

Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 12-2-18

To Adult Teachers:

December 2 we will study John 10:11-30 Discussion questions are:

1. What was it Jesus said in vs. 14-18 that caused the negative reaction in vs. 19?
 - a. Vs. 15, "I know the Father"
 - b. Vs. 16, "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen."
2. What does vs. 17 teach you about God's love?
3. If you see death as unnatural and a perversion, how does that affect your life?
4. How do you understand this statement: "If you let death threaten you it will keep you stagnant in your spiritual life."?
5. What is your reaction to this statement: "Christians can't afford to be addicted to safety."
6. How do you feel about being totally known?
 - a. What would it take for you to be comfortable with being totally known by God?
 - b. What Christian practices can you think of that would encourage us to get comfortable with being totally known?
7. Agree/disagree: "Christianity is all about being known!"
8. Why is this statement true: "Jesus will not be your Shepherd unless he is your Lord."
9. Why does Jesus insert a comment about "other sheep" in vs. 16?

Sermon: *The True Shepherd*

John 10:11-30

A Shepherd is not a partner. Sheep do not sign an agreement with the Shepherd agreeing that if he does his part they will do their part. The Shepherd takes care of the sheep because that's just what shepherds do.

The discussion in the text is over whether or not Jesus is the true shepherd. As Jesus listens to the debate he responds by describing 3 characteristics of the true shepherd. There are 2 things Shepherd Jesus can do that no other shepherd can do.

1. He can and does give himself totally for the sheep.
2. He can and does know the sheep totally.

The true shepherd can and does give himself totally for the sheep.

Vs 17 – "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again."

There are some great shepherds in the Bible. Jacob was a great shepherd. Once when contracting with his father-in-law he says, "If I lose any sheep I will repay with my own hand." but he does not say, "I will die for the sheep." David was a great shepherd. When a lion and a bear killed some sheep, he tracked them down and killed them. He risked his life for the sheep but do you think he would have gone bear hunting if he had known he would forfeit his life? The uniqueness of Shepherd Jesus is that he lays down his life for his sheep and he lays it down voluntarily. "No one takes my life from me. I give it of my own accord." (John 10:18)

Let's talk a moment about death. Our culture says death is natural. It's what is supposed to happen after living a full life. It's a part of the process of nature. Don't ever buy into that! Death is unnatural. Death is a perversion. Death is our greatest enemy. Death is not what is supposed to happen after living a full life. What God intended was for us to keep on living and never get sick and never get old and never die. Death is a black-hooded executioner. Death is inevitable, yes, but it is not natural. The question for us is how are we going to meet this great enemy? When death comes to you are me, we are its victim. Not so with Jesus. Listen to what he says about that. He says, "No one takes my life from me." Jesus was not a victim of death. Jesus laid down his life.

Do you understand what death is? Death is the separation of the body from the soul. John Murray describes the death of Jesus this way, "Jesus put one hand on his soul and one hand on his body and ripped them apart." He laid down his life. Physical death is separation of your soul from your body. Spiritual death is separation of your soul from God. Think about that for a moment – spiritual death. For all eternity being incapable of giving or receiving love, incapable of joy and peace. When we say Jesus conquered death we mean he removed from death the ability to separate us from God. O what a shepherd!

There is no reason for you to be threatened by death. You have no reason to live as if your 70, 80, or 90 years are all you've got. Right now counts forever. The other side of eternity is a whole lot longer than this side.

If you let death threaten you it will keep you stagnant in your spiritual life. Some young person says, "I'm going to be a foreign missionary." Their parents get all upset and say, "You could be a professional. You could make some serious money. Don't waste your life in some obscure place where no one will ever notice nor care what you do." Those are the words of people who are hemmed in by death. They cannot see beyond their 80 years. I remember when Randy Voss announced his plans to marry a young Japanese lady and spend his life in Japan doing vocational mission work. One mother of a young person about Randy's age spoke about Randy's mother, Betty Voss, and said, "I can't do that. I'm no Betty Voss." Let me tell you that was not an easy decision for Betty to go along with but her faith allowed her to see the bigger picture. You can't let death hem you in. Christians can't afford to be addicted to safety. You stand for what's right, and noble and true and redeeming. There is an answer to the rhetorical questions Paul asks in I Corinthians: "*O death where is your sting? O grave where is your victory?*" Our shepherd has dealt with death for us by taking the stinger out of death and the victory out

of the grave. Look at the death defiance of the shepherd, "*Nobody takes my life from me!*" Look at him in Gethsemane. When he gets that vivid picture of what the cross will be like, why doesn't he say, "Why should I take the burning agony of the cross on my shoulders for these people who not only can never repay me but don't even stay awake when I am suffering like this?" He doesn't feel that way because he is a shepherd!

