

## THE CARE OF THE SHEPHERD

John 10:1-11

By Raymond White

*John 10:2 He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. :3 To him the porter openeth: and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. :4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him for they know his voice.*

In Israel it was common to see shepherds leading their flocks across the hills looking for pasture. When the shepherds were not doing that, they left their sheep in a common fold watched over by a porter. The shepherd in this story is Jesus.

When he returns to the common fold to claim his sheep, the porter lets him enter. The porter is God.

What is the common fold? Is it the church? It can't be the church because the shepherd would not lead his sheep out of the church. It is probably not the world because that would leave the rest of the story inexplicable. The best answer seems to be Israel. The shepherd leads his sheep out of Israel to find new pasture. He doesn't drive them, he walks ahead of them and they follow. Wherever you go, Jesus has already been there.

*John 10:7 I am the door of the sheep. :9 ...by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved and shall go in and out, and find pasture. :11 I am the good shepherd...*

This is curious. It appears at first to be a mixed metaphor. How can Jesus be both the shepherd and the door? How can that make sense?

Here's how. When the shepherd takes his flock out into the field to find pasture, he kept them out for days, not returning to the common fold. How would he care for the sheep at night while he slept? He would build a little sheep fold out of mud or wood. The small enclosure had an entrance but no door. When the sheep were inside, the shepherd laid down at the entrance and became the door, his sleeping body blocking the entrance preventing the sheep from leaving.

During the day the sheep were free to roam around, enjoy the pasture, explore the world. But at night when the world got scary and dangerous, the shepherd brought them into the safety of the fold, that is to say, the church, and protected them with his own body.

Jesus Christ allows us to enjoy this wonderful world — we work, we play, we just live life. But it is also Jesus Christ, the shepherd-door, who protects us from it.