

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

John 10: 1-14

When David, the Psalmist, spoke those words, I doubt that he ever dreamed that they would be written down, and then become some of the most familiar words in the Bible.

Even among those people who do not consider themselves Religious, there is an interesting familiarity with those time-honored words.

When one is found in a condition that seems to be hopeless, or is in sorrow, or is facing bereavement, those words flash upon the mind and heart in a most wonderful and special way.

Seldom have I met with a bereaved family or attended a funeral service without either hearing those comforting and uplifting words, **OR** speaking them myself.

And they have meaning for every experience of life. **THE DANGER OF OUR FAMILIARITY WITH THE WORDS, HOWEVER,** is in failing to experience the freshness, the vitality, the **POWER**, and the Reality of this truth - That the **LORD** wants to be the **SHEPHERD** of our lives in Every experience - every moment - **EVERY DAY!**

Now, the **image of the Shepherd** is common throughout the Bible. There is good reason for that. Sheep and Shepherds were everywhere.

It may be difficult for those of us who have spent most of our lives in a city to realize how important sheep were to those living in Biblical days. Even living among cows and chickens here in Lebanon County these days, we may forget that sheep in Bible-times provided both food and clothing - a main source for both. Their lives, literally depended upon sheep! **And the keeper of the sheep - the Shepherd** - was so extremely important to them. He protected the sheep from predators, he watched over them both day and night, he led them to still waters to drink, and to green pastures to feed.

I remember so well one day as my wife and I were driving along a country road in Germany when off to the side we saw a large flock of sheep. I stopped the car and looked at this unusual sight. And there in their midst was a shepherd leaning on his staff, waiting patiently for the sheep to feed and move on. I got out of the car, went over to him and asked if I could take a picture, which he agreed to by simply shaking his head, and saying not a word.

Even today, I wonder how many - or how few people in that village realize how dependent they are upon a shepherd like that, and the care he has for the sheep - night and day, on and on?

In the Bible, beginning way back in the book of Genesis chapter 49, verse 24, we see the Prophetic characteristic of the Shepherd as Jacob spoke to his sons about God as "**The Shepherd of Israel.**"

Isaiah, Chapter 40, verse 11 says, "The Lord God shall feed His flock like a Shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

The Psalmist praying to God in Psalm 80:1 said "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who leads Joseph like a flock."

Referring to sheep that are lost, Ezekiel 34:12 reads as follows: "The Lord says, As a Shepherd seeks out his flock, so I seek out my sheep and deliver them."

JESUS WAS THE FULFILMENT OF ALL THOSE PROMISES OF GOD.

So in this Scriptural passage read this morning from the tenth chapter of John, we find Jesus speaking to the Pharisees who knew so well those Old Testament scriptures, and He said,

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD! THE GOOD SHEPHERD GIVES HIS LIFE FOR HIS SHEEP." vs 11.

FIVE THINGS TO NOTE IN THIS PASSAGE -

I. HERE CHRIST SPOKE OF REDEMPTION.

In fact, it seems as though He was saying that Redemption is one of the ways that you can determine who is the True Shepherd. The True Shepherd is the Redeemer.

In verse 1 we read, "He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."

The sheepfold is there - the sheep are in it - But **THE TRUE SHEPHERD** does not climb over the wall and assume the position of a shepherd by stealing the sheep.

Rather, he becomes the shepherd in the appointed way - for the **PORTER** - which in this case is **GOD**, chooses whom He will to be the Shepherd. And the Way He chose, was the Way of the Cross.

So Jesus earned the right to become the Shepherd by his own Sacrificial Death on the Cross on behalf of the sheep. By His own willingness to give up his own life for them, He became the Shepherd.

JESUS, THE RIGHTEOUS ONE, THE HOLY ONE, THE ANOINTED OF GOD, IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD!
VERSE 11, HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP.

That, my friends, is REDEMPTION. It is one of the most important and distinguishing characteristics of the True Shepherd.

REDEMPTION IS A VAST SUBJECT -

Whatever else it may mean to us, we must not forget that God has done for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Peter said in Chapter One, verse 18 "You know that you were not REDEEMED with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." -

YOU CANNOT REDEEM YOURSELF.

Paul said that Salvation is "not of works, lest anyone should boast, For by GRACE are you saved by Faith, and that not of yourselves, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD." Eph. 2:8.9. - WORKING will not get it for you!

The teaching of some religions tells a man that he must save himself - but that is not REDEMPTION. Now, we know a lot about redemption because of all the free coupons that are printed in the newspapers, on the internet.or given at the grocery stores.

