



April 26 – Our Need for Protection

Weekly Reading – John 10-14

Today's Passages – John 10:7-15, 27-30 // Psalm 23:1-6

Main Point

Jesus is the only One who offers us ultimate protection.

MAIN PASSAGES – JOHN 10:7-15, 27-30 & PSALM 23:1-6

John 10:7-15

[7] So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

[8] All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

[9] I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

[10] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

[11] I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

[12] He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

[13] He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

[14] I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

[15] just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. (ESV)

John 10:27-30

[27] My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

[28] I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

[29] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

[30] I and the Father are one.” (ESV)

Psalm 23:1-6

The LORD Is My Shepherd
A Psalm of David.

[1] The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

[2] He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

[3] He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
[4] Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

[5] You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
[6] Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (ESV)

Background

In both John 10 and Psalm 23, the imagery of shepherd and sheep would have been deeply familiar to the original audience. In the ancient Near East, shepherding was a common occupation, and sheep were entirely dependent on their shepherd for guidance, provision, and protection. Sheep were known to be vulnerable, easily led astray, and unable to defend themselves, which made the role of the shepherd critical. In Psalm 23, David draws from his own experience as a shepherd to describe God's personal care, protection, and provision for His people. The "rod and staff" were tools used for both defense against predators and guidance for the sheep, symbolizing both protection and correction.

In John 10, Jesus builds on this well-known imagery but gives it deeper meaning by identifying Himself not only as the "Good Shepherd" but also as "the door" for the sheep. This reflects the practice of shepherds literally positioning themselves at the entrance of the sheepfold at night to guard the flock. By contrasting Himself with "thieves," "robbers," and "hired hands," Jesus exposes false leaders who do not truly care for the sheep. His claim to lay down His life for the sheep points forward to the cross, revealing that His protection is not merely physical or temporary, but eternal and sacrificial in nature.

Christ Connection

These passages ultimately point to Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise to shepherd His people. In Psalm 23, the Lord is the Shepherd who provides, leads, and protects, ensuring that His people lack nothing they truly need. In John 10, Jesus makes it clear that He is that Shepherd in the flesh—the One who knows His sheep, calls them by name, and lays down His life for them. Unlike earthly leaders or temporary sources of security, Jesus offers ultimate protection through His death and resurrection, securing not only our present care but our eternal safety. Because He is the Good Shepherd, those who belong to Him can rest in the assurance that they are known, guarded, and held securely in His hand.

Life Group - The Flow

- 15 minutes - Conversation and relationship-building
 - 15 minutes - Year of Prayer guided prayer time
 - 5 minutes - Introduction (icebreaker, activity, or illustration)
 - 35 minutes - Study and apply the Bible
 - 5 minutes - Optional activity
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Year of Prayer (15 min)

Always pause and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your time of prayer.

Father God, Isaiah 45:5, leads us to praise You because You are the Lord, and there is no other; apart from You there is no God. Isaiah 9:6 and Daniel 7:9 reminds us that we are to praise You as the Ancient of Days, the Eternal Father who lives forever and ever.

- If you have words of praise to the Father, would you offer those up now. (Pause)
- As we are still before the Father, ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and reveal to you any unconfessed sin. Be quick to confess and repent, knowing that the Lord is faithful to forgive your sin and restore you to a right relationship with Him. (Pause)

Lord, we desire to align our lives according to Your Holiness.

Father God, we want to express words of thanksgiving for Your ongoing goodness to us. We can all pray in agreement that Your faithfulness to us is never ending. Thank You for Your mercies that are new every morning.

- **Do you have words of thanksgiving to share? If so, do so now. (Pause)**

Father, guide us in using our time wisely. You tell us to number our days. Help us make every day matter, may it count for Your kingdom as we live out Ephesians 5:15-16, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil." Colossians 4:5 tells us to "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity."

