



SERMON: 12 May 2019 – Robert Alexander

“The Good Shepherd” (John 10:1-6; 14-18; 22-30)

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|  | <p>There are many images we all enjoy of Jesus, but among the best loved ones must be that of the Good Shepherd.</p> <p>With the central plateau of Palestine consisting of rough and stony ground – the image of the shepherd is woven into their history..... and inevitably providing one of the most familiar figures the shepherd.</p> |
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Being a shepherd was a hard life:

- It was a 24x7 job (no flock ever grazed without a shepherd).
- With little grass around, wandering in search of ‘pastures green’ was a part of the shepherd’s everyday routine.
- The land was ‘Open Plan’ before the term had been thought about - No dividing / securing / barriers / to keep the sheep in place.... therefore they had to be constantly watched.
- Not only watched, but also protected from wild animals, thieves and robbers.
- They would protect the sheep with their own life.

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At night, they would often gather into a sheep fold, (cave, open area surrounded by wall, one gate (or doorway).• The entrance to the fold was very important whybecause that was the only way in or out.• At night the shepherd would lie down at the gate of the fold nothing out, nothing in (sheep safe / robbers and thieves out).• Often several shepherds would use the same pen. |
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Yes, this would indeed be the image of a Palestinian shepherd. But Jesus goes furtherHe said ‘I am THE Good Shepherd’

- One of the great “I AM’s”.
- NOT ‘a’, or one of many or ‘one of a select band’ ..., but THE (ie Jesus tells us, there is only ONE of me).

Referring to the sheep foldI am the gate for the sheep..... others before are thieves and robbers but my sheep have not listened to them, Sheep who enter fold through me will be saved / I’ll protect them.

Thieves come only to steel and kill..... By contrast, Jesus gives life in all its fullness to his sheep and to us: And we all recognise:

The words of our call to worship this morning:

Minister: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want

All: He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.

Perhaps words in Psalm 100 are a little less known:

Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

But ever so relevant.

¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd; said JesusI know my sheep and my sheep know me (The good shepherd not only knows the sheep in his flock they know him, the sheep recognise his voice). ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep

But that’s not the end of things.....there’s more:

¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep fold. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

One flock and one shepherd.

The struggle of exclusiveness: A problems in Jesus’ day and still I’d say a struggle for many today.

Once a people group get the idea that they are specially privileged ... it is difficult to accept that privilege is open to all, not just them and them alone. A struggle indeed for the Jews. They believed they were God's chosen race and that God had no proper use for any other nation. What Jesus was telling them was that there will come a day when all men, women and children will know Jesus as their shepherd.

One shepherd, one flock.

In the later part of our reading this morning,

We move on several months..... In his gospel, John tells us that the Jewish leaders got their chance to question Jesus. The Festival of the Dedication. This was the latest of the great Jewish festivals to be founded. It was sometimes called The Festival of Lights; and its Jewish name was Hanukkah. (falls very near our Christmas time and as you know is still widely observed by the Jews.).



Jesus was in Jerusalem, walking through Solomon's Colonnade (a roofed porch with tall stone columns located at the east side of the Temple. No doubt as Jesus walked, he taught and some would listen.

Then the Jewish leaders approached, "How long," they said to him, "are you going to keep us in suspense? Tell us plainly, are you or are you not God's promised Anointed One?"

(I like the bit tell us plainly....aye, so we can understand. Perhaps they should have requested a yes or no answer only.

There is no doubt that behind that question were two attitudes:

- 1) There were those who genuinely wished to know (perhaps some of them were seeking themselves)
- 2) But there were others who beyond any doubt asked the question as a trap. They wished to trick Jesus into making a statement which could be twisted either into a charge of blasphemy (speaking sacrilegiously about God) which the Jewish courts could deal with or a charge of insurrection (uprising against the authority of government) which the Roman governor would deal with.

Jesus' answer was that he had already told them who he was. They just did not understand. Of course, some claims do not need to be made in words.

There were two things about Jesus which placed his claim above and beyond all doubt:

- Firstly, there were his deeds. Every one of Jesus' miracles was a claim that the Messiah had come.
- Secondly, the very authority with which Jesus spoke was a claim that God was speaking in him.

But the great majority of the Jews had not accepted that claim. As we have seen in Palestine, the sheep knew their own shepherd's call and answered it; the Jewish Leaders were not of Jesus' flock.

Remember:

The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

They did not understand what he was telling them.

But though most did not accept Jesus, some did; for them and for us Jesus promised three things.

(i) He promises eternal life. He promises that if we accepted him as Master and Lord, if we became members of his flock, all the littleness of earthly life would be gone and we will know the splendour and the magnificence of the life of God.

(ii) He promises a life that would know no end. Death is not the end, but the beginning;

(iii) He promises a life that is secure. Nothing can snatch us from his hand. Trial and tribulations – yes, but in the sorest moment and the darkest hour we will still be conscious of His everlasting loving arms underneath and around us.

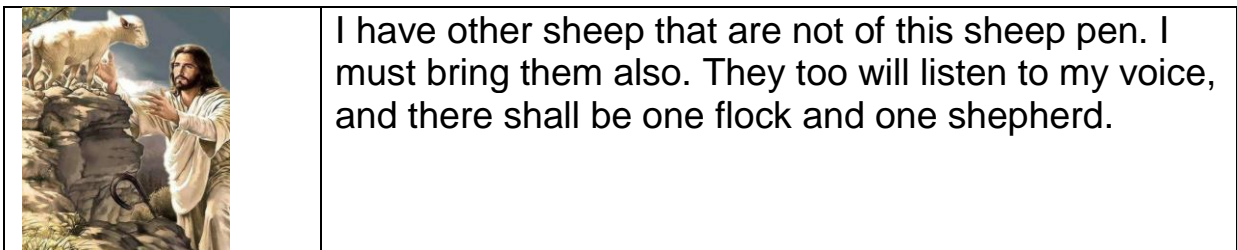
KEY point I ask you to take away this morning is:

It is only in Jesus Christ (The Good Shepherd) that the world can become one.

The only possible unity for all mankind is in their common son-ship with God. In the world there is division between nation and nation; in the nation there is division between neighbours / families / in the workforce. (BREXIT, Inderef2). The only thing which can cross the barriers and wipe out the divisions is the gospel of Jesus Christ telling of the universal fatherhood of God.

Please Note: The fact that there is one flock does not mean that there need be only one Church or one method of worship. But it does mean that all the different churches are united by a common loyalty to Jesus Christ.

(For all) To become one, Jesus said:



This is something every one of us can help Jesus to realize. People cannot hear without a preacher; the other sheep cannot be gathered in unless someone goes out to bring them in.

Christ depends on us; it is us who can help him make the world one flock, with Jesus as our shepherd.

Whose voice do we listen to:

The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

Through our bible, our prayers, our fellowship let us all listen to the guidance and direction we get from our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. May the Good Shepherd lead us where he wants us to go and guide us in what he wants us to do.

Amen.