



Apr. 25, 2021 Jn. 10: 11-18 & Acts 4: 8-12
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Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Prayer for](#)
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[A good shepherd and his sheep](#)
[Calling](#)
[Sheep](#)And
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDNj5a6qaoU>

ENTERING THE SCENE:

Reaching back to the earliest day of the scriptures we hear of people in power abusing their roles to enrich themselves and not caring for God's people. Since it was thought that they only had power because it was given to them by God to take care of God's flock, this abuse was roundly condemned and often. In fact when Jesus puts the words shepherded and good together it would have struck people as nonsense. In earliest days in 2013 Pope Francis he urges his pastors to get to know their sheep so well that they smelled like their sheep. In places today they are literally laying down their lives for their flocks. However, in some places they are even dropping the word "evangelical" because our modern day hirelings have misused this identification. Let us now see how Jesus describes being a shepherd today.

John 10:11-18

11 **I am the good shepherd.** The **good shepherd lays down his life** for the **sheep**. 12 He who is a **hireling** and not a **shepherd**, whose own the **sheep** are not, see the **wolf** coming and **leaves the sheep** and **flees**; and the **wolf snatches** them and **scatters** them. 13 He **flees** because he is a **hireling** and cares nothing for the **sheep**. 14 **I am the good shepherd**; I **know** my own and my own **know** me, 15 as the Father **knows** me and I **know** the Father; and I **lay down** my life for the **sheep**. 16 And I have other **sheep** that are not of this **fold**; I must bring them also, and they will **heed** my **voice**. So there will be one **flock**, one **shepherd**. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I **lay down** my life, that I may **take** it again. 18 No one **takes** it from me, but I **lay** it **down** of my own accord. I have **power** to **lay** it down, and I have **power** to take it again; this **charge** I have **received** from my Father.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How do you tell the difference between a shepherd and a hireling

PRAYER: Trust is the basis of life. Without trust, no human being can live. Trapeze artists offer a beautiful image of this. Flyers have to trust their catchers. They can do the most spectacular doubles, triples, or quadruples, but what finally makes their performance spectacular are the catchers who are there for them at the right time in the right place. Much of our lives is flying. It is wonderful to fly in the air free as a bird, but when God isn't there to catch us, all our flying comes to nothing. Let's trust in the Great Catcher. Amen.

Henri Nouwen

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

I AM: The power of the "I Am" statement would have certainly hit the Pharisees hard. They frequently asked him "who do you think you are" kinds of questions. John uses the **I am** saying frequently. He wants to point to Jesus as the one sent by God. Any Jew would immediately remember Moses' encounter with the burning bush in Ex. 3: f. When Moses asked God for God's name, God replies "I am..." [Ex. 3:6]

How do you think they felt as they heard Jesus repeat the "I am" statement? Would the 'little people' have heard it in the same way? How do you feel about it now?

GOOD SHEPHERD: In those days these two words did not fit together. The shepherds were often not good to their sheep. Instead of providing for them as in Ps. 23, they used and abused them. It must have confused the people to hear these two words used together.

Think of the things today that cause the same unease and confusion that the words 'good shepherd' must have caused in Jesus' day. What examples can you list? What feelings do you find rising up within you as you express them?

LAYS DOWN: Human fear creates a situation that makes it difficult to abide someone who is totally free and fearless. Jesus chooses to freely lay down his life for a good that he values even more than physical existence.

Is there anything that you would lay down your life for today? Are you "laying down" your life now in any way these days? Are you doing it freely?

LIFE: The Sadducees [those in charge of the temple] did not believe in any personal existence after physical death. The Pharisees believed that some form of existence endured, but were unable to describe how that happened.

How do you think Jesus' belief in eternal life contributed to his ability to face the danger of death? What effect would this belief have as he confronted the so-called 'shepherds' of his day? Do you believe in personal immortality enough to face a similar threat?

SHEEP: Sheep are animals that need good care in order to thrive. They are unable to make it on their own, because too many things can cause disease or death. They are able to learn the sound of their shepherd's voice, and they willingly follow a good leader.

Is the metaphor of sheep helpful for you? If someone called you a sheep, what would be your response? Could you delight in being the sheep of a good shepherd? If so, why? If not, why not?

