A truth that breaks borders, tears down religious walls, and continues to challenge the Church today

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Introduction: Was Jesus only for Israel?

One of the most repeated—and at the same time most misunderstood—ideas in the reading of the Gospel is this: *Jesus came only for the Jews*. It is true that He was born within the people of Israel, that He preached mainly in Galilee and Judea, and that His historical mission began “at home.” But to reduce the work of Christ to an ethnic, cultural, or merely temporal project is to have missed the very heart of the Gospel.

Jesus **was not sent only to the children of Israel of His time**. From the beginning, His mission had a **universal dimension**, even though it unfolded in a pedagogical and progressive way. This truth finds one of its clearest and most luminous expressions in **John 10:16**, when the Lord Himself declares:

> ***“I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.”*** *(Jn 10:16)*

These words are not a secondary metaphor. They are a **theological key**, a prophecy, and a roadmap for the Church of all times.

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1. The historical context: Israel as a starting point, not a limit

The election of Israel: a means, not an end

God chose Israel not for the sake of exclusivism, but for **mission**. Already in the Old Testament, the election of Abraham has a universal horizon:

> ***“In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”*** *(Gen 12:3)*

Israel is the **instrument**, not the final destination. It is the priestly people called to prepare the coming of the Messiah who would **save all**, Jews and Gentiles alike.

When Jesus says in Matthew 15:24,

> ***“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,”***
> *He is not denying the universality of His mission, but rather* ***marking the order of the salvific plan****: first the promise, then its expansion to the whole world.*

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2. John 10: the Good Shepherd and the universal horizon

“This fold” and “other sheep”

In John 10, Jesus presents Himself as the **Good Shepherd**, an image deeply rooted in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 34; Psalm 23). The immediate “fold” is Israel. But Jesus introduces a revolutionary statement:

> ***“I have other sheep that are not of this fold.”***

These “other sheep” are **the Gentiles**, the pagans, the nations that did not belong to the Mosaic Covenant. Christ affirms something decisive:

- **They are also His**
- **They will also be called**
- **They will also hear His voice**
- **They will also be part of the one flock**

There will not be two Churches, nor two paths of salvation.
There will be **one Shepherd and one flock**.

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3. Jesus was already acting with a universal mindset

Although His preaching focused on Israel, the Gospels are full of **clear signs of universal openness**:

- The healing of the Roman centurion’s servant (Mt 8:5–13)
- The dialogue with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4), a woman, a foreigner, and considered a heretic
- The faith of the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21–28), whom Jesus holds up as an example
- The parable of the Good Samaritan
- The adoration of the Magi—Gentiles—at the very beginning of the Gospel

Jesus **breaks religious frameworks**, not to relativize the truth, but to **show that salvation is not the property of one group**, but a gift for all.

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4. The Cross and the Resurrection: the universal turning point

It is after the Paschal Mystery that this truth is fully manifested. The final mandate is unequivocal:

> ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”*** *(Mt 28:19)*

The Cross tears down the wall that separated Jews and Gentiles (cf. Eph 2:14).
The Church is born **Catholic**, that is, **universal**.

Saint Paul expresses it with absolute clarity:

> ***“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free… for you are***

> ***all one in Christ Jesus.”*** *(Gal 3:28)*

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5. Theological relevance today: Christ does not belong to any faction

Against religious exclusivism

John 10:16 protects us from a temptation that is always present:
believing that **Christ belongs only to “our group.”**

- To one circle
- To one sensibility
- To a misunderstood tradition
- To a closed identity

Christ **does not dissolve**, but neither does He shut Himself in.
The truth is not negotiated, but **it is offered to all**.

The Church faithfully guards the deposit of faith, but she does so **for the world**, not against it.

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6. Practical theological and pastoral guide

How to live John 10:16 today

1. Listening to the voice of the one Shepherd

Before worrying about “the other sheep,” we must ask ourselves:

- Do I truly recognize the voice of Christ?
- Or do I follow ideological, emotional, or cultural voices?

 Practice: daily reading of the Gospel and an examination of conscience in the light of the

Word.

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2. Avoiding spiritual pride

Belonging to the visible “fold” does not guarantee interior fidelity.

 Practice: cultivate sacramental humility—frequent confession, awareness that faith is grace, not merit.

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3. Welcoming without relativizing

Christ calls everyone, but **He does not eliminate the truth in order to do so**.

 Pastoral practice:

- Welcome people, not justify errors
- Love the sinner, not bless the sin
- Bear witness with both charity and clarity

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4. Living a missionary faith in everyday life

Not everyone is called to go far away, but **everyone is called to radiate Christ**.

 Concrete practice:

- Coherence of life
- Clean and truthful language
- Real mercy
- Courage to give reason for the hope that is within us

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5. Trusting in the work of the Shepherd

Jesus does not say, *“Perhaps they will come,”* but rather:

> ***“I must bring them also.”***

The mission belongs to Christ. We collaborate.

 Spiritual practice: prayer for the conversion of the world, without anxiety or triumphalism.

Conclusion: one Shepherd for a wounded world

John 10:16 is not just a beautiful phrase. It is a **promise**, a **program**, and a **responsibility**.

In a fragmented world, polarized and weary of empty speeches, Christ continues to say:

> *“I have other sheep… and they will hear my voice.”*

The question is not whether Jesus was sent only to Israel.
The real question is this:

Are we today willing to let ourselves be used by the Good Shepherd so that those sheep may hear His voice?

Because in the end, it is not about enlarging a group,
but about **gathering all humanity under the one Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep**.