

John 10: 11-15; “I am the Good Shepherd”, Sermon # 57 in the series – “That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall, on November 15th, 2020, in the Morning Worship Service.

We must remember as we begin our study of this passage, that all people are seen by our Lord as sheep. Sheep are not creatures which of themselves are independent. They need to be cared for; they need a shepherd to watch over them. To really flourish, they must have a shepherd to provide for their needs. They must have One who will protect them, or they will be killed by predators. But the problem is really far worse for people than it is for physical sheep when we think about it. For all men by nature, we are told in the Scriptures, do not want to recognize the fact that they need a shepherd. They want to go their own way and do their own thing. The Bible says, in Isaiah 53: 6 – “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way...” And so, at this hour, I want to speak to you about what Christ has done for all men, and what He does specifically to become the Good Shepherd of the Sheep. He tells us Himself in this passage what He undertook to do, and to be to us, as the Good Shepherd. 1st of all – He gives His life for the Sheep. 2nd – He cares about the Sheep. 3rd – He knows His Sheep and He has laid down His life for them. Let’s consider together, now, just how Great a Shepherd our Lord Jesus Christ is, and how Good He is to those whom He saves.

1st of all – Christ Gives His Life for the Sheep.

In verse 11, Jesus says – “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. Now, I have just told you, that in the 3rd point of this message, that I will talk to you about how the Lord Jesus laid down His life for the sheep, and so you might think at first glance that this verse 11 that we are looking at, is referring to the same thing; that is, that His giving His life for the sheep is the same thing as His laying down His life for the sheep. But I want you to understand that although His giving His life for His sheep included His laying down His life for them, that this “giving” that is being spoken about here, takes in much, much more. I want you to see that this giving of Himself began in eternity past, and it continued in His Incarnation, and it was a giving which encompassed His whole earthly life and earthly ministry. Indeed, I think that if we are understanding this verse rightly, we will see that His giving His life for His sheep continues on throughout all generations because of the greatness of His Person and what He came to do and accomplish by His giving of Himself.

For although the Lord Jesus gave Himself specifically for all God’s elect people at the cross, He loved the Church and gave Himself for her, we should understand that He was giving Himself in a continuous way, for our salvation, during the whole time before and after that, and even now He is continuing to do so. Let us always remember the fact that in the counsel of Redemption which took place before the world began, in eternity past, that the purpose of both the Father and the Son were fixed, to have a people for their own possession. The Father purposed to give His Son for the salvation of all sinners who would be saved, and the Son purposed that He would give Himself to accomplish our redemption.

Listen to the language of this covenantal agreement between the Father and the Son, which is found in Isaiah 49: 8-10. “In an acceptable time I have heard You, and in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You and give You as a covenant to the people, to restore the earth, to cause them to inherit the desolate heritages; that You may say to the prisoners, ‘Go forth,’ to those who are in darkness, ‘show yourselves.’” “They shall feed along the roads, and their pastures shall be on all desolate heights.” “They shall neither hunger nor thirst, neither heat nor sun shall strike them; for He who has mercy on them will lead them, even by the springs of water He will guide them.” This is God the Father speaking to His only-begotten Son, telling Him that in the acceptable time when He would become Incarnate, telling Him that there

would come a time when He would be born, and when He would suffer, bleed, and died for sinners. In these things, He was telling Him, and He is telling us, that He would give His dear Son as a covenant; to purchase redemption for all of His elect people; to all those who would be saved by faith in Him. And He is saying that this would be accomplished through His giving His Son and His Son's agreeing to give Himself, to obey God's law perfectly in their place and to suffer for sinners in their place. It was for this reason that certain definite spiritual blessings would come to be applied to them. The earth would be restored. Their hearts and lives would be changed forever for the better because His Son would be giving His precious life for them. He would freely give Himself for them. The Father would help Him in the day of salvation, that is in the day when our Lord would give Himself for us. He would preserve Him through the sufferings which He the Father brought against Him. And after He had paid everything related to our redemption, He would raise Him from the dead.

What then was it that Christ died to purchase for us? What did He give Himself for? Verse 9 of Isaiah 49 says – “That you may say to the prisoners,” that is to those who He was given by the Father to save, those who were prisoners to sin – “Go forth”. “And to those who are in darkness, ‘Show yourselves.’” Those who trust in Him, to them He gave Himself to bring you out of the darkness of ignorance and sin, and out of the darkness of Satan's dread kingdom. He brought you into the light of life which you will most surely be found in His own glorious kingdom, walking in the light as He is in the light. See then, the description of sheep which is found in verse 9 b – “They shall feed along the roads, (that is the paths of truth and righteousness) and their pastures shall be on all desolate heights.” That is, in all the places where you do not think that you can flourish or prosper, spiritually speaking; in those places, you will find plenty of spiritual food to sustain you in God's word.