So what is the true shepherd like? First, he gives himself totally for the sheep. Second,

The true shepherd can and does know the sheep totally.

The Bible gives us a taste of what it is like to be totally known by the shepherd. Remember that time Jesus encountered Nathaniel for the first time and said, "*I know you Nathaniel. I saw you under the fig tree.*" Nobody knew what event Jesus referred to except Jesus and Nathaniel. Whatever it was Nathaniel did under the fig tree, the fact that Jesus saw it leads him to confess, "*You are the Son of God!*" When Nathaniel comes to grips with the fact that Jesus knows him totally, it drives him to faith. When a disillusioned Mary is wandering around in the garden wondering what has become of her crucified Lord, a gardener, who is actually Jesus, appears and calls her by name, "*Mary*", and suddenly hope is alive again for her. When Mary comes to grips with the fact that Jesus knows her totally, it drives her to faith.

To be totally known can at first be a bit intimidating. Remember when Adam and Eve sinned they were suddenly ashamed of their nakedness? Suddenly they were aware of their imperfections. Have you ever gotten a job that you longed for but when you got it there was this terrible awareness that you really don't know how to do this job? The prospect of an evaluation terrified you. That is the condition of every human being before God. We all know that deep down we are incompetent to make our way through life. At the end of time there will be 2 kinds of people present. Revelation 6 tells us that there will be those who will call to the mountains and say, "*Fall on us!*" They will desperately want to hide. Isaiah 61 tells us there will be people who will say, "*I will rejoice greatly in the Lord. My soul will exult in my God for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has wrapped me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland and as the bride adorns herself with her jewels.*" We either stand before God naked and ashamed or we stand before God with our nakedness covered by the garments of Christ himself. Either way we shall be fully known.

John 10 says we will be known like the Father knows the son. If you read "The Shack" you have a deepened image of just how much the Father, Son, and Spirit delight in one another. To be invited into that fellowship is beyond my imagination! Imagine the Father knowing you as He knows Christ. The Son is the apple of His eye. And you get to enjoy that kind of relationship with God!

Let me share with you a great dilemma that we all feel. I want people to know me. I want you to know where I am from, what I have been through, what I am trying to do with my life. If you were to sit with me and ask me questions about me that gave you

answers to such questions I would be pleased to participate in the conversation. I want you to know me...up to a point. As that conversation proceeded you would at some point cross the line. You would want to know things about me that I don't want you to know. Do you understand that you will have that conversation with God and He will, to your surprise, say, "I already knew that about you. I knew about your dark side. I knew about your inconsistencies, your secret thoughts. I even knew about the sin that so easily besets you. But here you are, clothed in the righteousness of my Son. Well done, good and faithful servant..." Listen to the words of Jesus, "I know my sheep...just as the Father knows me." (John 10:14-15)

Would you just admit it? You want so desperately to be known. Some of you are working so hard to be beautiful, to be educated, to be accepted. You know why you do that? Because you are trying to cover your nakedness. There is part of you that is ugly and you don't want anybody to see it. Can I tell you something about Christianity that most of you don't seem to get? Christianity is all about being known!

In vs. 18 Jesus says, *"I have authority to lay down my life and authority to take it up again."* He will not be your Shepherd unless he is your Lord. Remember the first 2 words of the 23rd Psalm? *"The Lord is my shepherd."* Jesus is not asking you to come to church a little more or read your Bible a little more or increase your giving a little. He is saying, "You must surrender it all to me or I can do nothing for you." He is not asking for perfection. He is asking for submission. If you wish him to be your shepherd, acknowledge him as your Lord.