

## One Flock and One Shepherd

HN/SS 31/07/05 am LS

Reading: Zech 13, John 10:1 – 30

Study Text: John 10:15 – 18

Sing Psalms: 80:1 – 4; 79:8, 9, 10, 13; 116:1 – 7; 116:13 – 19; 80:17 – 19

Young People: dipping sheep.

The allegory of the shepherd and his sheep continues in this passage, but with unique developments. Jesus becomes more direct in his teaching as he brings out the reality of this allegory. It has been a most enlightening and encouraging allegory and continues to be so. Jesus is like a shepherd looking after his sheep – that is us. He knows his sheep intimately – and they know him. He leads them and feeds them; he protects them and provides for their every need.

As the good shepherd he is unique in that he lays down his life for the sheep. This is the principal lesson of this passage. A good shepherd will be prepared to die defending his sheep. But with the good shepherd, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, this is not a possibility, it is a necessity. Only by laying down his life can he save his sheep.

### Other sheep

Before we look at the realities which go beyond the bounds of this allegory we note that there is **one** flock and **one** shepherd. We do not have one shepherd with many flocks. So what does Jesus mean when he speaks of *other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring for they will hear my voice* (10:16).

This fold refers to the Jews among whom Jesus moved and ministered. He had occasional contact with Gentiles. Here as in other places he looked forward to the time when the Gentiles would be brought in. They would not be brought into the fold of the Jews but into the flock of Jesus Christ.

Under the Old Covenant God delivered the Jews out of bondage and brought them into the rich land. He shepherded them. But not all heard the voice of the good shepherd and followed him. Many refused to listen and to follow Jesus. The Gentiles had not yet heard the voice of Jesus but they would hear. Those whom he had chosen, the elect from among the Gentiles would hear and would join the flock, along with Jews who were similarly chosen and called.

*Them also I must bring.* Note the certainty with which Jesus speaks. He does not say them also I must invite. They will hear and they will come. They are predestined to come according to the will of God. Jesus was speaking with divine authority and divine certainty. If he has authority to lay down his life and to take it up again then we must accept that he has authority to save whom he chooses.

Jesus knew who were his – *I know my sheep*, they hear my voice and follow me. Is it not still the same today? Jesus knows who are his. All whom he has chosen will come to him and he will keep them in his flock. We have this assurance. He says later on in this chapter that *no one shall snatch them out of my hand* (10:28).

His sheep also know Jesus – *I am known by my own*. As a shepherd how well do you know your shepherd? We have the comparison of the Father and the Son knowing each other. We can never know as Father and Son know each other but the words are here – my sheep hear my voice, my sheep know me. Has not the shepherd revealed far more of himself than we currently know? Are we striving to know him better?

The scattering seen at the tower of Babel because of sin will be reversed by the good shepherd. He will bring together his chosen ones from all the nations! He will gather them all into one flock. Those who were afar off will be brought in; those who were estranged from one another in the flesh will be united in Christ – to the glory of God the Father and his son Jesus Christ.

## **Father**

Jesus could not go on teaching for long without making mention of his beloved Father. I am the good shepherd he said. But he was not alone in this; he was not alone when he lay down his life. His Father who had sent him into the world for this very purpose had not left him alone.

*The Father knows me, even so I know the Father*. There is a glorious oneness between Father and Son (10:30) and unity in their mission (5:19). Let it never be thought that ‘the love of the Son was triumphing over the wrath of the Father’. Jesus knew he had been sent by the Father to die for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). With the cross looming large before him, he prayed to his Father as he knelt in Gethsemane – take *this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done* (Luke 23:42). This scene in the garden wonderfully portrays the truth set before us in this verse (10:15).

As he walked in obedience to his Father’s commands Jesus knew his Father loved him (10:17). ‘The love of God the Father for the Son is eternally linked with the unqualified obedience of the Son to the Father’ (D.A. Carson). Even as Jesus went to the Cross he did not doubt the love of his Father. It was love for us that moved God to send his only Son to die for us. At the same time he loved his Son. This is the wonderful mystery of the Cross. It was all of the love and grace of God.

We see around us how Satan and his agents are seeking to bring hatred and fear into the world. Jesus also lived in times of oppression and fear. The Romans were oppressing the people of God. The Pharisees ruled by fear – the people feared to mention the name of Jesus. They were like hired hands, like thieves and robbers. But Jesus was different. Loved by the Father he showed love to his flock. He lay down his life for them because he loved them.

‘Jesus willingly went to the Cross to die for us. His death was not the death of a martyr who sinks at last overwhelmed by enemies, but the death of a triumphant conqueror who knows that even in dying he wins for himself and his people a kingdom and a crown of glory’ (J.C. Ryle).

## **Authority**

Jesus speaks prophetically about his death and his full authority/power over all that will come to pass. He will lay down his life; it will not suddenly be taken from him by the power of men. In fact Jesus speaks in the prophetic perfect as if it has already happened. *No one took it from me* is the best translation of 10:18. He repeats the fact that he ‘lays down his life’ four times in this passage.

It was important for his sheep, as well as for those who were going to kill him, to know this truth. Jesus told his disciples at the last supper *truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined* (Luke 23:22). He knew what Judas his betrayer was doing. Nothing is hidden from his sight. Nothing happens but that God in his sovereign will has planned or allowed it. To Jesus belongs all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). He gives life to whom he will; all judgment has been committed to him (5:21f).

## **Resurrection**

The authority of Jesus over his own life would be demonstrated not only in his death but in his being raised from the dead. He would lay down his life and he would take it up again. Now we have moved a long way from the allegory of the shepherd and the sheep you might say – but have we? The true shepherd protects his sheep and is ready to die in order to save them. This we understand – it is just that for Jesus this death was not just a possibility it was a certainty. The only way for Jesus to save us was to die for us.

Jesus' death satisfied the holy wrath of God that was upon us because of our sin – and remains upon all who do not come to Jesus. His death also out-smarted Satan who thought that by having Jesus killed he would have victory in this world. But it was the very opposite – Jesus won the victory at Cross.

Jesus said, in the words of Zechariah 'strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered' – but after I have been raised I will go before you to Galilee (Matthew 26:31). You see a dead shepherd cannot continue to lead and feed his flock. By his death he has saved us, but Jesus said *I have power to take it (my life) again* (10:18). He would rise from the dead to lead his flock for ever more.

The sheep would not be scattered for long for their good shepherd who died for them would rise again to lead and feed them all the way into eternity. What a blessed and wonderful truth. Do you understand it? Are you comforted by this truth?

Many thought these claims of Jesus were too fantastic to believe. They said *He has a demon and is mad*. Still today many will not believe this wonderful truth and so have no shepherd to watch over them and bring them into the eternal security of heaven.

How wonderful these words must have sounded to the poor beggar Jesus healed. He would have been assured that he had trusted in the right person, the very Son of God. He trusted in the good shepherd, the *great shepherd of the sheep who through the blood of the eternal covenant will make you complete in every good work to do his will, working in you what is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen* (Hebrews 13:20 – 21).

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