of a stranger, the thief and robber who is trying to lead them astray (v.1, 4-5). The Lord's listeners that day did not understand (v. 6), but I hope you are able, not only to comprehend, but also to warn others about the danger of following a shepherd whose underlying goal is to get rich by fleecing his flock.

Tuesday, June 2 (read John 10:7-10)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)

In case you had trouble following the metaphor used in v.1-6, Jesus gets to the point by declaring Himself to be the gate (door) through which the sheep enter the sheepfold (v. 7, 9). Before He came, the religious leaders (Pharisees & Sadducees) were fleecing the flock for their own financial gain, not to mention the control they exercised over the people (v. 8). Jesus gives us great security by stating, "whoever enters through me will be saved" (v. 9b). Many believers have fallen prey to preachers, especially some on TV, who live "high on the hog," misusing the money sent to them by their listeners. Jesus has come so that **you** may have an abundant life (v. 10). Ask yourself, "Am I experiencing life to the full?" If the answer is "no," you may be following a preacher instead of the Good Shepherd!

Wednesday, June 3 (read John 10:11-13)

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

How can Jesus be both the Good Shepherd and the gate for the sheep? Great question! In Israel, after the shepherd accounted for all of his flock and led them into the sheepfold, he would lie down over the opening and actually become the gate. Any sheep that would try to leave the fold would have to step over the shepherd; likewise, any wild animal that tried to enter the fold would have to get past the shepherd. What a picture of security this is for us, the sheep in His sheepfold! A hired hand could never love someone else's flock so much that he would lay down his life for it; instead, he flees at the sight of trouble (v. 12-13). That is the reason that I never consider myself an employee of the church. As an employee, I would be free to leave when trouble came my way. As an under-shepherd, however, I report directly to the Good Shepherd who determines when it is time to leave the flock in order to serve someone else!

Thursday, June 4 (read John 10:14-18)

I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. (John 10:16)

In the printed verse above, Jesus is speaking to the Jews about the Gentiles who will also come into His sheepfold. This verse is very personal to me because of the dual ministry of New Hope Christian Church and 20:20 Vision Ministries. The Lord has assigned both of these to me in addition to an evangelistic ministry. No matter where I am, the "other sheep" are on my mind and in my prayers. Jesus has a personal relationship with all who have come under His care (v. 14-15). Someday, Jews and Gentiles will worship together in the Kingdom of God (v. 16). Someday, the Jews will finally believe that Jesus willingly laid down His life so that anyone who comes to Him in faith may have eternal life (v. 17-18).

Friday, June 5 (read John 10:19-24)

At these words the Jews were again divided. (John 10:19)

Isn't it odd that Jesus, the One who offers unconditional love to the world, causes so much division? Some denominations accept anyone **except** those who believe that the Bible is infallible and that Jesus is the only way to salvation. How did we get in such a condition as this? Jesus is either Lord or He is a lunatic! He is either Truth or He is a liar (John 14:6). No true Christian should be divided on these issues. Jesus has spoken plainly to all who have ears to hear (v. 24)! He is the Savior! He is the Messiah who is to come! He is King of kings and Lord of lords! You can worship Him in Spirit and in Truth! He will give you eternal security!

Saturday, June 6 (read John 10:25-30)

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27)

I hope you will read today's text over several times until you feel the security that God wants you to have. I used to marvel at the people who did not believe in the miracles of Jesus. It alarmed me to discover that they were not really His sheep according to His own words (v. 25-26). His true sheep listen to His voice and follow Him wherever He leads (v. 27). He knows them personally and grants eternal life to each one (v. 27-28). They are forever safe in His arms and in the arms of the Father. No one can snatch any true believer out of the arms of the Father or the Son because the two of them are one (v. 28-30). Hallelujah! What a Savior!