

## The Good Shepherd John 10 v11-18 21st April 2024

This morning's Gospel reading is a familiar and powerful passage.

To get a better idea of what's going on I find it helpful to have some understanding of the setting. Where Jesus was and what was going on.

In the previous chapter - John 9, Jesus is approaching Jerusalem. Near the temple mount at the Pool of Siloam; He has really upset the Pharisees. He's healed a man born blind, and on the Sabbath! They are incandescent. How dare he.

In the midst of this controversy Jesus claims to be the Good Shepherd.

They refused to accept that Jesus was who He claimed to be. That was sacrilegious.

This man was blind but now he saw. The Pharisees didn't want to see.

They drove the man away.

Even the man's parents respond in a way that Jesus refers to when he talks of the hired hands who, 'see the wolf coming, leave the sheep and flee'.v13

This now seeing man, whose life had completely changed, believes in Jesus who has performed this astonishing miracle. And yet those who know and study the scriptures are blind to the truth.

He then makes a bold statement.

I AM

Jesus is referencing the encounter Moses had with God centuries before, when he asked God's name. (Exodus 3 v14) God replied, 'You shall tell the children of Israel this :I AM has sent you'.

In Greek it is '*ego eimi*' The same phrase in Isaiah 40-55, that God uses repeatedly to refer to himself. So, when Jesus says EGO EIMI he is subtly identifying himself with God - as God. (*EGG OH EM EE*)

John's Gospel has many EGO EIMI sayings

**I am he"** (4:26)

**I am the bread of life"** (6:35).

**, I am the light of the world"** (8:12; 9:5).

**I am the door"** (10:9).

**I am the good shepherd"** (10:11).

**I am the resurrection and the life"** (11:25).

**I am the way, the truth, and the life"** (14:6).

**I am the true vine"** (15:1).

Why did Jesus say, the GOOD shepherd.?

Part of it was that he was comparing himself with the unfaithful leaders of Israel, who were shocked at his answers and claims.

Also, the GOOD here means literally 'attractive' The Greek KALOS used in this verse, means that a thing or person goes beyond good to lovely, with strength and power. It may also mean, beautiful, virtuous, excellent and genuine.

There is nothing weak, feeble and anaemic about this picture of Jesus.

Most importantly, it is illuminating to understand who a shepherd was in ancient times.

People would have been very familiar with shepherds and their work. What it involved and the dedication and bravery required.

A good shepherd was someone who was watchful, resourceful and courageous, loving, patient and sacrificial too.

Two things to note.

1. These sheep were kept mainly for their wool and thus they would stay longer with the shepherd. A close relationship between sheep and shepherd developed.

The shepherd knew his sheep by name (v3), and the sheep were able to distinguish between the voice of their shepherd and the stranger. (v3-5)

2. In the Middle East, (and I saw this when I lived in Cyprus as a child) the shepherd led his sheep. He did not drive them and chivvy them along. He led, they followed behind, over difficult and often dangerous country.

At night, sheep were gathered into a pen to protect them from thieves, bad weather and wild animals. The pens were caves, sheds, or open areas surrounded by walls made with stones and branches. The shepherd would sleep with his sheep to protect them. He would lie in the doorway, across the narrow opening to the pen, ready to defend his flock. (v8-15). He was the gate/door (v7).

When Jesus said to the crowd, 'I am the good shepherd', he was offering to be their leader, and provide security, satisfaction and unity.

Interesting when we remember that at that time the Jews had no sense of security.

They were an occupied country and their religious leaders were like the hired shepherds Jesus spoke of; More interested in the pay than the well being of their flock.v11

A shepherd regularly risked his life searching for those of his flock who had wandered off, were stolen or had been injured. The terrain was rough and the threats were real. But those who were hired did not know the sheep or care as much. They often left them vulnerable to save themselves.

As we follow the shepherd, however hard the way, he will lead us on to find more and more satisfaction in him. In verse 10 Jesus says '...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.'

Jesus is clearly concerned about those outside the Jewish nation in verse 16. He lived in a divided world as we do.

He says he wants to bring them into the same flock. Not fold. But flock - that is, in relationship with himself, the good shepherd.

In giving his life for all men v18 he broke down the barriers that divide men from one another.

When I first thought about being a sheep, I was a little offended.!

But when I think of the care the shepherd takes of his flock, his daily sacrifice, his loving care for every detail of their lives, his protection and gentleness, his leadership, his seeking the lost and his desire to bring all...**ALL** people into his flock. I am humbled.

We are wandering around a bit lost most of the time. We NEED the Good Shepherd.

This is a powerful picture of the extravagant love of God, His son, Jesus' sacrifice and the gift of the holy spirit in guiding us. A God who cares for all and wants all men in his flock.

It is also a wonderful example of how our relationship with God is vital for our health, wellbeing and growth. Whose voice are you listening to? Who are you following? Are you distracted by others?

Whose voice ARE you listening to?

The inner critical voice, so loud sometimes?

External distracting voices?

Whose voice are you listening to?

Let's make sure we are focused on hearing our Lord's voice above all others.

Then..

We can be drawn into a love that stretches from before time into a future beyond time in the abiding presence of the shepherd -God.

My prayer is that this morning you have come to see how much God loves you. His focused and particular care of every detail of your life His desire for you to know his voice and follow him. May you live loved and may you rest in his care. Amen

A time of reflection now. Please be open to hear God's voice as I read Psalm 23

The Passion translation of Psalm 23

The Lord is my best friend and my shepherd. I always have more than enough. He offers a resting place for me in his luxurious love. His tracks take me to an oasis of peace, the quiet brook of bliss. That's where he restores and revives my life.

He opens before me pathways to God's pleasure and leads me along in his footsteps of righteousness so that I can bring honour to his name.

Lord, even when your path takes me through the valley of deepest darkness, fear will never conquer me, for you already have! You remain close to me and lead me through it all the way. Your authority is my strength and my peace. The comfort of your love takes away my fear. I'll never be lonely, for you are near.

You become my delicious feast even when my enemies dare to fight. You anoint me with the fragrance of your Holy Spirit; you give me all I can drink of you until my heart overflows.

So why would I fear the future? For your goodness and love pursue me all the days of my life. Then afterward, when my life is through, I'll return to your glorious presence to be forever with you!

**Gillian Robinson**