

Lesson 10

Fourth Sunday of Easter

The Holy Gospel: John 10:11–18

The Holy Gospels from John 10 that are assigned to this Fourth Sunday of Easter make it Good Shepherd Sunday every year. In the course of the three years of the lectionary, we are given a complete look at this metaphor. Jesus' picture of His person and work was based on something familiar to all His hearers, both from their awareness of what was involved in shepherding and from their familiarity with the Shepherd Psalm, Psalm 23.

The Greek has Jesus say "*Egō eimi*," "I, I only, am. . . ." This is another forceful I AM by which Jesus pointed to Himself as the Lord God in action, for the name *Yahweh*, by which the Lord God revealed Himself to Moses at Sinai, means "I AM."

152. What did Jesus point to as the first evidence of His being *the* Good Shepherd?

The Greek *huper tōn probatōn*, "for the sheep," means more than just dying to defend the sheep. *Huper* conveys the sense of "on behalf of" or "in the place of." The earthly metaphor falls short, for this Good Shepherd dies as a substitute for the sheep. The Bible's teaching of vicarious atonement finds its expression also in this unique use of the metaphor (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

153. What does Jesus' "No one takes [My life] from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord" in verse 18 add to this consideration?

The Father commissioned the Son to lay down His life for the sheep, and He loved Him because He willingly accepted the commission and was faithfully carrying it out.

154. What is the difference in this metaphor between a shepherd and a hired hand? What assurance is there for us in Jesus' being the Good Shepherd and not just a hired hand? What does this metaphor say to those who are to serve as the Lord's under-shepherds? (See Jeremiah 23:1–4.)

155. What did Jesus point to as the second evidence of His being *the* Good Shepherd? How intimate and complete is Jesus' knowledge of His sheep? (See John 10:30.)

156. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus knows you that intimately?

Jesus spoke of “other sheep that are not of this fold.” Again, the little Greek word *dei* is used in the text, denoting a necessity, an urgency.

157. Who are these “other sheep,” and why is it urgent that Jesus bring them too? What do Jesus’ words about “one flock, one shepherd” say about the Church? What is the distinction between the “one holy Christian and apostolic Church” and “the Churches” that we can see in the world?

The First Lesson: Acts 4:1–12

This pericope is a high point in the drama of the growing boldness of Peter as a result of the Pentecost outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Remember, this is the same Peter who followed Jesus to the courtyard of the high priest—and there shamefully denied his master. But in the power of the Holy Spirit, this was now a new Peter. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter had preached to the crowd, spearheading the proclamation of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. He had seen the Spirit-powered response of 3,000 people. Soon after, as he and John were going to the temple to pray, Peter boldly applied the power of Jesus’ name to heal a lame beggar, and then openly explained to the onlookers that it had been the name of Jesus and faith in His name that were behind the miracle. Peter and John were taken into custody, kept in jail overnight, and the next morning, were brought before the Sanhedrin, the same body that had condemned Jesus to death. Earlier, Peter had fearfully denied Jesus under the questioning of slaves and servant girls in the courtyard of the high priest, and now he was being interrogated by this powerful man himself in the presence of the Sanhedrin, the Jews’ supreme court. Peter did not waver. He boldly and pointedly confessed the name of Jesus.

158. What were the two elements of Peter’s testimony about Jesus in his response to the high priest’s questioning?

159. Why was Peter led by the Spirit to quote the Scripture from Psalm 118 as part of his testimony?

In conclusion, Peter boldly declared: “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” The little word *dei*, “must” or “it is necessary,” points to the exclusiveness of Jesus’ saving name. This became the clear testimony of the inspired, apostolic Word (see John 3:16–21; 1 John 2:22–23; 1 Timothy 2:5–6).

160. Why is Jesus the one and only Savior?

161. What impact had Peter's bold action and words had on the beggar who had been healed by him? (See Acts 3:8.) on the crowd at the temple? (See 3:10; 4:4.) on Peter himself? (See 4:8.) What impact did it have on the Jewish authorities? (See 4:13–22.)

162. How is it that the same message enabled by the same Spirit opens the minds and hearts of some but not the minds and hearts of others?

163. How does this First Lesson tie in with the emphasis of today's Holy Gospel?

The Epistle for the Day: 1 John 3:16–24

This Epistle for the Day stresses the *doing* of love that is the expected fruit of faith in God's display of love in Jesus Christ. Christ acted in laying down His life for us. Our response to learning from Him what love requires is manifested in practical displays of active love. As active Christian love *does* something to help others, it *says* something to them, but John indicates that it also *speaks to us* to strengthen our faith and life as we practice it.

164. What does it say to the person who is being helped in Christian love? What does it evidence to the one who is acting in love? How does being active in love help us to “reassure our [hearts] before [God]”?

We always need to remember that the love John is describing is agape, the determined, purposeful love of the regenerate will, that *consciously* offers a responsive love to God by *actively* seeking the welfare of the neighbor in Jesus' name.

165. How can we silence our hearts when they condemn us because we do not live up to the ideal of consistent, active agape love in our daily lives? What does it do for us to have consciences that are clear because we know we are doing our best to obey God's commands and do what pleases Him?

166. What are the two basic commands God gives to those who are His? How do these relate to each other?

167. How may we be sure that we have the Spirit that Jesus gives to those who are His? (See 1 Corinthians 12:3–7; Titus 3:4–7; 1 John 4:13–21.)

168. How are God's nature and work as three divine persons manifested in this pericope?