

Conversations on
John 10:11–18

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Listen together to “Shepherd” by Todd Agnew. Discuss: In what ways do you connect with the words to this song? What wants leave us feeling hungry even when we satisfy them? What are our real needs? Imagine a new final stanza that represents God’s response. What might God say?

WHAT is important to know?

Jesus is identified as a *kalos* shepherd. This Greek word, most often translated “good,” is frequently understood by Americans as the opposite of “bad.” While not inaccurate, *kalos* means “good” more in the sense of model. Jesus is the good shepherd insofar as he is a model shepherd as revealed in Israel’s Scriptures. *Kalos* shepherding will protect at any cost those followers who are intimately known to the shepherd. At the end of this passage, we hear that Jesus knows the cost of being a good shepherd and willingly pays it, in accord with God’s goal of the ultimate protection of the sheep. (*Sarah S. Henrich*)

- ✪ What three or four words describe the *kalos* shepherd as you understand this term?
- ✪ How does this interpretation of Jesus as a good shepherd aid your understanding of this Scripture passage?
- ✪ What do you think Jesus means when he says, “I am the good shepherd”?

WHERE is God in these words?

Christ is the Word of God, the message of the self-giving love of God, who did not want the world to perish. The voice of Christ calls out to us; thus now is the time to examine our attitudes, practices, and behaviors that keep us safe from the concerns and needs of Christ’s other sheep. To the extent that we decline to enter into the world of these other sheep due to discomfort or limited perceptions of our advantage, it is we who are refusing the voice that insists “one flock” is a correlate of the principle “one shepherd.” (*Stephen A. Cooper*)

- ✪ What does this passage tell us about the role of Jesus the Christ?
- ✪ What does Stephen Cooper mean by the phrase “safe from the concerns and needs of Christ’s other sheep”?
- ✪ What attitudes, practices, and behaviors keep you “safe from the concerns and needs of Christ’s other sheep”?
- ✪ Where do you experience Christ as the incarnate Word of God? What one word best describes this place?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

Sheep must be led. Sheep will not go anywhere that their trusted shepherd does not go first, to show them that everything is all right. The shepherd’s voice is key. As Jesus says, “I know my own and my own know me” (v. 14). Sometimes we go astray, just like sheep. There are many voices out there vying for our attention. Many distractions lure us from the path. Jesus promises that he will never let us go. His voice will bring us back. We belong to him. This is a strong word of reassurance to us in our struggles to be faithful. (*Nancy R. Blakely*)

- ✪ What voices and distractions are luring you away from where Jesus, the good shepherd, is leading?
- ✪ What is your response to hearing that “Jesus promises that he will never let us go”?
- ✪ If you let go of your need to be in control for a week and trusted Christ not to lead you astray, what might change?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

John makes it clear that the work of gathering the flock belongs to Jesus and God—we are to provide a space where all are welcome. The community that John envisions is open and celebrates its diversity as a gift from God. The Good Shepherd is a powerful image for us—who hunger for connection in a society that values individualism and secularism. In our moments of loneliness, isolation, alienation, and hopelessness, the Good Shepherd responds to our deepest yearnings for community by offering an alternative to our fears, separation, and insecurities. (*Barbara J. Essex*)

- ✪ What are you or your congregation doing to create hospitality and inclusion in all areas of life? What more could you do?
- ✪ What is your congregation’s biggest struggle when it comes to living as “one flock” under the leadership of the one Good Shepherd?
- ✪ How is diversity celebrated in your life and in your community of faith?

Thank God for God’s mighty acts of salvation.