Some of you are old enough to remember the omnipresent S & H Green Stamps. It seemed that with every purchase you made, no matter where, the merchant gave you those little green stamps. You could hardly wait to get home to paste them into a little booklet. You would then look in the catalog which had pictures of all the things you could get with your stamps. You longed for the day when you could go to the Redemption Center - and there was one right at the center of Lebanon - and get your gift.

And a similar experience happens today when the Dutchway Market gives you those "**Super Saver**" slips of paper, that in themselves are nothing more than paper - UNTIL they are redeemed for something good to eat, a Turkey, a Chicken, or some ice-cream.

THAT'S WHAT REDEMPTION IS ALL ABOUT.

Something that is useless is redeemed for something of Value.

The Sin we don't want - our brokenness - our despair - our defeats and failures - the emptiness of our lives - ALL are exchanged for the Love and the Forgiveness of God - given by Christ Who shed His blood on the Cross for our Redemption.

"Amazing Love, How Can it be - that Christ my God should die for me?"

Second. this passage speaks of LIFE

II. Christ himself said in verse 15 - "I lay down my life for the sheep."

That, my friends, speaks not only of Redemption and Forgiveness of Sin purchased by His sacrifice, but it speaks also of LIFE.

"I lay down my life for them." for what?

So they might have it.

JOHN SAID, in chapter 1 verse 4, "In Him - Christ - was life."

And Jesus said, "I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly. "

That is not the case with the hireling - the hired man who was paid to protect the sheep, but who when he saw the wolf coming, fled from the scene to protect his own life.

That was what happened in the previous Chapter when the Pharisees confronted the man who was born blind. They were not concerned with him and as John reported in Chapter 9 verse 35, they cast him out.

They rejected him!

But Jesus FOUND him and restored his SIGHT.

Jesus gave him NEW LIFE!

"FOR HE WHO HAS THE SON HAS LIFE - HE WHO HAS THE GOOD SHEPHERD HAS LIFE.

How thrilling it must have been for that blind man whose eyes were opened to a whole new life because of Jesus.

Charles Wesley was the brother of John Wesley, Founder of Methodism. John was the Preacher, Charles the Hymn-writer and Song-writer. He describes Life without Christ as being in a darkened prison shackled in chains. -

**"LONG MY IMPRISONED SPIRIT LAY
FASTBOUND IN SIN AND NATURE'S NIGHT
THINE EYE DIFFUSED A QUICKENING RAY,
I WOKE, THE DUNGEON FLAMED WITH LIGHT
MY CHAINS FELL OFF, MY HEART WAS FREE,
I ROSE, WENT FORTH AND FOLLOWED THEE."**

As I read those words I couldn't help but think of a man by the name of SCOTTY LAWRENCE who lived in Chicago.. His story is in a book in my library.

SCOTTY tells the story of his life and how it fell apart. He says that he became a down and out drunkard but tried to get control of his life and couldn't. He would even go to a department store and steal in order to be caught, arrested and sent to prison.

In PRISON, he said he got sober. But as soon as he got out his old habit took over.

But one day he wandered into the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago, a Christian Mission, like the Lebanon Rescue Mission on Sixth Street in Lebanon. There he heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ and I surrendered to the Savior. Sometime later he wrote this song,

"One day in sin I was told of a love,
Coming from One who is reigning above,
Gladly I listened, 'twas music to me,
To know though a sinner, I could be free.
SOMEBODY WHISPERED THAT JESUS LOVES ME.

HAS THAT HAPPENED FOR YOU?
HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED NEW LIFE IN CHRIST?

**III. This passage also speaks of FELLOWSHIP,
FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST,**

for in verse 3, still in John 10, Jesus said, "The Sheep Hear His Voice." - the voice of the Shepherd.

One of the songs we used to sing is titled "In the Garden."
We don't sing it much any more, though it is loved by many.

It was written by C. AUSTIN MILES, and my Mother used to tell me that he was a cousin of mine in an earlier generation. It was like, his grandmother was my great-grandmother's sister. Something like that. Isn't that impressive?

Anyway - listen to some of the words of that song.
"I come to the garden alone,
while the dew is still on the roses,
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear,
THE SON OF GOD discloses."

THE WRITER HAD MET JESUS!

THE PART I LIKE IS THE CHORUS:

AND HE WALKS WITH ME AND HE TALKS WITH ME - AND HE TELL ME I AM HIS OWN, AND THE JOY WE SHARE, AS WE TARRY THERE, NONE OTHER HAS EVER KNOWN.

