

# Lesson 10

## Fourth Sunday of Easter

### The Holy Gospel: John 10:1–10

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is always Good Shepherd Sunday. In the Three-Year Lectionary, the Holy Gospels lead us through the chapter and its metaphors in three selections. These first verses of the Good Shepherd chapter relate to what preceded. Jesus gave sight to a man born blind and identified Himself to him as the Son of Man. As the man, with new sight and new insight, knelt and worshiped Him, Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” Some Pharisees asked, “Are we also blind?” Jesus told them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains” (9:39–41).

Speaking of the Lord as Israel’s Shepherd and of their religious leaders as shepherds was a familiar metaphor of the Old Testament (see Psalm 78:52; Jeremiah 23:1–4). When you keep the interaction with the Pharisees in mind, you readily understand the point of Jesus’ “he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way.” In their willful blindness, the religious leaders were deceiving themselves. As false shepherds, they were harming God’s flock.

158. In Jesus’ figure of speech, what is the key factor that distinguishes the shepherd from the thief? How is the true shepherd’s identity verified in his interaction with the sheep in the pen?

159. Why did the Pharisees not understand this seemingly obvious figure of speech?

In this section, Jesus did not refer to Himself as the \_\_\_\_ but as the \_\_\_\_.

160. As He referred to Himself as the door of the sheep, what was Jesus boldly saying had to happen if the people and their leaders were to be saved and come in and go out and find pasture?

Jesus’ “I am the door” is another of His emphatic “I am”—*egō eimi*—statements that are keys to appreciating John’s Gospel. Jesus’ saying “all who came before Me are thieves and robbers” is a general statement that Jesus made for impact. It was true only by comparison with God’s own Shepherd in the case of those who were faithful shepherds. Old Testament history records the service of many faithful judges and prophets and priests, but all fell short of the ideal Shepherd.

161. How was the religious establishment of Jesus’ day guilty of being “thieves and robbers”?

Verse 10 leads toward Jesus' picture of Himself as the Good Shepherd. In it, Jesus contrasted Himself and His reason for coming with the motivation of thieving false shepherds. The tense of the Greek verbs is significant. "The thief comes" is present tense, showing continuing action—he "keeps on coming" and is a constant danger because he comes to steal and kill and destroy. In contrast, Jesus said, "I came" (the emphatic *egō*)—a decisive coming that does not have to be repeated (see Hebrews 9:24–28). The lasting result: "They may have life"—a present tense with the thrust of "they may keep on having."

162. For what reason(s) might believers imagine they do not have the Shepherd's gift of life and the abundance of its accompanying blessings?

## **The First Lesson: Acts 2:42–47**

It is significant that a description of the continuing fellowship of believers follows immediately after the account of their conversions and Baptisms. It would be hard to think of them experiencing this dramatic turnaround and just going back to life as usual. Relating to Jesus Christ, the Head, in faith always calls people to relate to one another in love in the fellowship of the Body of Christ. About the first Christians, we're told, "They devoted themselves to \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_, to \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_."

163. What encouragement is there in each of these for our Easter faith and life?

These first Christians immediately displayed their love of Christ in their love and concern for one another. Luke's account gives you a feeling of a "camp" or "retreat" experience, which could not have continued indefinitely. But their enthusiastic love and joy gave them favor with all and attracted others into their fellowship. Church-growth studies often refer to this quality as "the love quotient."

164. How would you rate our congregation's love quotient? What can we do to improve our practice of Christian love?

165. How does this First Lesson relate to the theme of today's Holy Gospel?

## **The Epistle for the Day: 1 Peter 2:19–25**

Peter wrote: "This is a gracious thing, when, \_\_\_\_, one \_\_\_\_ while \_\_\_\_." This surely related to what some Christian slaves were experiencing at the hand of their pagan masters. We, too, may be in situations in which we "do good and suffer for it."

166. What was the "secret" of Jesus' being able to suffer unjustly without retaliating, and how can we follow His example? (See Romans 12:17–21.)

As our substitute, Jesus “bore our sins in His body on the tree.” Because of His atonement, we are forgiven—declared to be righteous—assured of eternal life. But here Peter was pointing beyond justification by faith in Christ to its effect on daily living as Christians.

167. Identify the three phrases by which Peter pointed to the life-renewing results of Jesus’ suffering for us. State how each encourages us to be conscientious in our discipleship.