

# The good shepherd of the sheep

Christ Church: 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024 10.00 am. & online  
John 10:11-18 page 1076

This reading is the Lectionary one for this Sunday and continues the theme of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. We look at four key ideas from our title in an adjusted order.

## 'Shepherd'

'I am the good *shepherd*' is repeated in vv11 & 14, one of seven 'I am' sayings in John's gospel.

But we need to UNlearn some common ideas about shepherds. They were *not* like the sentimental or heroic Sunday School pictures or cute TV shows about lambs.

It was a dirty, uncomfortable and dangerous role undertaken by an underclass of people. Finding pasture would not have been easy, and wild animals posed dangers. Yet Jesus portrays himself being like one. Ponder that.

## 'Good'

'I am the *good* shepherd' is repeated in vv11 & 14.

But we need to UNlearn this being just morally good. The word translated 'good' has overtones of being attractive, even beautiful. Think of Jesus having a compelling appeal because of his love. He is good because:

- He lays down his life for the sheep (vv11,15,17,18) and the word 'for' in John always has overtones of sacrifice.
- He sticks by his sheep (vv12,13)
- He cares for them (v13).
- He knows and is known by the sheep in a relationship likened to that between God and Jesus (vv14.15).

## 'The'

'I am *the* good shepherd' is repeated in v11 & 14. Not 'a' but 'the'.

We need to UNlearn this being just a NT picture. It comes often in the Psalms (eg. Psalm 23) and the Prophets (eg Zechariah chapter 11) and especially so in Ezekiel chapter 34.

Read Ezekiel 34:2-6 of the failure of useless shepherds (the picture is for leaders of the people) and God taking over their role to rescue the flock (34:11-). This is where Jesus got his picture from by saying 'the' good shepherd rather than 'a' good shepherd, and the people would have recognised that. We need to know the OT to understand correctly the NT.

In Ezekiel God is seen as the good shepherd but so is David – a reference to the Messiah (read 34:23,24). Then read 34:30,31. This is then widened to the gentile world too in John 10:16.

We need to read and study Ezekiel 34 if we are to grasp the real meaning of John 10. We need to look back to the OT to understand the incredible relationship believers have with Christ!

## 'Sheep'

We cannot leave this passage without considering the sheep the shepherd cares for. Jesus knows his death for the sheep is coming (v15) but also the resurrection (vv17,18) because a dead shepherd can hardly care for the sheep.

But if we need to look back to the OT we also need to look forward to the Church. In Acts 20:28-31 Paul uses the same picture and ideas for the church leaders in Ephesus. They are now the shepherds of the flock or, rather, under-shepherds, under Christ. Pray for CC leaders, clergy, speakers, PCC caring for the flock.

But all this applies to us individually too. Last week Dele suggested that one of the OT passages Jesus might have pointed to on the road to Emmaus might have been Isaiah 53 and our passage today takes us back there too.

Isaiah 53:6 'We all, like sheep, have all gone astray, each one of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all'.

This is the incredible backdrop to John 10. Do we know this in our own lives? Have we accepted Christ's death to rescue us? Have we accepted his resurrection and his presence in our lives today, giving us everything we need as our 'best' shepherd?