

40. The Good and Powerful Shepherd

July 10, 2011

As many of you have noticed, Jesus as the Good Shepherd is one of the most recognizable of Christian art images. The majority of them beautifully portrays the image of the gentleness of our Lord as the Good Shepherd. Yet it somehow does not convey our Lord as the powerful Protector against the spiritual thieves and robbers as well as the Ultimate Sacrifice who willingly died for His sheep.

The word 'good' means "morally excellent; virtuous; righteous; pious; satisfactory in quality." It also has an underlining definition that contradicts the word 'bad'. You cannot call someone or something good unless there is someone or something bad. You got some good doctors, you got some bad doctors. You might have good lawyers then there could be bad lawyers. Those 99% of bad lawyers ruin the reputation of 1% of the good lawyers.

Our Lord's goodness was inherent in His divine nature. To call Him "good" is the same as calling Him "God" according to what Jesus said in Mark 10:

Mark 10:17-18 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" 18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

After all, only God is good, and we are not.

Some of the godly people named in the Bible were shepherds by occupation: Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David, to name a few. Even the prophet Amos was found among the shepherds in Toccoa when God called him.

Keep in mind that Jewish shepherds normally did not tend the sheep in order to slaughter them, unless they were used for sacrifice. Shepherds tended them that the sheep might give wool, milk, and lambs.

This morning, our Lord Jesus points out four special ministries that He performs as the Good Shepherd.

A. THE GOOD SHEPHERD DIES FOR THE SHEEP

John 10:11-13 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. 12 But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. 13 The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

In v11, we find that famous declaration, "I am the Good Shepherd." It is the fourth out of the seven of Jesus' 'I AM' statements in John's Gospel:

John 6:35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

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.

One very important thing we must remember is that Jesus didn't die as a martyr, or killed by men, rather He died as the Ultimate Sacrifice, willingly laying down His life for the incapable sheep – us.

Jesus contrasted Himself to the hireling who watches over the sheep only because he is paid to do so. But when there is danger, the hireling runs away, while the true shepherd stays and protects the flock.

I want all of you to pay attention to a couple of phrases in these three verses regarding the hirelings:

1) he who is not the shepherd

Notice that Jesus doesn't even acknowledge these hirelings as shepherds. There are many so-called Bible teachers and preachers around the world who con their congregation for their monetary gains. They are the spiritual robbers and thieves Jesus talks about. If you are supporting these con artists who are on Christian TV and begging for money from people yet they are living in exorbitant luxuries, you are only enabling their carnality.

2) one who does not own the sheep

These hirelings do not have ownership of the flock. They could care less about the sheep. A good example is the formerly blind beggar who was thrown out by the Pharisees.

Jesus was not one bit concerned about the Pharisees' self-esteem or social position. Certainly in making this statement, He is contrasting Himself to the false self-proclaimed shepherds who were in charge of the Jewish religion of that day.

I am sure that you all notice that God's Word is not a crowd pleaser at all. Our God is not a politician who is concerned about what people might think about him or her and change one's opinion according to the ones who make the most noise.

B. THE GOOD SHEPHERD KNOWS THE SHEEP

John 10:14-15 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. 15 As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

As we learned from v3, our Shepherd Lord Jesus knows our names. It is more than intellectual awareness, rather it speaks of an intimate relationship between God and His people.

Our God knew us before the creation of the universe.

Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.

Do you know what one of the most mind-boggling things about our God is? He knows everything about us including all the hidden sins and failures that we don't want anyone to know, yet He still loves us. That doesn't mean that He is winking at our sins and saying, "Kids must be kids." No way in the world our God would dilute His holiness, righteousness, and justice for the sake of His love for us. It just means that despite all of our shortcomings, He still loves us. Our Lord knew what He was getting. There is no surprise to our God.

An old rich grandfather who was losing his hearing badly went to his doctor and got a hearing aid and it worked. A couple of weeks later he went back to the doctor and

said, "Doctor, these things are so great I can even hear conversations in the next room." The doctor said, "Oh, that's wonderful. I bet your family is really glad that you can hear." He said, "Well, I haven't told them. I've just been listening and listening and getting to know my family a lot better. And guess what, doc, I've changed my will twice already."

Throughout the Bible, God's people are compared to sheep. This comparison can be a compliment as well as a not-so-compliment. Generally sheep are clean animals, unlike pigs and dogs. Some of you might say, "No, no, no. My dog is clean." Really? I don't think you've seen what your dog does when it has nothing else to do.

By nature, sheep are stupid, defenseless, and prone to get into danger as we are prone to wander away from our Lord Jesus; and as sheep need a shepherd to care for them, we all also desperately need Jesus.

Another thing we must see throughout the Gospels is the way Jesus dealt with individuals. It is worth noting that Jesus never dealt with any two people in exactly the same manner.