We pray for those who've never acknowledged You as their Lord and Savior. May they accept the teaching of John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

- **Would you speak aloud the names of those for whom you are praying for salvation? Speak those names now. (pause)**

May those whose names that were spoken be open to the Holy Spirit, as You work to draw them unto Yourself. Holy Spirit, we ask You to continue to guide our thoughts, revealing to us how You desire for us to express our petitions and intercessions. We ask that we always allow You to guide our steps. Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to "trust in the Lord

with all our hearts, and do not lean on our own understanding, in all our ways acknowledge Him and He will make straight your paths.” May this be true in our lives.

- **Have group members start with those we are Asking God to Save:**
 - **Friends**
 - **Family**
 - **Co-workers**
 - **Others**
- **Then have group members share Prayer Requests**

Father, we desire to know You more deeply and experience more of Your presence in our lives. May we exercise the discipline needed to carve out more time to be with You. Help us, Lord, to submit to You in all things, acknowledging that our steps are established by You, as we delight in Your ways. Increase our hunger for Your Word, so we might delight in Your ways with each breath we take.

With hearts full of joy and anticipation, we pray in agreement in Jesus’ Holy name. Amen

Introduction (5 min)

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

There was a show called *It Takes a Thief* where a professional burglar would break into someone’s house – with their permission – to expose how secure it really was.

And almost every time, the homeowners were confident going in.

They thought their locks were solid, their systems were enough, and their home was safe.

And almost every time, the thief got in – easily!

It exposed something uncomfortable: what they trusted to protect them wasn’t actually strong enough.

Like those homeowners, we tend to put our security in things that feel strong: money, stability, relationships, control.

But the real question is, *What actually protects us?*

OR you can use this introduction:

In the time of Jesus, shepherds didn’t always have sturdy pens or gates like we might imagine today.

Often, they would gather their sheep into a simple enclosure—maybe made of stones—and at night, there was only one opening.

And the shepherd himself would lie down across that opening, literally becoming the door.

If anything wanted to get to the sheep - a wolf, a thief, a predator - it had to go through the shepherd first.

Which meant this: the only way the sheep were safe was if the shepherd stayed there.

The sheep couldn't defend themselves. They couldn't outsmart danger. They couldn't secure themselves.

Their safety depended entirely on the shepherd.

Ask:

- What stands out to you about that kind of protection?

Transition to Passage 1:

In John 10 and Psalm 23, we're going to see that Jesus doesn't just offer temporary security—He offers ultimate, unshakable protection as our Good Shepherd.

Study and Discuss (40 min)

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says about a particular topic.

Teaching Toolbox Tip

The “Clarify the Image” Method

Biblical passages often use imagery (like shepherd and sheep) that can feel distant from modern life. Take a moment to briefly explain what those images meant in their original context before asking discussion questions.

How to Use It

Before discussion, say something like:

“In this passage, sheep weren't strong or independent—they were completely dependent on their shepherd for protection and direction.”

Then ask your question.

Tip: A quick 10–15 second explanation can make the passage much clearer and lead to better discussion

Passage 1 – John 10:7-15, 27-30

READ THE PASSAGE – Have a volunteer read John 10:7-15, 27-30.

John 10:7–15

[7] So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

[8] All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

[9] I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

[10] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

[11] I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

[12] He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

[13] He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

[14] I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

[15] just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. (ESV)

John 10:27–30

[27] My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

[28] I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

[29] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.

[30] I and the Father are one.” (ESV)

Commentary

Leader Prep: Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

10:7, 9. Jesus’ reference to Himself as the door may hark back to messianic readings of passages such as Ps 118:20.

10:8. All who came before Me may hint at messianic pretenders who promised their followers freedom but led them into armed conflict and doom instead (Ac 5:36–37; 21:38). The reference to thieves and robbers is reminiscent of the reference to Israel’s shepherds “who have been feeding themselves” but not the flock.

10:9. Jesus is the door to salvation (cp. 14:6). The NT elsewhere speaks of “entering” God’s kingdom as through a door (Mt 7:7,13; 25:10; Ac 14:22). Will come in and go out echoes covenant terminology, especially blessings for obedience (Dt 28:6; cp. Ps 121:8). It is also reminiscent of Moses’ description of Joshua, who led Israel into the promised land (Num 27:16–17). Find pasture depicts the assurance of God’s provision (1Ch 4:40; Ps 23:2; Isa 49:9–10; Ezek 34:12–15).

