

# Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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**Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:**

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):  
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

**John 10:1-10**

Year A - Easter 4, Text: John 10:1-10  
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The contents of this section are a continuation of Jesus' attack on the Pharisees that surfaced previously in John, Chapter 9.

In this text, Jesus refers to Himself as the Good Shepherd (*the*, not *a*). The term shepherd denotes king and kingship. Here, note the references to shepherd in Psalm 23, Jeremiah 23, and Ezekiel 34, where the term shepherd means king. The language used in these Old Testament passages surfaces in John 10:1–10. The following cultural comments are helpful here.

In today's western world, those dealing with sheep walk behind the flock, as do also the sheep dogs that they use. However, in the world of the Middle East, the shepherd walks ahead of the flock and blows on a whistle or makes a noise that the sheep recognize, and then follow the one who blows the whistle or makes that noise. When two or three shepherds decide that they would like to spend some time talking with each other, their respective flocks mix together. But no problem! When the shepherds go their own way once again, they simply make the traditional call or sound, and the flock divides, with each sheep following its own shepherd.

A sheepfold is usually a circular area surrounded by a stone wall, open to the sky, with an opening or gate set in the wall. Someone can be stationed at the gate (a gatekeeper), or the shepherd himself (after leading his sheep into the sheepfold) rests/sleeps across the gate opening.

John 10:1-6 contains a figure of speech about the sheepfold; v. 7-18 contain four "I am" sayings that throw light on the meaning of v. 1-6. Jesus addresses the Pharisees' situation indirectly through the figures of speech embedded in this chapter.

**Verses 10:1-3a:** Jesus defines who is and who is not the shepherd by defining who has access to the sheepfold. The shepherd's identity is endorsed when the gatekeeper grants him access to the sheep.

**Verses 10:3b-5:** These verses focus on the positive relationship between a shepherd and his sheep, and the negative relationship between a stranger and the sheep.

**Verses 10:6-10:** The figure of speech Jesus draws on is found in Ezekiel 34:1–10 and 34:11–31. Ezekiel referred to the kings of Judah as bad shepherds who endanger the flock, and God has to intervene and tend His sheep until they can be entrusted to David's care.

Although Jesus' words point to the Pharisees as those who endanger the flock, they do not see this. They think of themselves as shepherds, not as a thief or a stranger. However, Jesus is the gate who provides His flock with life and access to His Father. And Jesus calls His sheep not merely to believe in Him, but also to follow Him. The implications are big indeed, for Jesus walked the way of a Servant-without-limit throughout His ministry.

