

Sermon Notes - April 26, 2015, Pastor Alan Smith

"The Good Shepherd"

Let's play a game - "Pastor Says." It's like playing "Simon Says." Do you remember playing that game or playing follow the leader? When we played following the leader, the leader tried to make it as hard as possible to follow him. In the Middle East, the sheep are not driven by the shepherd but they follow.

There are two things I want us to look at today:

- The shepherd and the sheep
- Let's look at the sheep first

Throughout the Bible, God's people are compared to sheep; and the comparison is a good one. Sheep are clean animals, unlike pigs and dogs:

(2 Peter 2:20-22) 20 And when people escape from the wickedness of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then get tangled up and enslaved by sin again, they are worse off than before. 21 It would be better if they had never known the way to righteousness than to know it and then reject the command they were given to live a holy life. 22 They prove the truth of this proverb: "A dog returns to its vomit."* And another says, "A washed pig returns to the mud."

They are defenseless and need the care of the shepherd:

(Ps. 23). The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. 2 He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. 3 He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. 4 Even when I walk through the darkest valley,* I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. 5 You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. 6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

They are, to use Wesley's phrase, "prone to wander," and must often be searched for and brought back to the fold:

(Luke 15:3-7). 3 So Jesus told them this story: 4 "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. 6 When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' 7 In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!

Sheep are peaceful animals, useful to the shepherd. In these and other ways, they picture those who have trusted Jesus Christ and are a part of God's flock.

We are sheep, or at least I hope we are. The sheep in our scripture knows the voice of their shepherd:

(John 10:2-3) 2 But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

To be a sheep we need to have a relationship. Not just a casual relationship, but one that is intimate. The sheep recognize his voice and come to him and he calls them by name and leads them.

First, we as the sheep need to know His voice and the only way to know His voice is to have a relationship with Him. Jesus is not here physically, so we don't interact with Him the way we interact with each other. We have to hear His voice internally. We have to know that God is talking to us. How do we know this?

We need to build that relationship through reading the scriptures, prayer, and a time of quiet worship before God. It is in these disciplines that we learn to hear the voice of the shepherd.

You see, God doesn't scream at us. He speaks to us in a still small voice. As I get a little older I am finding out that I have issues with hearing out of my right ear. I can hear out of that ear, it is just a little more difficult and especially in a noisy room.

So I have to listen more intently. Some of us are a little hard of hearing and it's not because of an ear problem, but because of a relationship problem.

Some think they can just get by and do the minimum. Jesus did not do the minimum for us. Jesus declares in this scripture that He is the good shepherd and the good shepherd sacrifices His life for His sheep. Jesus is not like the hired hands or the priests of His day who abandon the sheep; who are only worried about their pay. Jesus loves His sheep and knows them. We are those sheep and Jesus knows each of us!!!

Jesus has sacrificed Himself for us. Jesus gave it all to pay our debt. Jesus is that good shepherd that loves us, takes care of us, and leads us.

Do you believe it?

Is Jesus your Good Shepherd?

If Jesus is your good shepherd, then what kind of sheep are you?

Do you hear and know His voice?

Are we as His sheep totally committed to Him?

Do we just do the minimum?

In today's world, God doesn't want us to do the minimum.

He doesn't want just part of us!

He wants all of us!

He wants us to serve Him completely!

Are you ready to be the sheep that God wants you to be?

Are you ready to give Him your all?