

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

On-Line Bible Study

Topic: John 10: 1 to 21

NOTE: This is our third major section of the Summary Chart of John's Gospel. This chart is available elsewhere on our website. The overview of these seven sessions is to define the Word of God. This definition has two parts: "To do the work of God," and the "Validity of Jesus' Teaching." Today's session is the fourth study in this section. It is the fourth of four studies.

I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

II. A review of the Gospel of John chart reveals that the context for this chapter is the question, "How does The Shepherd help define the Work of God as revealed in the Validity of Jesus' Teachings."

To avoid the problem of making *The Shepherd* an object to be studied, view the shepherd as an experience. What is your experience of/as a shepherd? This is one of those images outside the mainstream experience of living in a Post-Scientific world. Obviously, Jesus lived in a pre-scientific world very familiar with the experience of being a shepherd. Since Jesus is using this image as a simile or a metaphor, the role of the "sheep" comes into play in this chapter. The gospel writer makes this clear in vs. 6 "Jesus used a figure of speech."

This is our first task— Before going on, take the time to name your experience of these words. While these images may not be in our personal experiences, it is possible to mine the experience represented in this words.

The following words cannot be glossed over without second reflection:

Sheep pen by the gate (vs. 1); shepherd of his sheep (vs. 2); the watchmen (vs. 3); gate (vs. 7); good shepherd (vs. 11); hired hand (vs. 12); Father (vs. 14).

Then, do a second reflection on these images: thief and a robber (vs. 1); sheep (vs. 3); stranger (vs. 5); wolf (vs. 12b).

III. The gospel writer is very helpful when he provides images such as "I am the gate" (vss. 7 - 10). Vs 9 is interesting. "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."

There are two experiences here on which to reflect. **The first** is the image of the gate. The sheep pass through the gate to salvation. Apparently, Jesus understands his role as The Logos/Christ. As we examined in last week's assignment, the human dilemma is such that we are FATED to live in a STATE of separation (or sin). Our only hope to experience At-One-Ment is to relate through something outside ourselves. This archetypal form is through The Christ as The Gate. Living through the Christ—or the Cross—provides the occasion for us to experience At-One-Ment. You have a personal relationship with me through The Cross (or Jesus the Christ), and I have a personal relationship with you through The Cross, and together we find our UNITY through the Cross.

In this way, we never have an immediate relationship to anything or anyone. Absolutely all of our relationships are viewed through the cross of Christ. The cross means that we are willing to sacrifice all our selfishness so that the welfare of another comes first. This is called a secondary relationship. In living this way, we experience At-One-Ment with neighbor, self and Perfect At-One-Ment. This applies to your friends, your spouse, your co-workers, the environment, and all of the toys you want (shotgun, new clothes, car, etc.).

The second image is that of salvation. To be saved is a transitive verb; it does something. Also, salvation is a noun describing the end result of the action. So, from what are we saved, and to what are we saved? Obviously, we are saved from our separated fate, and we are saved to At-One-Ment.

- A. Reflect on your experience of "the good shepherd." What is implied in the term "good?" Avoid "head trip analysis." What is your experience as/of a shepherd? Then, reflect on the significance of what "good shepherding" might be. It may be helpful to remember that Jesus reminded a person not to call him "good" because only God is good. Chew on this awhile.

Share, on-line, with the list serve your own reflections.

- B. Reflect on the significance of the words thief and a robber (vs. 1); sheep (vs. 3); stranger (vs. 5); wolf (vs. 12b). Keep your reflections as experiences or as "gut trip analysis." Share, on-line, with the list serve your own reflections.