

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

The Glory of the Shepherd's Affection

Introduction

The leaders of Israel failed to shepherd the flock. The Pharisees failed to shepherd the flock. Like them, I and the Elders will fail to shepherd you, the flock of God. Every leader, every pastor, every parent and every teacher will, at some time, let you down – some terribly. But I like the confession of the late Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr., who wrote:

“I tell my congregation that they are God's sheep. I don't own them. They don't belong to me; Christ is their shepherd. The best they can hope from me is that I'll be a good hireling, but that is all I can ever be -a hireling. Therefore, I tell them that they should not look to me but to Christ, who is their Good Shepherd, the One who will never desert them.”¹

Today I pray that God by His Spirit will stir such a confidence and love for Christ, through His Word that you will find yourself fixated and forever changed as you contemplate His love. My text is found in:

Text: [John 10:11-18 \(ESV\)](#)

I want you to consider with me how Christ builds His Church. I've organized the text under these 3 headings:

- I. Vv11-13
Christ Builds His Church Through Self-sacrificing Love
- II. Vv14-16
Christ Builds His Church From All People
- III. Vv17-18
Christ Builds His Church According to His Father's Plan

I - Christ Builds His Church Through Self-sacrificing Love

I remind you that Jesus is reaching back into Ezekiel 34. He is comparing himself to the wicked, self-serving shepherds of Israel.

“Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was

¹ R. C. Sproul. John (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary) (Kindle Locations 2544-2546). Kindle Edition.

no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.” (Ezekiel 34:7–10, ESV)

This is not true regarding the Good Shepherd. William Barclay notes that there are two Greek words for good used in the Greek text: *agathos* and *kalos*. *Kalos* is used of the Good Shepherd. He writes, “Sometimes in a village or town people speak about the good doctor. They are not thinking only of the doctor’s efficiency and skill as a physician; they are thinking of the sympathy and the kindness and the graciousness which he brought with him and which made him the friend of all.”²

This is a good reminder when we hear the words Good Shepherd. Jesus is “good” not just in skill, but in sympathy and kindness. For those who truly know Him know Him as a true friend. He treats His sheep as His own (because they are His own). When danger comes, he doesn’t abandon His sheep, He protects them. He cares for them with that unique sense of “you’re mine”. He knows them and they know Him on a level that is beyond comprehension. Notice that Jesus says that the intimate level of understanding between Shepherd and sheep is like the relationship of the Father and Son in the Trinity. “Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.”³

But there’s more. Remember David, the shepherd boy who risked his life to kill a lion and a bear to defend his sheep. A good shepherd will risk his life to protect the sheep, but he doesn’t intend to die. Our Good Shepherd planned to lay down his life for His sheep. That is amazing! He came to die.

The warmth of this passage is emphasized when we read that He laid down His life “for *the sheep*.” Paul expressed this in other terms ([Ephesians 5:25](#), emphasis added): “Christ loved *the church* and gave Himself up *for her*.” The sheep are those who “hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” (John 10:3, ESV). These are the sheep that He lays His life down for.

The love of Christ for His Church is an intentional, personal, particular, protective love. As the angel told Joseph, “She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21, ESV)

II - Christ Builds His Church From All Peoples

What comforting words we read for us Gentiles: “And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.” (John 10:16, ESV). We had already noted that the “fold” represented Israel. As Christ came to His own people, the nation of Israel we read: “To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own

² Barclay, William, *The Gospel of John*, Volume 2, Chapters 8-21, G.R. Welch Co., Toronto, ON, 1975, Page 62.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 10:15). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.” (John 10:3–4, ESV).

Jesus goes to the fold and calls out His flock. But there’s sheep not of this fold. It’s a different fold. There He goes and does the same thing. He goes to that fold and calls out His sheep. When they hear His voice, they respond even as the elect Israelites: “They will listen to my voice,”⁴ He says. “This refers to Gentiles who will respond to His voice and become a part of the church.”⁵ Remember what Paul wrote to the Romans: “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*” (Romans 1:16, ESV).

This formation of elect Jews and elect Gentiles form the Church, the new community of Christ. Again, it’s a clear amplification of Ezekiel 34: “*And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.*” (Ezekiel 34:23, ESV). Paul expounds this doctrine in Ephesians 2:11-22 where we read that His intent was to “create in himself one new man in place of the two.”

III - Christ Builds His Church According to His Father’s Plan

John 10:17–18 (ESV) give us an unusual insight into the councils of God. Let’s read it again,

¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Notice the governing sentence: “This charge (or this command) I have received from my Father.” The coming of the Shepherd, the calling of the Sheep, the sacrificial love that Christ has for the Sheep all originated in the pre-existent councils of God – before the foundation of the world. All that Jesus came to do emerged from the relationship He had with the Father for all time. The love of the Father for the Son propelled Him to willing sacrifice His life for sinners like you and me. He took on human flesh to die a substitutionary sacrifice for His sheep. But He did not cease to be God, for His Divine nature remained active such as He was “able to take up” His life again.

But the architect of the plan was the Father, and the Son is complying with the Father’s will. All this was decreed by the Father. It could not fail. Thus, Jesus could say, “. . . *I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” (Matthew 16:18, ESV)

Application

The reaction of the people was divided. Normally that happens. Christ’s enemies accused Him of insanity. To suggest that no one can kill him, but that He would voluntarily lay down His life and take it

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 10:16). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁵ MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). [The MacArthur Study Bible](#) (electronic ed., p. 1604). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

up again sounds bizarre to the natural mind. Jesus warned those who already were busily plotting His death, telling them: "You can't take My life from Me. I give My life for My sheep, but you have no power over Me."

He was accused of demonic oppression. Any criticism of the status quo in Judaism received the same charge. It sounded irrational that God's plan would be to send His Son, to call out His sheep from all nations; to die for them and rise again for their salvation. This all flies in the face of human logic.

This instruction by our Lord is all about relationships: Shepherd to sheep, sheep to Shepherd, Shepherd to God, and sheep with others not yet in the fold. What binds all these relationships together in one is the specific and sacrificial love we see most clearly in the cross of Jesus Christ. It is there where Jesus voluntarily laid down his life.

How are we to respond to such love? Isaac Watts penned these words:

*But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe:
Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do.*