Christ gave Himself for you at the cross, and He gives Himself for you now in the blessings that He brings to you, so that you might know the reality of being able to feed upon His promises, precepts, and all the principles of truth that He will feed you with. And thereby He knows, and you know, that you will neither be hungry or thirsty; that is, spiritually speaking. You will not feel that heat or the sun striking you. That is, you know that whatever trial, difficulty or persecution that you face, you are His child. You have been delivered from the wrath of God; that wrath which would have been upon you if you had not found Christ and His grace. You know that you are no longer under it. God's wrath which waxes hot against sinners because of their sins; that wrath does not strike you. And He would also deliver you from your being sad, from your being depressed because things in your life, or things in this nation are not working out in the way that you had hoped that they would. Even though this is so, you know that Christ is with you. He is giving to you, of His grace, He is giving to you, of His good Spirit, to sustain you and to cheer you, in your daily walk with Him.

Christ who has had such mercy on you, shall lead you. He is the One who had mercy on you to hear your cry for salvation on the day that you prayed to Him. He is also the One who is even now is undertaking to comfort you and guide you, spiritually speaking. This Great and Good Savior and Master and Friend, who has lived and died for you then, when He walked upon the earth, He is the One who leads you and guides you, even now, by the springs of water. He knows how to bless you, how to refresh you, how to encourage you, how to comfort you, in Your daily walk with Him. You not only found life and strength in Him, when you first came to Him, by faith you still find life and strength, coming to you, each and every day, from Him. You say that you are prone to wander, O you feel it; you are prone to leave the God you love. And you pray the prayer of Psalm 119, verse 176 – “I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments.”

In those sad times in your Christian experience, when you realized that you have sinned in your heart, and perhaps also in your actions, you think back to the time when He first found you,

and you weep tears of repentance. You sorrow over your sin. You remember the parable that Jesus told in Luke chapter 15, verses 4-7 – “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?” “And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing.” “And when he comes home, he calls together his friends, and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’”

You remember Jesus’ words – “I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.” Ah, such great love does the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd have for you, O wandering Christian. No matter what sins you have committed, He would even now have you repent and turn from you sin. And when you do, you will find that He will forgive, and He will cleanse you, and you will be able to hold sweet communion with Him once again. Can you not see that Jesus gave His life for this, dear Christian, so that you might change and be transformed to be more like Him?

2nd – Christ truly cares for His Sheep.

Verses 12 and 13 say – But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.” “The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.” Now, the implication of these words is that the Lord Jesus truly cares for His sheep; He truly cares for all sinners trusting in Him for salvation, and for all believers who are trusting in Him to care for their souls in the way that only He can do; to feed them spiritually, to protect them, to guide them; in other words, to shepherd them spiritually. The other implication of these words is that there are people who are in positions of spiritual authority, people who are paid to oversee other people’s souls, people who are called “shepherds”, but they really do not care for the sheep. We find an example of this in the book of Ezekiel, chapter 34, if you will turn over there with me.

Verses 1-4 say this – “And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves!’” “Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?” “You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock.” “The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.” Now these are words which could apply to any time before, during, or after they were given, for there are principles of truth here which are related to all spiritual shepherds in all generations. They apply to the shepherds in the time of Ezekiel, they apply to the false shepherds who lived in Jesus’ day; the scribes, and Pharisees, and rulers of Israel. And they could also refer to any professed Christian who is in a position of authority in the Church of Jesus Christ.

There have always been men like this; men who have done the work of the ministry in a selfish and sinful way; hirelings who do not do the work of the ministry out of any love for the sheep, but because they like the money that they can get. They want to profit from the sheep; they want to fleece the sheep, as it were. All the money that they think that they can get from them, they will try to get from them, and they will give, in return, next to nothing, and sometimes worse than nothing. For wolves are also mentioned here by Jesus. I take these men to be wolves in sheep’s clothing. Perhaps they are false believers, or false prophets and or false teachers; but in every case they are men who are cruel. They are men who catch the sheep and scatter them, He says.

The hireling is not a morally and spiritually courageous man, but he is a weak and compromising man who will not defend his flock from other such men who are cruel, and who with force and severity, they rule over the flock. The hirelings do not feed the flock, they feed

themselves. The wolves are those who abuse the flock, and want control over every aspect of their lives. They like to enslave others to themselves. Neither do they truly care for the sheep. But listen to the prophecy of the Good Shepherd which is found in verses 11-16. "For thus says the Lord God: 'Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.'" "As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day." "And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country." "I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel." "There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in the rich pasture on the mountains of Israel." "I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God." "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong and feed them in judgment."

Now jump down to verse 20 – "Therefore thus says the Lord God to them: 'Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep.'" "Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep." "I will establish one shepherd over them – My servant David." "He shall feed them and be their shepherd." "And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken." Now, even though these verses are set in the context of what God will do for the nation of Israel, some day in the future, by saving them as a nation and as a people, there are nevertheless truths here that I have read to you, which apply to the whole Church age as well.