HIRELING: A hireling is someone who has little power. They sell their labor, skill and time, but often receive relatively little rewards for their efforts in comparison to the one who hires them. It is natural for a hireling to be less invested in the outcome of an endeavor.

Imagine the anger that was developing in those religious leaders as they intuited his meaning? Then imagine the hope developing in the 'sheep' of that day, as they also intuited his meaning? What situations today make you feel like this?

WOLF: Wolves were the bane of shepherd and sheep. The cunning and strength of the wolf easily made sheep a good catch. At night when the sheep were asleep, it was common for a wolf to steal into the flock and snatch one of the sheep. Good shepherds used their rods and staffs to ward off intruders and protect their sleeping sheep.

What things today have the ability to snatch your faith life from you? Could an idea, possession, relationship, fear, addiction, or comfort level have such power? How can you tell if a shepherd does not have your wellbeing in mind?

LEAVES: Being left, or abandoned, is a primal fear of all newly born creatures. If our caretakers are faithful, we learn to overcome this fear. If they are not faithful, we struggle with this fear most of our lives.

When you think about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, do you have a sense of presence that is faithful? Can you remember any event when you knew that God was very present to you? Has that assurance endured?

FLEES: To flee is to abandon someone/thing in order to save oneself. Self-preservation overrides the commitment to be faithful.

What things might be powerful enough for you to abandon someone/thing that you have made a commitment to?

SNATCHES/ TAKES: We know how we feel when someone snatches someone/thing from us. Jesus promises that no one can take us from God's love and care.

Explore the places in your experiences where you have been the victim of a snatcher. What feelings do these memories evoke? How do you feel about the statement that no one or no thing can snatch us from God's love and care?

KNOW: Often the bible uses the word *knows* in a very special way, one that describes the intimate relationship of a husband and wife. Jesus says he and God know us in this very intimate way.

Have you been able to let God know you in this most personal way? Are you comfortable with this? Does letting God know you have anything to do with your ability to know God? If so, how?

FOLD/ FLOCK: A sheepfold is the metaphor Jesus uses to talk about the ones who have learned to know his voice.

How have you come to know the sound of the shepherd's voice? Do you realize that the Christian life requires the support of a community in order to persevere?

VOICE: Each of us has a unique voice. We can tell who a person is just by the sound of their voice.

Explore the ways you rely on voice recognition in your daily life. Examine the ways you get to know the voice of Jesus.

POWER: Jesus is often seen going off to pray and is very clear that his source of power is God.

Does prayer empower you? What form of prayer works best for you? Compare the times when you were able to tap into a power source beyond your own abilities to the times when you felt that you had to manage on your own.

CHARGE: Jesus sees his mission or charge to be the one to link all humanity with his Father. He is so clear about this that he is willing to die for it. *Is there a 'charge' in your life? What is it? Is it worthy of your very life?*

RECEIVED: God gave Jesus the charge and the power to see it through. Jesus received it freely and gave his all to the effort. In prayer, we receive that same power, and that same charge.

What have you received that empowers you to see it through the challenges of your life? What form of prayer helps you the best?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Jn. 10:1 // Jer. 23:1f; Ezek. 34:1-31; Jn. 10:4 // Mi. 2:12f; Jn. 10:9 // Ps. 23:1f; Is. 49:9f; Jn. 10:11 // Heb. 13:20; Jn. 10:12 // Zech. 11:17; Jn. 10:16 // Jer. 23:3; Eph. 2:14f; Jn. 10:17 // Heb. 10:10; Jn. 10:18 // Jn. 19:11;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Acts 4:8-12; [Ps. 118:1,8-9,21-23, 26-29](#). 1 Jn. 3:1-2; Jn. 10: 11-18;

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 4:5-12; [Ps. 23](#); 1 Jn. 3:16-24; Jn. 10:11-18;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

When we permit ourselves to trust deeply, we are letting another human being into our heart and into our soul. We have accepted the good intentions of another so deeply that we allow them to step so close to us that we cannot protect ourselves any longer. Now we are wide open and when we meet another in the infinite expanse of true vulnerability and profound intimacy, the experience is identical to mystical intimacy with God or Spirit. [Andrew Cohen](#)

Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservations. - Elton Trueblood

Few souls understand what God would accomplish in them if they were to abandon themselves unreservedly to Him and if they were to allow His grace to mold them accordingly. - Ignatius

“And, deeper than all of our anxieties and our need to protect ourselves, lies a truth we know at the core of our being, namely, that in the end we cannot take care of ourselves, we cannot make ourselves whole, and we cannot hide our weaknesses from each other. We need to surrender, to trust, to let ourselves fall into stronger and safer hands than our own.” Fr. Ron Rolheiser

John, in his gospel, makes many significant changes. In the words of [St. Clement of Alexandria](#) (circa 200CE) “the other gospels tell the story” from the outside”, John reveals the heart of Jesus. In John, Jesus knows all that is about to happen to him and lets the drama unfold. He does not pray in the garden before his arrest. Judas does not touch him. As the band of men arrive, Jesus comes forward and asks, “Who are you looking for?” In John, Jesus’ death is no defeat John 10: 17-18.

I am called here to grow. ‘Death’ is a critical point of growth, or transition to a new mode of being; to a *maturity* and fruitfulness that I do not know (they are in Christ and in His kingdom). The child in the womb does not know what will come after birth. He must be born in order to live. I am here to learn to face death as my birth.” Thomas Merton

We turn to God for help when our foundations are shaking, only to learn that it is God who is shaking them. Charles West

...the Bible does not regard man as an eternal soul temporarily attached to a mortal body but as a finite creature of flesh, living by the power of God who gives man his whole being as it is.

Nemesszeghy, Ervin, S.J. & Russell, Joah, S. J. [Theology of Evolution](#). Butler, WI. Clergy Book Service. 1971. Page 67.

In the ancient Near East the title of shepherd was applied both to kings and to gods. Lipit-Ishtar of Isin is the wise shepherd, the humble shepherd (ANET=Ancient Near Eastern Texts- 159), and Hammurabi is the shepherd of the people (ANET 164, 165). The god Shamash is addressed as shepherd (ANET 387). The Old Testament theological use of the title, however, shows some variation from the Mesopotamian use. The king of Israel is never called the shepherd directly; and the title as applied to Yahweh is not conventional, but is elaborated with a wealth of imagery drawn from the life of the shepherd. The title of shepherd is given to the rulers of the people, who include the king, the royal officers, and the elders, all who have authority. It includes also the judges, the heroes of Jgs (2 Sam. 7:7). Almost all of the uses of the title find fault with the shepherds for failure to meet their responsibilities (Jer. 2:8); they are stupid (Jer. 10:21), they scatter the flock (Jer. 23:1-2), they lead the people astray (Jer. 50:6), they are unfaithful (Ezek. 34: 2-10), they have no understanding (Is. 56: 11f). Therefore the prophetic threats of disaster fall with special force upon the shepherds of Israel (Jer. 22:22); 25:34-36). In the messianic restoration Yahweh will give His people shepherds after His own heart (Jer. 3:5; 23:4); the prince from Bethlehem will feed his flock in the strength of Yahweh (Mi. 5:3). Cyrus is the shepherd of Yahweh who leads the people of Yahweh back to their own land (Is. 44:28) The schism of Israel will be healed in the messianic future, and Israel will be one nation under one shepherd (Ezek. 34:23; 37:22,24; this passage is echoed in Jn. 10:16. McKenzie, John. [Dictionary of the Bible](#). NY. Macmillan Pub. Co. 1965. Page 803.

[Origen of Alexandria](#) (185-254) tried to develop an early Christian doctrine. In his “On First Principles” he deals with the mystery of the incarnation in such a way that he eventually was deemed a heretic. In Book II chapter 6 he uses John 10:18 to make part of his argument of Jesus’ eternal indwelling in God. Reading his work helps to illustrate how difficult such a task was and still is.

Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998.