10:10. Jesus' promise of abundant life in the here and now brings to mind OT prophetic passages such as Ezek 34:12-15,25-31.

10:11. Jesus is the good shepherd. In the OT, God as the true shepherd is contrasted with unfaithful shepherds whom God will judge (Jer 23:1-4; Ezek 34; Zech 11:4-17). David (or the Davidic Messiah) was also depicted as a good shepherd (2Sam 5:2; Ps 78:70-72; Ezek 37:24; Mic 5:4), as was Moses (Isa 63:11; cp. Ps 77:20). The reference to the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep calls to mind young David (1Sam 17:34-37).

10:12. The hired man does not care for the sheep and abandons them in times of danger. The hired hands of Israel (Ezek 22:27) are contrasted with God and His Messiah, whose role is patterned after God's "good shepherd" par excellence, King David (1Sam 17:34-36).

10:16. The other sheep... not of this fold refers to Gentiles (Isa 56:8). Jesus envisioned a future Gentile mission following His death on the cross. One flock, one shepherd alludes to Ezek 34:23; 37:24. Believing Jews and Gentiles will be united into one messianic community.

10:24-25. The demand, If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly seems like double talk (Lk 22:67). If they had not understood Jesus' claim to be the Messiah, why did they repeatedly try to kill Him? (Jn 5:18; 7:25; 8:59). Indeed, Jesus responded that He did make this claim.

10:26-29. Snatch (vv. 28-29) denotes the use of force. The comment contrasts with the figure of the hired man in verses 12-13 who abandoned the flock in times of danger, and recalls OT statements that no one can rob from God's hand (Isa 43:13).

10:30. Jesus' claim that He and the Father are one (cp. vv. 33-38; 5:17-18) echoes the Shema, the basic confession of Judaism (Dt 6:4) and amounts to a claim to deity. Jesus' unity with the Father is later said to be the basis on which Jesus' followers are to be unified (Jn 17:22).

Guide Discussion

Leader Note: You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage.

1. **Good for Students.** To what does Jesus compare His followers, and to what does He compare Himself? Why do you think He chose those images?
2. **Discuss.** In this passage, what separates the Good Shepherd from the hired hand, and why does that matter?
3. **Discuss.** What is the significance of Jesus calling Himself "the door," and what does that tell us about how we experience His protection?
4. **Deeper Dive.** What causes Christians to question their security in Christ, and how does this passage challenge those doubts?

Transition to Passage 2:

"We've seen in John 10 who Jesus is—the Good Shepherd who protects and lays down His life for His sheep. Psalm 23 helps us feel what that kind of care and protection looks like in everyday life."

Passage 2 - Psalm 23:1-6

READ THE PASSAGE - Have a volunteer read Psalm 23:1-6

Psalm 23

The LORD Is My Shepherd

A Psalm of David.

[1] The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

[2] He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.

[3] He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

[4] Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

[5] You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

[6] Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
forever. (ESV)

Commentary

Leader Prep: Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

23:1. The Lord is often referred to as the shepherd of His people, Israel (74:1; 80:1; Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:11-16). In the ancient Near East, kings were commonly known as the shepherds of their people. Since Yahweh is the true King, the title shepherd is most appropriate.

23:2-3. Lets me lie down is a Hebrew form implying causality, showing that God is the cause of the refreshment. Right paths might have a twofold idea. In keeping with the shepherd and sheep image, it can mean safe paths that are free from danger. In the larger context of Wisdom literature it refers to paths of righteousness, though usually that would contrast one path of life with another leading to death. The former idea is probably the primary meaning here.

23:4. Some argue that the Hebrew term tsalmaweth is related to an Akkadian word (tselem) that means "deep darkness." Others say it comes from two Hebrew words, tsal

and moth, and means “shadow of death.” It occurs approximately 20 times in the OT. It is clear that it implies intense darkness that represents extreme danger (Job 10:21; 28:3; Jer 2:6). “Darkest” fits this specific context, since it is in the darkest valley where the greatest danger (such as a predator) lurks for sheep.