Our Christ is a Savior-Shepherd who seeks and saves those persons who are lost, those persons who have been driven away by forceful and unloving rulers of God's people. Christ is the One who can bring them back, and He will bring them back according to the election of grace. He will work in such a way as to bring them into His own fold. Those persons who are broken in their hearts by the wicked actions of evil men He binds them up. Those who are sick with the various diseases of the soul related to sin, He heals and strengthens them. He does this because He really cares for them in a precious and powerful and tangible way; giving them grace, and spiritual strength, and the comforts and encouragements of His presence, and by sending the Holy Spirit into their hearts when they first trust in Him. And He also gives them true under-shepherds to minister to them on His behalf.

Listen to 1st Peter 5, verses 1-7 – The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion, but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." "Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

You see now don't you, that we who are Christians need to remember that we have a Living Risen Savior; One who we can cast all of our cares upon, because He truly cares for us. This is why how we can be learn to be humble people and not be proud. This is how we who are pastors and leaders among God's people, can serve Him, not by compulsion, but eagerly, and not for dishonest gain. It is because we know that He is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. As Peter says in 1st Peter 2: 25 – "For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." And verse 21 of that same chapter says – "For to this you

were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth; who when he was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed. All this is from our Good Shepherd.

3rd – Christ knows His Sheep and has laid down His life for them.

In verses 14 and 15 Jesus says – “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep and am known by My own.” “As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.” I take it from these words that Christ is the Good Shepherd because He as the God-Man takes the time to know all the details of each one of His people’s hearts and their lives. He does this out of His great and deep love for us, and His great desire to make intercession for us. He does this so that we will grow in spiritual maturity, and in our relationship with Him, and in our experiential knowledge of Him. The way that He is known by us His sheep, is when we take notice of all the details of what He has said to us in His word. We are growing in the knowledge of Christ when we take the time to think about and remember the things that He has done for us according to what His word says to us about Him.

It is especially important that each of us think about, and remember, His great zeal for our salvation. Listen to Luke 12: 49 – “I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” “But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!” Think of it now; Christ knowing that He would have to go to the cross on our behalf, to accomplish our redemption and purchase for us all the blessings of our salvation, and He is distressed until it is accomplished! In Hebrews chapter 12, and verse 2, it says that it was for the joy that was set before Him that He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Christ’s love was that great! It is that great, for you the one who He purchased by his sufferings. His love was as strong as death. His holy jealousy was for the justice of God to be satisfied, and thus the glory of His grace would be seen coming to undeserving sinners like us.

The reason that we can know Him and love Him is because He first loved us. He loved us and laid down His life for us. This truth has real implications for us because Jesus went on to say in verse 51 of Luke 12 – “Do you suppose that I came to give peace on the earth?” “I tell you, not at all, but rather division.” “For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three.” “Father will be divided against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. The implication of these words is very simply this; that if you see how great His love was for you, in His eager willingness to suffer and die for you, if you see that it was because of His earnest desire to purchase of you, to buy you back from your slavery to sin to save you by His grace, then you should be willing to continue to follow Him in regard to what all the details your obedience to Him will mean, even if your own children or in-laws are estranged from you because of it.

His love for you during His earthly ministry was shown in His fully doing the will of the Father on your behalf, in relation to keeping all of the commandments of God in your place, and thus He fulfilled the law. Your love for Him is seen in your being willing to do and keep His commandments out of love for what He has already done for you, and it will be expressed to Him during the times of fellowship and communion that you have with Him; the Lord of Glory, your Shepherd-King. “Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. The culmination of all of His holy and righteous work was His laying down His life for you, the sinner. Yours is your willingness to lay down your life for the brethren. This comes out of your fellowship and communion with Him.

However, we should also take notice of the fact that Jesus says – As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father. This was the reason that Christ laid down His life for the sheep. It was because He knew the Father intimately; as He was, and is, His only-begotten Son. In Matthew chapter 11, verse 27, Christ says – “All things have been delivered to Me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father.” “Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” There is perfect oneness of knowledge of all things between the Father and the Son which is known by both Persons of the Godhead in infinite depth and height. The Father has delivered all things related to the salvation of every person that He is going to give eternal life to, to the Lord Jesus. The number of the elect and each of their names, and all that they have done before salvation in terms of their sins, and all that they will do after they are saved by grace, to the glory of God, all of this was known by them, and it was and is to this day, and will be forever, held by them together, in terms of the outworking of their purpose to save each one chosen, each one who Christ died for, and to bring them all to eternal glory.

Together in such a great purpose, together in such a great work as salvation imports, the Father and the Son knew that it would take Christ the Good Shepherd’s laying down His life for the sheep to bring them to the place where they could be brought into the fold, and cared for in this very spiritually intimate way, so that they would be able to be changed and transformed; to be able to be sheep well cared for, each one of them saying – The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. Christ as the Son of God knows His sheep, because the He and the Father are One in Being and Essence; One in perfect knowledge of each other; One in their particular knowledge of every aspect of every sheep’s life, and one in their love for the sheep. That love was displayed in Christ the Son’s becoming a Man, and demonstrated in His laying down His life for them. Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.