A child's perspective: When a mother saw a thunderstorm forming in mid-afternoon, she worried about her 7-year-old daughter who would be walking the three blocks from school to home. Deciding to meet her, the mother saw her walking nonchalantly along, stopping to smile whenever lightning flashed. Glimpsing her mother, the little girl ran to her explaining enthusiastically, "All the way home, God has been taking my picture! (This child is a child of the Good Shepherd)

No bird can fly without opening its wings, and no one can love without exposing their heart. Mark Nepo

"At the root of all war is fear: not so much the fear that men have of one another as the fear they have of *everything*. It is not merely that they do not trust one another; they do not even trust themselves.They cannot trust anything because they have ceased to believe in God." *New Seeds of Contemplation*). Thomas Merton

The word *faith* comes from the Latin word *fides*, and its primary meaning is "trust." Stephen Bullivant

In Phillip Keller [A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23](#), Zondervan Pub. Grand Rapids, MI. 1970, we get a deep look into the role of a good shepherd. It is worth a read or re-read.

The power of grace "comes alive and flourishes to the extent that we, in faith, go out and give ourselves and the Gospel to others, giving what little ointment we have to those who have nothing, nothing at all." Pope Francis.

For the article of modern day shepherds of the faithful read <http://www.thecatholictelegraph.com/pope-francis-priests-should-be-shepherds-living-with-the-smell-of-the-sheep/13439>

Real life comes to be itself precisely in moving beyond the limits of control and certainty. Trust is integral to real life. We have an inner need to trust, to believe, to live in a mutual recognition with others. Interdependency cannot happen without it. This interdependency is energized by the unpredictable and new which occurs when separate beings merge and form a new reality. This is life which comes to itself beyond the predictable, secure, and controllable. Fr. David Bock

In an article titled [In No One We Trust](#) written in 2013 we find: "Strong values enable us to live in harmony with one another. Without trust, there can be no harmony, nor can there be a strong economy. Inequality in America is degrading our trust. For our own sake, and for the sake of future generations, it's time to start rebuilding it. That this even requires pointing out shows how far we have to go." It is worth a re-read.

Good Shepherds are willing to lay down their lives for their sheep (see [John 10:11](#)). As spiritual leaders walking in the footsteps of Jesus, we are called to lay down our lives for our people. This laying down might in special circumstances mean dying for others. But it means first of all making our own lives - our sorrows and joys, our despair and hope, our loneliness and experience of intimacy - available to others as sources of new life. One of the greatest gifts we can give others is ourselves. We offer consolation and comfort, especially in moments of crisis, when we say: "Do not be afraid, I know what you are living and I am living it with you. You are not alone." Thus we become Christ-like shepherds. Henri Nouwen

Yet tsror in Hebrew means a pebble. In ancient times, shepherds needed a system to keep track of their flocks. On some days, they would go out to pasture with a flock of 30; on others, a flock of 10. Memory was an unreliable way of keeping tabs on the number of the flock. As a result, the shepherd would carry a sling over his shoulder, and in it he would keep the number of pebbles that corresponded to the number in his flock. That way he could at all times have an accurate daily count. When we place stones on the grave and inscribe the motto above on the [stone](#), we are asking God to keep the departed's soul in His sling. Among all the souls whom God has to watch over, we wish to add the name--the "pebble"--of the soul of our departed.

Jn. 10: 10: Life . . . abundantly, i.e., eternal life. 12: The hired hand may refer to the Jewish leadership (see Ezek 34.1-10). Wolf, evil; a more specific referent cannot be determined 16: Other sheep may refer to Gentile followers. Pg. 179. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

"God is not a deceiver that He should offer to support us, and then, when we lean upon Him, should slip away from us." - St. Augustine

The word *faith* comes from the Latin word *fides*, and its primary meaning is "trust." Stephen Bullivant

SELECTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015. Pgs. 72-73. To order contact Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2009. Pgs. 97-100.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2005 Pgs. 82-85.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2012. Pgs.

68-70. Naomi. [Warriors of Love](#)

Psalm 23

John Shea. [The God Who Fell From Heaven](#). Argus Communications, Allen TX. 1979. Page 78. A PRAYER TO THE GOOD SHEPHERD: Pg. 78

Phillip Keller [A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23](#), Zondervan Pub. Grand Rapids, MI. 1970.

Keller, Phillip [Lessons From a Sheepdog](#), Word Books, Waco TX. 1983.