

John 10:1-21

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 August 2013

Preacher: Graham Weeks

[0 : 00] Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are a loving Heavenly Father! You are a great and mighty God, enthroned on high in the heavens,!

I usually say there are two kinds of people who should never apologise, and that's cooks and preachers, because the recipients of what they provide may not know any better. However, I'm going to break my own rule this morning with an apology to the children, that you haven't got a set of notes, and that is my fault. You'll just have to listen very hard and carefully, I'm afraid.

Jesus saying, I am the Good Shepherd, which we read, and Psalm 23, the Lord is my Shepherd, are among the best known of all Scriptures.

But I want us to look this morning at what does it mean to have God as our Shepherd. And look at this through the Scriptures. In fact, quickly from Genesis to Revelation.

[1 : 24] Now, there is, first of all, we must understand a huge difference. between shepherding in the Bible, and in our culture in Britain today.

Psalm 80, verse 1 says, Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock, You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, Shine forth.

What do we hear there? The shepherd of Israel leads the flock, leads his people. If you've ever seen a shepherd at work in this country, you'll know it's different.

He drives the sheep, probably with the aid of one or two dogs. If you ask me a picture of the shepherd in this country, it's seeing my cousin in the Yorkshire Dale, standing with me on one side of a small valley, and he's whistling to two dogs, that are rounding up the sheep on the other side of the valley.

It was something to wonder at, the control. But that was driving sheep. Not like we hear God doing in the Bible, which is leading.

[2 : 34] The Lord is my shepherd. He leads me beside still waters. He leads me in paths of righteousness, for his name's sake.

What we see in Israel is, the shepherd is the leader. It's the same with Jesus, when he says, I know my sheep, my sheep know me, they follow me.

The shepherd is the leader. And the first reference we have in the whole of Scripture, to shepherding, is God shepherding his people.

It's in a verse in Genesis 48, where the patriarch Jacob, is blessing his son Joseph. And remember, the patriarchs were shepherds.

They were a shepherd people, with large flocks. Well, in Genesis 48 and verse 15, Jacob blessed his son Joseph and said, May the God before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, walked, the God who has been my shepherd, all my life to this day.

[3 : 47] God is the shepherd of Israel, of Jacob, Abraham and Isaac. God being their shepherd, there it meant their ruler.

They followed God as their ruler, as he led them from place to place, as he led Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans, as he led them into Egypt, and eventually out of Egypt.

God the ruler shepherds Israel. And the striking thing is, that when God talks about leaders in Israel, when he talks about kings in Israel, they are to be shepherds.

Ruler and leader, come together as the king, the shepherd. So Moses talks in Numbers 27 and verse 15, Moses said to the Lord, May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community, to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.

He was going to give them a leader, to shepherd them. And we remember that David, that most famous king of Israel, before he became king, he was a shepherd.

[5 : 18] Literally, a shepherd. Psalm 78 and verse 71 says, From tending the sheep, he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance.

David the shepherd king. And what does God tell David? Well, he speaks to him in 2 Samuel chapter 5 and verse 2 and says, In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns.

And the Lord said to you, You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler. I think it's very interesting where we see this parallel, that the shepherd was a leader, and the shepherd was a king.

And it says something about how that king was to lead the people of God. Rulers commanded to shepherd my people Israel, God says.

So it is David the shepherd king who says, The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be in want. You see that background gives more significance to what David is saying in Psalm 23.

[6 : 43] The Lord is his shepherd. And the fact that the Lord is the shepherd, I think also means that when Jesus says, I am the good shepherd, not just the use of the words, I am, which speak of God, but the shepherding part speaks of how God had been to Israel as well.

So I believe that when Jesus says, I am the good shepherd, he is in fact speaking about him being God's Messiah, him being God come to lead his people.

But David, still in the Psalms, Psalm 28 verse 9, he prays to God, Save your people and bless your inheritance.

Be their shepherd and carry them forever. Picture of the tender shepherd picking up the lamb from the flock.

And so we see that God, he is the shepherd king of Israel, and he takes the shepherd David to be shepherd to his people.

[7 : 54] And when they look to the future, when the prophets speak of the future, when they speak of God's Messiah saving his people, it's as a coming shepherd.

Among the most beautiful verses in scripture are Isaiah 40 verse 11. In Isaiah 40 verse 11, it says of the Messiah to come, he tends his flock like a shepherd.

He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart. He gently leads those that have young. What have we got here?

What is God doing through his Messiah? He is gathering his flock, gathering his people together. There is an intimate caring, a gentle leading.

Isaiah gives us a beautiful picture of what Jesus, the Messiah, the good shepherd, will do for us, his people. Jeremiah the prophet speaks of this as well.

[9 : 01] Jeremiah in 31.10 says, Hear the word of the Lord, O nations. Proclaim it in distant coastlands. He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.

Israel going into exile, judged by God, taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, scattered, will be gathered in the coming days by God, by his Messiah, like a shepherd.

Ezekiel says, as a shepherd, this is Ezekiel 34.12, as a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep.

