

April 25, 2010
Easter 4

"Jesus the Christ Is My Shepherd"

JOHN 10:22-30

Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. ²⁴ The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." ²⁵ Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

"The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want." I shall not want! That means I lack nothing when I have Jesus as my Shepherd. That means I have everything I need to make it through this life and everything I need to enter into the place Jesus has prepared for me in heaven.

In the words we just read our Lord Jesus speaks about himself as the Shepherd who knows his sheep and holds them tight and gives them eternal life. He also tells the people who did not believe in him that he was the Christ. When you hear in the Bible that Jesus is the Christ it means that he is the Messiah, the anointed one, the one God specifically designated as the one to save us.

To illustrate how important this is to put our trust in the right place for our salvation, let me play a little word game with you. If my pipes are leaking I call a...plumber. If my car is not running right I take it to my...mechanic. If I have a problem with my teeth I go to the... dentist. I don't think I would call up an electrician and ask him to fix my teeth. When it comes to your greatest need in life, the need to be saved from the eternal fires of hell, there is only one place to go and that is Jesus, Jesus the Christ, the one God chose to get the job done right. John 20 says of the Bible, "These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing you might have life through his name.

This morning we want to see how Jesus combines these two important truths that he is our only Shepherd and that he is the Christ, the one the Father chose to save us.

He seeks those who reject him

What always amazes us about Jesus the Shepherd is his desire to have all people put their trust in him, even the people who hated him. See him walking in the temple courts in the cold of winter, looking for people, looking for people, always looking for people. "Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade." It was the Feast of Dedication another name for Hanukkah that falls in the month of December around our celebration of Christmas. Can't

you feel the winter wind coming across the Judean hills? Jesus was busy, he was always busy because he is the Christ. He is the Shepherd the heavenly Father had chosen to rescue people. It was Jesus who said, "I have come to see and save that which is lost." It tells us in Matthew 9 that Jesus looked at the crowds of people and had compassion on them, "because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." In Ezekiel we have this love for the lost expressed with the words, "My sheep wandered over all the mountains, and on every high hill. They were scattered over all the whole earth, and no one searched for them or looked for them."

How do you view the crowds of people you see when you are shopping, or going to school, or even the neighbors who live next to you, or the person working next to you in the office? Do you see them the way Jesus saw them, as sheep without a shepherd?

Jesus even reached out to those who hated him. "The Jews gathered around him, saying, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.'" These people hated Jesus. They circled around him the way a pack of wolves in Yellowstone National Park might circle around an elk to bring it down. They wanted Jesus to tell them plainly if he was the Christ, the Messiah, the one sent from God, because then they would have the evidence they needed to put him to death for claiming he was God.

Notice what Jesus did for these people to help them see that he was the Christ. He told them, "I did tell you, but you did not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep." If you read the early part of this chapter of John you discover that Jesus spent time in the temple courts talking plainly about his role as the Christ using the picture of the Shepherd going after the lost sheep. In the earlier part of this chapter he said, "I am the good shepherd, I give my life for the sheep." He said again, "I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep, and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father- and I lay down my life for the sheep." Jesus spoke these words to his enemies to lead them to put their trust in him for salvation. He reminds them of all the miracles he did as the Christ to show them he had the power to rescue them. He wanted them to put their trust in him.

I want to share with you a picture that I have in my office. It shows a lamb that is in danger of dying in the snow and cold. Over the lamb is a dog, a collie, lifting its head and howling in the wind. What is the dog doing in this picture? He is calling for the shepherd to come and rescue the lamb. As long as the lamb is under the care of the shepherd it is safe and secure. When it wanders off by itself and becomes lost it becomes easy prey for all the wild animals. Isaiah 53 describes your life and mine as we come into this world with sin inherited from our parents, "All we like sheep have gone astray and have turned everyone to his way..." The domestic sheep survives in large numbers all over the world because it depends on the shepherd to provide it with food, water, and protection. If the sheep becomes independent, it dies. If it is dependent it lives.

Little babies are dependent on their parents when they are first born, but as they grow up, they become more and more independent. Remember when your little child learned to walk, and the first day of kindergarten when you cried, and the rebellious teen years, and when you said good bye to them as they went off to college, or watched them stand before the Lord to say, I do in marriage? Part of parenting is teaching children to be independent, but the most important part of parenting is teaching them to be dependent

on a Shepherd for their salvation. That's what Jesus wants for all people, even his worst enemies. He wants total dependence on him and a confession that says boldly, "The Lord is my shepherd" not a partial dependence. He wants the whole world to know that he is "the Christ" the one who does a perfect job of rescuing us.

How much do you believe that Jesus the Christ is your good shepherd? Do you believe that he has done 90% and 10% is still left up to you? Do you believe he has done it all for you? Thank God you can say this morning with all your heart, "The Lord is my shepherd!"

He leads those who follow him

When you know the Shepherd and become totally dependent on him, it is such a joy to know that he is going to be leading you through this life and finally taking you to live in your Father's house forever. "My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish; no one can pluck them out of my hand." I heard a story once about shepherds from the Mideast, watering their sheep at a well. When it came time to leave, the shepherd called out to the sheep that were his and they left the other flocks that were there and followed his voice.

Do some of your talk to your pets, your dog or your cat? These animals know your voice and they respond to your voice. As a Christian you love listening to the voice of your shepherd speaking to you in his Word. Have you ever just opened the psalms and started reading, or found yourself in a bad spot in life and then opened the Bible randomly and started reading? Words reach out to you and bring you close to the shepherd. Think of all the beautiful green pastures and quiet cool waters the Shepherd has prepared for you, so you can luxuriate in the love he has for you.

The Shepherd knows you. This week in our Thursday morning Bible class we will study Psalm 139. Listen to what it says about the Lord knowing us even better than we know ourselves. Psalm 139 says, "If I go to the heavens you are there, if I make my bed in the depths you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn and settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me and your right hand will hold me fast." The Lord not only knows the difficult days that are ahead for you, but has also planned how he will rescue you from those difficult days.

To have Jesus the Christ as your Shepherd means that you already know what he has planned for you after you die. Jesus says, "I give them eternal life and they shall never perish." The 23rd Psalm says, "Surely goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." We will live in the house of the Lord forever! The reading from the Revelation said, "The Lamb at the center of the throne will be there shepherd, he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes." It says, "Never again will they hunger. Never again will they thirst..."

The Shepherd who reached out to you and rescued you, carries you through this life and holds you tight in his loving arms. Jesus said, "No one can snatch them out of my hand." In Isaiah we hear the Lord, the Christ, the Shepherd say to us, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine." The one who calls us and makes us his own is faithful. He says, "No one can pluck them out of my hand."

I am holding in my hand a picture of Jesus the Shepherd that we glued to this board in our Star Bible Camp. There is something special about this picture. It shows joy on the face of the Shepherd as he carries the lamb in his loving arms. That's the Shepherd, the Christ, who speaks to you this morning and lets you respond joyfully to his words by saying, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall

not want." Amen.