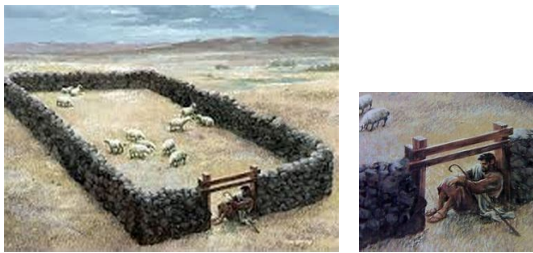


The Gospel of John

Lesson #86
The Journey
Jim Hoffman

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Village Sheepfold



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The Gospel of John

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, a total of 226,910¹ head of sheep and lambs were killed by predators in 2019 (the most current information available).

Common Predators - Coyotes were responsible for 46.9 percent of total predator kills on sheep, followed by dogs at 33.9 percent and mountain lions at 4.3 percent. Bears, fox, eagles, wolves and bobcats (among others) also prey on sheep and lambs.

The leading non-lethal control measures used to control predatory kills for the majority of sheep and lambs include fencing, night penning and shed lambing. Ranchers and farmers spent \$51.4 million in 2019 on non-lethal control measures in an effort to safeguard flocks, and another \$4.7 million in lethal control methods.

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The Gospel of John

- John 10:5 “A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”
- There is evidently something built into sheep to protect them from being led astray because he says plainly, “a stranger they will not follow”.
- So how might this apply to us? Born again people will not follow another Savior; they may follow purveyors of crazy fringe doctrines, but they will not follow a false savior.

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The Gospel of John

- John 10:6 This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.
- How fitting it is that right after saying sheep won't follow another shepherd, John writes that the “Jews” did not understand what he was saying – “my sheep hear my voice and follow”.
- I don't think the condemnation could be more clear – if the “Jews” did not understand this simple analogy, their hearts were not open to his teaching, and they were not his.

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The Gospel of John

- John 10:7 So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.”
- By now we know what the “door” of the sheep was – it was that space in the wall of the sheepfold where the sheep would go in and out with the shepherd.
- It was the only way in, the only way out, and was tended by a shepherd who was fully committed to the safety of his sheep.

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The Gospel of John

- You may recall from the book of Job how Satan was not able to do anything to Job unless it was permitted by God.
- Job 1:8 And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" 9 Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? 10 Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." 12 And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand."

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The Gospel of John

- The picture is the sheepfold – we are safely tucked in and trusting our Shepherd believing that nothing can get to us without his permission.
- This is a distinction – we do not believe no adversity will come to us. We believe no adversity will come without the Shepherd's permission.
- There are adverse things we must often pass through for our own good and the glory of the Shepherd – they may be painful but are ultimately necessary.

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The Gospel of John

- This tension between certainty and trust points to much more for our lives than just fate – God has a plan for us that must be lived out for us to be his sheep.
- You may want the certainty of a problem free life where no one ever loses their job, no one ever gets sick, and no hearts are broken – but that is not life in a sin filled world.
- Our Shepherd has a plan, and our calling includes residence in this world where God has others positioned to witness our lives as we go through adversity.

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The Gospel of John

- We revel in the safety of the sheepfold, but God’s purposes for us involve living in a dangerous world.
- Our souls are safe, but our bodies are far from being free from the dangers of the world – we need look no further than Jesus who experienced rough treatment from the world and promised trouble to his sheep.
- The Father could have kept the Son from the cross, but that would defeat his purposes for his descension from Heaven in the first place.

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The Gospel of John

- Okay, I’ve warned you that just because you are in the sheepfold you are still a sheep, and you must follow the Shepherd to graze and drink in dangerous places.
- John 10:8 All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.
- There were false teachers and false messiahs (especially in the 400 yrs of silence) who came as pretenders with malicious intentions.

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The Gospel of John

• Acts 5:35 And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. 36 For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 37 After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. 38 So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; 39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!”