23:5. The image shifts from shepherd to friend. The identification of Yahweh with a shepherd emphasizes His care and protection, but He is much more than that for a person who is in close fellowship with Him. While protection from enemies is still implied, it is intensified with the image of a banquet (table) that is served while the enemies look on. In Jewish society oil was a symbol for rejoicing (104:15) and was also used in the welcoming of guests (45:7; 92:10; Lk 7:46).

23:6. The verb pursue is commonly used for attackers, but here Yahweh’s goodness and faithful love are personified as the ones who chased the psalmist throughout his life. As long as I live represents the Hebrew “for the length of days.” This is equivalent to the parallel of all the days of my life. Though some translate this as “forever,” it is nowhere else used that way but always refers to one’s earthly life (91:16; Pr 3:2,16). Dwell (Hb yashav) is similar to the word for “return” (Hb shuv). In this verbal form, it differs only in the vowels. It is possible that the request is to return to the sanctuary of Yahweh throughout one’s life, although the preposition argues for the idea of “dwell.”

Guide Discussion

Leader Note: You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage.

1. **Good for Students.** What are some ways Psalm 23 describes God’s care and protection for His people?
 2. **Discuss.** Why might the “rod and staff” be comforting, even though they represent correction and discipline?
 3. **Discuss.** How do both Psalm 23 and John 10 help us better understand what it means to be part of God’s flock?
 4. **Deeper Dive.** What is our role in trusting and following the Shepherd, and how does that affect our experience of His protection?
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Optional Activity (5 min)

Choose one of the following activities if time allows.

Option 1: Under the Shepherd's Care

Transition from Passage 2: “We’ve seen who Jesus is as our Shepherd—but what does it actually look like to live like we believe that? Let’s think about that together.”

Time: 5 minutes

Supplies: Index Cards (you can find these in the resource cart along with pens/pencils)

Instructions

Say:

In Psalm 23, David describes what life is like under the care of the Shepherd—provision, guidance, protection, even in dark valleys.

Step 1 – Contrast

Ask the group:

- What would life look like for a sheep without a shepherd?

Call out answers:

- vulnerable
- anxious
- exposed
- easily lost
- no direction

Then ask:

- Now what does life look like for a sheep with a good shepherd?

Write or call out:

- protected
- guided
- provided for
- safe
- cared for

Step 2

Ask:

- Which of those two descriptions do you tend to embody yourself?

Step 3 – Call to Action (use the index cards)

- What would it actually look like this week to live like someone who is truly under the care of the Good Shepherd? Write down a couple of actionable items you can implement this week to help you trust in the care of God.

Option 2: Song Reflection - “He Will Hold Me Fast” by Keith and Kristyn Getty

Transition from Passage 3: “If Jesus truly is our Good Shepherd, then our security doesn’t depend on us—it depends on Him. As we listen to this song, think about where you need to trust Him more.”

Time: 5–6 minutes

Supplies: Index Cards (you can find these in the resource cart along with pens/pencils)

Instructions

Play the song as a group (or read a portion of the lyrics). Have members write down what stands out to them as the song plays.

Then ask 1-2 of the questions below:

- What line from the song stood out to you the most, and why?
 - How does this song reflect what Jesus says about holding and protecting His sheep in John 10?
 - What situations in life tend to make you question whether you’re truly secure—and how does this passage and song challenge that?
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Final Takeaway and Prayer

After discussion concludes, read the takeaway statement:

Because Jesus is our Good Shepherd, we can rest in His care, trust His leading, and know that we are securely held in His hands.

Either pray something like the guide below, or invite someone in the group to close in prayer.

Thank Jesus for dying as your good shepherd. Rejoice in the abundance that you, as His sheep, get to experience. Trust in His goodness and in His protection. Ask that He would make you passionate about telling others how good and gracious Christ our shepherd is.