My friends, Many today are missing something in their lives when they don't have an ear that is tuned to the Voice of the Shepherd - OR WALK WITH HIM DAY BY DAY.

It is one thing to be REDEEMED by Christ, but it another to be in Constant Communion or Fellowship with Him. In fact, we prove our **Redemption** through our **Fellowship.**

ARE YOU WALKING AND TALKING WITH CHRIST?

In First John: 2:19 we read, "They went out from us because they were not of us - for if they had been of us they would have continued with us." And Chapter 1:7 "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another."

In other words, IF WE DO NOT REMAIN IN FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM, we simply manifest that we are not his sheep.

"MY SHEEP KNOW MY VOICE," they are in fellowship we me. -LET'S READ ON -

IV. - Verse 4 in our Scripture Reading speaks of OBEDIENCE! "The sheep **follow the shepherd**, for they know his voice." -Surely, the Lord meant far more than Physically Following in his footsteps.

The Christian life isn't a child's game of "Follow the Leader." where if you sit, I'll sit; if you run, I'll run; if you climb the hill, I'll climb too.

There's more to it than that. That approach is only the beginning as we see so well in the life of Peter, James and John.

They heard the voice of Jesus and were obedient when He said, "Follow Me." They left their nets to be sure.

-But He also said, "I will make you Fishers of Men." And they became that too.

With courage and determination they braved the criticism and ridicule of unbelievers and showed what it really is to be a disciple and follower of Christ - and be obedient to Him.

HAVE you considered your OBEDIENCE to the Lord, lately?

ARE you where God wants you?

ARE you doing what He wants you to do?

ARE you what He wants you to BE?

DON'T GET ME WRONG -

It is not the preacher's responsibility to tell you God's will for your life, But it is his responsibility to CHALLENGE you to move to that position where you not only HEAR but HEED the voice of the Shepherd. Then to be able to say, "WHERE HE LEADS ME I WILL FOLLOW, I'LL GO WITH HIM ALL THE WAY."

V. And now, just one more look at our Scripture in John 10. "Jesus said, "I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD, AND I KNOW MY SHEEP."

KNOWING US - HE PROVIDES FOR US

He knows us as we really are.

He knows our **NAME**, our **NATURE**, and our **NEED**.

He knows our **STRENGTHS** and our **WEAKNESS**.

our **VIRTUES**, our **VICES**,

our **LONELINESS**, our **SORROW**,

our **PRIDE** and **OUR PREJUDICES**..

NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN
NOBODY KNOWS BUT JESUS."

And what a wonderful consolation it is that HE takes us as we are and meets the NEEDS of our lives.

That is **EXACTLY** what the Psalmist meant when he said, "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT."

- I shall not want for **SALVATION**, for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

- I shall not want for **PEACE**, for the shepherd says, "My peace I give unto you."

- I shall not want for **LOVE**, for God commends His love toward us even while we were in sin."

- I shall not want for **PROVISION**, for "My God shall supply all your need."

THESE ARE THE PROMISES OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

Summing it all up in FIVE WORDS:

**REDEMPTION - LIFE - FELLOWSHIP -
OBEDIENCE - PROVISION!**

CONCLUSION -

Many years ago - sixty-two - on June 10, 1950 -
In a little Presbyterian church in New Jersey, ISABEL
AND I listened intently as the minister declared that we
were now husband and wife - Mr. and Mrs. William
Zulker. Then, at that ceremony, our family and friends
joined together with us as we sang the words of a hymn that
have been our constant **prayer** through these many years -
- through thick and thin,
- through good times and bad,
- Summer and Winter,
- Night and Day.

THE PRAYER IS THIS:

"SAVIOR, LIKE A SHEPHERD LEAD US,
MUCH WE NEED THY TENDER CARE
IN THY PLEASANT PASTURES FEED US,
FOR OUR USE THY FOLDS PREPARE.
BLESSED JESUS, BLESSED JESUS,
THOU HAST BOUGHT US,
THINE WE ARE.

THOU HAS BOUGHT US,
THINE WE ARE.

My Friends,
Today, after our closing prayer I invite you to join together
in singing this song, and may it be a prayer for you, too.

Now let us bow together.

"O Lord, so often we struggle through life trying to make it
on our own.

We wander around like sheep who have lost their way.

Help us to know that you are The Good Shepherd, loving
us - caring for us - protecting - and guiding us.

Forgive us of our rebellion.

Give us the determination that TODAY, we will trust you
more.

In the name of Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Sermon given on May 28, 2012 by Rev. William Allen
Zulker at the Zion United Methodist Church, Myerstown,
PA.