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The Gospel of John

- Thieves and robbers – yes, their intentions were to transfer whatever wealth their targets had to themselves.
- The Jewish people had been promised a Messiah – when God stops speaking for 400 years thieves and robbers saw an opportunity to fill the void.
- Many of the deceivers that come along are simply entrepreneurs whose business is religion – they come promising to scratch whatever itch the sheep have. ¹³

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The Gospel of John

- John 10:9 I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.
- The door metaphor is easy to understand – Jesus wants to replace the false teachers and systems whose goal was to deceive the sheep.
- We will see in verse #16 the Good Shepherd has other sheep that are not of the flock of Israel that he will lead as well. (Gentiles) ¹⁴

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The Gospel of John

- John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.
- This verse is famous for delivering two powerful truths – one is a warning, and the other is a promise which can easily summarize the Christian’s walk through life.
- We’re promised an “abundant” life and a part of living the abundant life is being aware of the dangers around us so that we will stay close to the Giver of Life. ¹⁵

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The Gospel of John

- Ever wonder why this life for the Christian is somewhat akin to walking through a minefield where every moment is filled with a threat and a promise.
- If we were children, we would insist that God has made a mistake to allow the devil to be loose with the capability to harm us.
- When we grow up we understand that we benefit from the threat the enemy holds because if this life were a cake walk, we would not stay close to the Shepherd. ¹⁶

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The Gospel of John

- John 10:10 tells us in no uncertain terms the mission of the enemy, the language is quite blunt – our enemy wants to steal from us, kill us, and destroy our lives.
- And what you may not have considered is that Jesus means the devil’s mission is both figurative and literal.
- Remember Job – Satan was allowed to literally steal from him, kill his children, and in so doing nearly destroyed his life. Only God kept him from killing Job, himself. ¹⁷

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The Gospel of John

- We flirt with sin thinking at times it is some sort of game where we know where the line is that separates flirting with sin to participating in sin.
- We are often easy prey for the enemy as he appeals to our lust of the eye, our lust of the flesh, our pride of life.
- The person caught in this web thinks it’s exciting and fun while the enemy of our souls is playing for keeps. ¹⁸

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The Gospel of John

- We should note from verse #8 that the thief often operates through other people – people who are either willing disciples of, or dupes of the enemy.
- Jesus was referring to the “Jews” in this case – they came trying to fleece the sheep of God, but were limited by God in their effectiveness.
- Oh yes, thieves and robbers may come as a part of living in a fallen world, but the sheep of God are always under his watchful eye even if it seems otherwise. ¹⁹

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The Gospel of John

- Now, let’s turn to the promise – the abundant life. What is it, and would it help me to know how to live for Christ and experience his promises?
- Under the care and protection of the Shepherd, the believer can experience the best life can offer.
- Job said, “Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble” and he knew, perhaps better than anyone before or since, how precarious and tenuous life can be. ²⁰

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The Gospel of John

- Putting Job’s experience, orchestrated by God, along side Jesus’ promise of an abundant life should shake us free from assumptions we tend to make.
- And what are those assumptions? We tend to assume the abundant life is about care free living or about a Christian life of ease.
- We should assume the opposite – the abundant life is gained by serving the Lord and then growing via the experiences, and battles, that come with serving him. ²¹

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The Gospel of John

- Do you really want to be sitting around on the new earth someday recalling how it easy it was for you because you kept your head down stayed quiet?
- I was in the Army during the Viet Nam war, but I got some very bad advice at 18 and chose to enlist in the Army Reserves rather than go and fight.
- Do you know how I feel today when I hear the stories of those who went and fought – worse yet when I go to The Wall and see the names of the dead. ²²

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The Gospel of John

- All the wars in history have been brutal and bloody which is no doubt where the phrase, “war is hell” comes from – it’s not hell, just similar.
- We are in a different war as Christians – the enemy has many of our loved ones captured and locked up awaiting the time when their release is not even possible.
- Our fight today requires the same things as any war of the past – soldiers, commitment, and a will that refuses to avoid the fight and will not quit. ²³

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The Gospel of John

- The best Christian we know of was the Apostle Paul and I ask you - did Jesus not deliver on his promise to Paul to have an abundant life?
- Paul’s life was anything but easy, long, and care free – he was beaten, rejected, and beaten and rejected again, yet he is universally cited as a great Christian.
- Ecclesiastes 8:8 There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war. (Brethern, we are in a war) ²⁴

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The Gospel of John

• Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

• Do I think the above is the abundant life – yes, I do! ²⁵

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The Gospel of John

• No less than five times in John 10 Jesus says plainly, “I lay down my life for the sheep” – if that doesn’t sound like war then what does?

• Hebrews 2:10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

• Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” War!! ²⁶

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The Gospel of John

So, Jesus’ offer of abundant life in John 10:10 means that to gain Him as your Shepherd is far and away the greatest thing that could ever happen to you. This despite the certainty of being placed on Satan’s target list. It means that anything this world may either give to you, or take from you, doesn’t really matter that much, because a life awaits you beyond the present that greatly surpasses this one in every way. It means that for the one who has faith in Jesus, the best is yet to come. You see, the cross wasn’t a disaster it was a design – and it was not a tragedy, it was a strategy.

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From the Family Research Council

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Questions?

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