As the shepherd cares for the sheep, the sheep get to know their shepherd better. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep and His sheep know Him. They get to know Him better by listening to His voice – the Word – and experiencing His daily care. As the sheep follow the Shepherd, they learn to love and to trust Him. Jesus is worthy of our total and complete trust, amen?

C. THE GOOD SHEPHERD BRINGS OTHER SHEEP INTO THE FLOCK

John 10:16 And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

As we learned last Sunday, the fold is Judaism, but there is other sheep – the Gentiles who are outside of the covenants of Israel. In our Lord Jesus' early ministry, He concentrated on the lost sheep of Israel. But the people who were converted at Pentecost were Jews and Jewish proselytes in Acts 2. The church was not to remain for the Jews only, but also to be spread out to the whole world. Apostle Peter and Paul took the Gospel out to the Gentile world according to chapter 10 and 13 of the Book of Acts.

While the blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient for the salvation of the entire world, it is efficient only for those who choose to believe.

The early Christian Bible translator Jerome, when translating his influential Latin version of the Bible, a.k.a. Latin Vulgate mistakenly translated 'one fold ('aule' in Greek)' instead of 'one flock (poimne in Greek)' in this verse. KJV was very much influenced by the Latin Vulgate so it also has "fold" instead of "flock".

John 10:16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. KJV

D. THE GOOD SHEPHERD TAKES UP HIS LIFE AGAIN

John 10:17-21 Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I

have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.” 19 Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings. 20 And many of them said, “He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?” 21 Others said, “These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

Whenever you see the death of Jesus Christ mentioned in the NT, you also see the resurrection of Christ within the close vicinity. You cannot separated one from the other. Because if Jesus died for our sins and remained in the tomb, He was no more than another so-called god in a tomb. But He conquered death and rose again. He overcame death so that we also may overcome death. According to the Book of Revelation chapter 21, there won't be any more death for those who are born-again once Jesus comes back to earth at the Second-Coming of Jesus right after the Great Tribulation.

Revelation 21:4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

Sometimes the Scriptures teach that it was the Father who raised the Son in Acts 2:32; Romans 6:4; Hebrews 13:20. Here, the Son stated that He had authority to take up His life again. And according to Romans 8:11, the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. Which one is the right one? Some self-appointed Bible critics say that they found a contradiction in the Bible and they glee. Too much of their disappointment, all three are true, because the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit worked together in perfect harmony.

It doesn't surprise us that Jehovah's Witnesses deny that Jesus could take His own life up again. But we are surprised to see Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, Fred Price and the other teachers of the Word of Faith movement teach that Jesus was a helpless victim in hell, saved only by the intervention of God the Father.

Kenneth Copeland brashly pronounced God to be the greatest failure of all time, boldly proclaimed that “Satan conquered Jesus on the Cross” according to his own version of Holy Bible: Kenneth Copeland Reference Edition in 1991 and describes Christ in hell as an “emaciated, poured out, little, wormy spirit” according to what he said on his television program “Believer's Voice of Victory” that was aired by TBN April 21st, 1991.

Yet, despite such statements, his cohort Benny Hinn ominously warned that “those who attack Kenneth Copeland are attacking the very presence of God!” in his TV program that also was aired by TBN June 8th, 1992. Their favorite defensive line is “Touch not God's anointed.” There is a Greek word for that: Hogwash.

Now it would seem that anyone under the care of the Good Shepherd would never go astray or need restoration. But sadly that is not the case. As we learned, sheep are incredibly stupid. And people are that way too. For example, why do we run from God? Why do we disregard His plan for our life? Why do we not trust Him when He has been absolutely and perfectly faithful to us all this time? You know it's amazing. We will break God's commandments and ignore His Word. Then when we begin to reap what we sow, we will actually get mad at God for a spiritual valley that we created ourselves.

The good news is that the Bible speaks of how God will restore us. Psalm 23:3 says *"He restores my soul."* Do you need restoration? Maybe you have strayed into sin or gotten yourself into trouble and you are in desperate need of His forgiveness. Perhaps you have this image that God is going to hunt you down and punish you for what you have done and send you to hell right away. No, God loves you very much and misses you. Just as Jesus told the story of the shepherd who left the 99 sheep to go after that one stray sheep, God is seeking you out right now, and wanting to put you back on your feet.

If you need restoration or salvation for the first time, don't be afraid to turn to the Good and Powerful Shepherd, Jesus today.

E. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Jesus was not a martyr, or killed by men. He died as the Ultimate Sacrifice for us.
- 2) Don't let anyone make you think that Jesus was a helpless victim on the cross and in hell. That is a lie from satan himself. He victoriously rose from the dead.
- 3) There is no surprise to our God. He knows everything about us including all those hidden sins. Confess them to Him only, not to a man. He will restore you and bless you.