

Fr. Rob

"Shepherds and Sheep

Sermon 30th April 2023

One of my most delightful memories is when I was able to spend my school holidays on my Aunt's farm in Derby, North Eastern Tasmania. Many a happy time was spent joining in with the rhythm of farm life, like early rising in time for milking the cows; riding the old pony; taking long walks to deliver lunch during the hay season and watching the younger boys from the other farm-house learning how to shear a sheep without killing it in the process, with nicks and bruises.

I was always amazed at how the animals did not or could not protest. Perhaps they were glad to be parted from their fleece. Sometimes I feel much happier after having my hair cut.

Australia was once said to "ride on the sheep's back" possibly in reference to the economy before the mining boom. Wool and meat were important for our export trade. Tasmania was home to some of the finest wool in the world and sold for premium prices. The Shepherds now ride on motor-bikes, helped by the iconic sheep dogs, to round-up the sheep for shearing.

"Shepherding" was a respected profession in Biblical times. We can start at Genesis for our first introduction as to how important this was to God. Adam and Eve had two sons. The firstborn was Cain, who tilled the ground and the second was Abel, who tended the flock.

Every family had their own flock for food, (meat) clothing, and coverings. Each flock had a Shepherd with duties relevant to caring for the sheep, such as finding good pasture for food, clean water for drinking and taking care of the lost, wounded or threatened sheep.

They were skilled in defending and protecting their property from wild beasts, marauders and robbers. They lived most of the time with their flock, developing a very close, intimate love for their charges, giving each their own individual name.

David, who later killed Goliath, wrote the 23rd Psalm. This reveals his intimate knowledge of what a good Shepherd should be. He had served his apprenticeship well, before being anointed King, by killing lions and bears with his slingshot. Even rescuing sheep from their jaws before their slaughter. (1 Sam: chapters 16 and 17).

The brothers Cain and Abel, were to make an offering to God. Cain made an offering of the fruit of the ground and Abel, the firstling of his flock. God rejected Cain's offering and accepted Abels. This is hard to understand until we read that Cain's heart was not right. (sibling rivalry?) (1 Sam 16 v.7) His offering was not costly but more a token, whereas Abel's was a sacrifice, it was very costly. There would be no descendants of that lamb to continue the line. (Genesis 4:3-7)

2.

The sacrificial system became an ordinance from God to cleanse the Israelites from their sins. To make atonement and peace with God. This was a shadow of what was to come as the Son of God, Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world at his crucifixion. We reaffirm this as we say "Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us. Give us your peace".

In the book of Ezekiel Ch. 34 There is a scathing account of Israel's false Shepherds. They fed themselves rather than the people. Clothed themselves first, did not strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injuries or brought back to the fold those who had strayed or were lost.

They ruled with force and hardness. The result was a scattered people (flock), that became food for wild animals, who wandered far with no one to search for them or to bring them back to safety. They only had concern for their own needs, lacking compassion and care.

Some of the sheep are reprimanded for their attitudes, of pushing and butting as well as becoming too fat. They became overfed by using these former methods. They were also accused of fouling the clean water and food with their feet, making it hard for the rest of the flock to eat and drink. This was an indictment against greediness, selfishness and lack of concern for others.

Matthew 9 verse 36 tells us that Jesus looks with compassion on the gathered crowd, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. The reading today from John Chapter 10, is an allegory. A personification of abstract ideas or a "figure of speech" which Jesus masterly uses to communicate very important principals.

Psalm 23. Read.

The true Shepherd speaks to us today "I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. I will rescue them, I will gather them, feed them. I will bring back the strayed, bind up the injured and strengthen the weak." (Ez: 34 11-30)

Jesus' story of the Good Shepherd is told for the sheep of Israel. However, he refers to other sheep that belong to the sheepfold, thus alluding that his death is for all mankind and will unite us together if we "hear his voice" and enter by the gate. (Jesus. I AM THE GATE). This is the way into the sheepfold. There is no other way. (1 Peter 2:21-25)....."for you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls."

Benediction.....Hebrews 13:20-21

Now may the peace of God, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working amongst us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen..

30. April 2023

Shepherd and Sheep.

Sermon : John 10:27-30

Ps. 23

1. "The LORD is my SHEPHERD"Intimate RELATIONSHIP. I am His and He is mine. The LORD is the leader, we are his followers. (J. 10-14)

"I shall not want."All that I will ever need is SUPPLIED. Not what I want but what I need. His grace is sufficient for us. (2 Cor. 12 v 9) "His power is made perfect in our weakness" *Sustenance*

2 " He makes me to lie down in green pastures.... A RESTING place...No need for struggling. (Heb. 4 v.9 - 10) There is a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

"He leads me beside still waters.....REFRESHMENT.....Calmness (not troubled).....A time for reflection. Living water. Life giving. (John 7.37-38). (Acts 3: 20) ¹⁴

3. " He restores my soul" "Cures" us. Brings HEALING to our heart. Our intellect, will and emotions are "reset." (3 John v2). Wellness. (Ps.42)" My soul longs for you. Why is my soul cast down?" The answer to the question is HOPE in God. *"As a deer longs for flowing stream"*

"He leads me in the paths of righteousness".....GUIDES us to the right way, the righteous way, God's way of living by making the right choices. Why?..... *Direction*

"For His name's sake."... We are given a PURPOSEFUL life. A reason for living as children of God in the Kingdom of God. (Rom.8.29) We are called to be conformed to the image of his Son Jesus, the first born of a new creation. *Ps 119 - v 105
Kneel to my feet
right in path*

4." Even though I walk through the darkest valley" of life's CHALLENGES , suffering seemingly impossible situations, slander, misunderstanding, sickness, death etc., it is in these times when our faith is tried and tested. We can become bitter or better. (Rom 8:28) " We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose".

"I will fear no evil" We have ASSURANCE. The phrase "fear not" is abundantly stated in the Bible. Enough times for us to really take notice and believe. *Perfect love (1 John 4 :18) 2 Tim 1:7 Spirit of love, power + self control*

"For you are with me". God is FAITHFUL. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you" The Lord is with us. Meanwhile we are developing our faith in Him *Immanuel together.*
" Be not afraid, I go before you always, Come follow Me and I will give you rest." Nothing can separate us from the love of God. (Rom. 8:35-39).

"Your rod and your staff, they comfort me"This is divine PROTECTION and GUIDANCE.

God is a God of comfort, bringing us to safety. Providing us with shelter and protection from those who would try to lead us astray. Keeping us SECURE in His care. (Ps.27:5)

30. April 2023

5. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies"This is HOPE. We have the Lord's care even in adversity/enemies. Christ within us the Hope of Glory. His deep love is as lavish as a banquet to sustain us. (Eph. 1.17-19) enabling us to pray and intercede for those who would revile or persecute us, because we know who we are and where we are going.

"You anoint my head with oil"CONSECRATION...Set apart.

"My cup over flows"ABUNDANCE.....We can be a joyful, thankful, grateful people for what the LORD JESUS CHRIST has done for us.

6 "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life"The BLESSING of God. HAPPINESS forever. Like a river of life within us. *Mercy.-*

"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord "SECURITY

"FOREVER"For all ETERNITY.