I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on the day of clouds and darkness. There is hope for God's people. They will be gathered together with God, the Messiah, as their shepherd.

verse 16 of that chapter, Ezekiel 34. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays.

[10 : 10] I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice. There is the hope for Israel, the Messiah to come to gather the people to shepherd the flock with justice.

And again, in that same chapter, Ezekiel 34, verse 23, I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them.

He will tend them and be their shepherd. So there is to be a coming David-like king, to look after God's people as a shepherd.

Confirming this, Ezekiel says in chapter 37, verse 24, My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd.

They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. Jesus, the good shepherd, is to be David the king over them, the one shepherd.

[11:18] And lastly, from the Old Testament, the prophet Micah says, in Micah 5, 4, He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord, and they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

So the great shepherd king is coming, and he will protect his people, and his people will not just be in one little land of Israel.

His greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. This is a verse about the mission of the great shepherd. So this great shepherd king is coming, and when Jesus was born, the Jews understood that Messiah would be a shepherd ruler, because when the kings from the east went to Herod and asked where the Messiah was to be born, the religious leaders said, Matthew 2, 6, But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for out of you will come a ruler, who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.

Right from the beginning, the babe of Bethlehem, to be the shepherd ruler. And of course that was quoting from the Old Testament. So now do you see more of the significance of what it means when Jesus says, I am the good shepherd.

It's the one who's going to lead for, lead, care for, provide for, protect, his sheep, his people.

[13:08] But there's something more he's going to do, which no other shepherd could possibly do. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Jesus says he's come to lay down his life for the sheep. Now, because we are so familiar with this, we can pass over the amazing significance of it.

Because if the shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, if he dies, what's going to happen to the sheep? Isn't the flock going to be savaged?

Aren't they going to be attacked and scattered? Not with this good shepherd. Because this good shepherd, who gives his life for the sheep, is the one who rises to life again.

As we read, for this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again.

[14:16] no one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down. I have authority to take it up again.

This charge I have received from my Father. Jesus willingly gives up his life. In the Gospels, when Jesus dies upon the cross, he doesn't use ordinary words for dying.

It talks about him sending away his spirit. Why? Because death had no dominion over him. Death had no control over him. He was sinless, but he had taken our sin upon him.

But he remained in charging control. He is willingly sacrificing his life. The shepherd laying down his life for the sheep, knowing that on the third day, the Father will gloriously raise him again from the dead.

for him to go on shepherding his people and to gather a flock from other lands than Israel, from other peoples. Hebrews 13, 20 says, May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant, brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep.

[15:37] The rising, the resurrection of Jesus as shepherd. We have a risen shepherd who died for us. We will remember his death at his table, but we rejoice that he is risen, ascended, now at the right hand of his Father in heaven.

And we have, if we trust in him, this personal relationship with him. I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep, and my sheep know me.

Do you know Jesus Christ as your saviour, your shepherd? Jesus says he is going to bring sheep together from many sheep pens.

10.16 in John, I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also, they too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock, one shepherd.

And that is the church of God, brought in from many lands, tribes and tongues and nations, to be one new flock of the great shepherd of the sheep.

[16:48] The question is, are you part of God's people? Are you part of Jesus' flock, the follower of the good shepherd, part of his sheep? The apostle Peter says, you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

Have you? Have you returned to the Lord Jesus Christ and know him today as your shepherd? Can you look forward to the future with him? Peter writes, when the chief shepherd appears, you will

receive the crown of glory, but will never fade away.

And this is the last but one reference, to a shepherd. The final reference to the shepherd, I said I was going to take you from Genesis to Revelation, and here is the Revelation one, which in some ways is the most amazing reference of all.

Revelation 7, 17. For the lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd. He will lead them to springs of living water, water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Leading to springs of living water reminds us to think back to Psalm 23. But here the shepherd is the lamb at the center of the throne.

[18:18] What a wonderful, stupendous, mixed metaphor really, of the lamb being the shepherd. And who is the lamb?

Jesus, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus, who sacrifices himself on the cross for our salvation.

He who has done this, he is now the lamb of God at God's right hand in heaven, at the center of the throne, and he is going to shepherd us for all eternity. Lead us to living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

We live in a fallen world, we live in a world where there is much sickness and sorrow. But one day we learn from the scriptures this will end. God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

The question this morning is, do you know Jesus Christ, the shepherd? Is he your leader? Is he your king? Do you know his providing?

[19:26] Do you know his protection? Do you look forward to his appearing? Let us pray. Lord God, we thank you that you are a great and marvelous and gracious God.

You shepherded your people Israel. You shepherded David, the shepherd king. You promised the Messiah, and you sent us the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, the shepherd of the flock, who laid down his life for the forgiveness of our sins.

We thank you that our Savior is now risen, he is now ascended, he is at the center of your throne in heaven. We look forward to his appearing. Help us to be strong in the faith, trusting in him, and giving thanks for all that you have done for us, in the Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep.

Amen.