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Sunday School Lesson
 FEBRUARY 23, 1947
 By Dr. Paul Caudill



Topic: The Good Shepherd
 Scripture: John 10:7-18
 Various metaphors are employed in God's Word to interpret the character and mission of Jesus. He is spoken of as "bread" and as "truth" and as "light." In today's lesson, however, Jesus presents himself as the Good Shepherd and through the parable of the sheepfold interprets for us his saving concern for all the peoples of the world.

False Messiahs
 Beginning with verse 7, Jesus repeats the allegory found in the opening verses of the chapter "with more detail and with more directness of application" (Robertson).

He begins by declaring himself to be the door of the sheep and warns his disciples against the claims of false messiahs—self appointed leaders who make havoc of the flock. "Jesus, therefore, said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them."

Jesus is the only valid door of access to the spiritual fold. There is no way of entrance into the kingdom of God except through him (John 14:6).

Numerous imposters had appeared already and had made no little havoc among the "sheep." Others would appear: "There shall arrive false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead us astray, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:23).

There is no end to these false prophets: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15). These "wolves" grow fabulously rich by foisting their spiritual nostrums upon credulous sheep. Fortunate indeed are those who know the Shepherd's voice.

One cannot afford to accept the promises of every so-called spiritual leader. The content of religious thought must be examined so as to see if it corresponds to the teaching and life of Jesus.

The Only Way
 In verse 9, Jesus says "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture."

Here Jesus declares unequivocally that he is the only way and this is exactly as it must be if we are to accept Jesus as God's Son who came to earth for the salvation of the world. Jesus tells us that he was sent to the earth by the Father (John 5:23); and that through the hearing of his word and faith in his person and mission man has eternal life "and cometh not into judgment,

but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

These claims of Jesus may be called narrow and intolerant and they are—as narrow and intolerant as truth.

Liberal dogmatists of today will not like these words of Jesus any more than the religious dogmatists of Jesus' day. The words were unpalatable then to those who were unwilling to accept Jesus Christ as Messiah—the Messiah that had been promised in the Old Testament. But Peter tells us that "in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12) and Paul says that his name "is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10f).

The Good Shepherd
 In verses 11 and 14, Jesus portrays himself as the "Good Shepherd" and justifies his statement in two respects.

First, he is the Good Shepherd because he lays down his life for his sheep (v. 11). He that is an hireling does not do this. When the hireling beholds the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. Because he is an hireling he does not care for the sheep.

The Good Shepherd gives his life as a ransom for many. He places no value upon his own comfort and safety but risks everything on the altar of devotion to his flock. The word rendered "good" emphasizes "the beauty in character and service." It reminds one of the good steward in 1 Peter 4:10 and of the expression "good minister of Jesus Christ" in 1 Timothy 4:6. There is no place in the Kingdom for careless shepherds, and there is no salvation for those who entrust themselves to such.

In verse 14, Jesus interprets the Good Shepherd as one who knows his sheep by name. They know his voice because they have experienced mental knowledge of him as their own Shepherd. There is, therefore, in fellowship with Christ a mutually reciprocal knowledge and in this relationship lies the secret of the disciples' love and loyalty.

Jesus goes on to tell how a similar relationship exists between him the Father: "I am the Good Shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father."

The Good Shepherd desires for his sheep the abundant life: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." Jesus wants his children to enjoy the over-plus of life.

One Flock—One Shepherd
 One flock—one shepherd. In verse 16, Jesus says, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd."

Of this passage Dr. A. T. Robertson has this to say in quoting from Westcott: Clearly "his flock is not confined to those enclosed in the Jewish fold, whether in Palestine or elsewhere" (Westcott). Christ's horizon takes in all men of all races and climes" (John 11:52; 12:32).

The world mission of Christ for all nations is the concept that lay in the heart of the Father in the sending of his Son into the world. He gave him for the whole human race—unto all who would receive him as Saviour and Lord. Christ's mission embraced the whole world. He died for every man but man can receive the blessings of the atonement only in proportion as he yields himself to Christ as Saviour and Lord.

There may be many folds of the one flock (Robertson). The word "flock" is merely a metaphor which is made up of the children of the Kingdom as they come from all climes and nations.

In Jesus Christ we find the one and only Great Shepherd of the sheep, and he is our Lord.

EXECUTOR'S NOTICE
 Having qualified as executor of the estate of Mrs. Sara A. Blevins, deceased, late of Wilkes county, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at Wilkesboro, N. C., on or before the 29th day of January, 1948, or this notice will be plead in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment. This 29th day of January, 1947.
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