

First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

March 4, 2018

Scripture: John 10:1 -18

1 ¶ "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. 3 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." 6 Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them. 7 Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. 11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-- and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 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 and one shepherd. 17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-- only to 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 authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Sermon: "Savour Like a Shepherd Lead us"

Part (1) WHAT IS A SHEPHERD (sheep)

- Few of us today in Smiths Falls have ever met a nomadic shepherd. Few of us can relate the life of a herder of sheep who is constantly on the move. Few of us live in the hills of Palestine, parading sheep from one field to another. And yet the image of the shepherd is well used in the Bible, is used in many stories of God's Holy Word.
- As we prepare for this table, let's turn to the Bible to see the way that God is our shepherd, and be drawn in to His love and guidance.

Part 1: Shepherds:

- Did you know that even though Jesus refers to shepherds many times in His ministry, shepherds were not considered in high regard in the society in which Jesus lived? In fact, a shepherd was considered to be an outcast. They were thought to be unclean. Sinners, even. The Hebrew people thought that shepherds were dishonest and thieving. Not exactly a rosy picture. Maybe you too can understand being painted with the wrong colour? Maybe you have been labelled as something that you know you aren't. Maybe you too feel like the shepherds of

old, and you know how it feels to be considered “less than” others.

- So, if they are so picked on, why are shepherds mentioned plentifully in the Bible? In the Old Testament many were shepherds, including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jacob's 12 sons, Moses, David -- even Abel.
- Why so many shepherds? In the Bible, Shepherding is used to build character. Think about the life of Moses or David where the art of shepherding is used in these great future leaders to allow them to build their leadership skills.
- The Bible, like Christ, saw in these outcast shepherds as a figure which represented goodness. They represented goodness because of the shepherd's close relationship to his sheep, an intimacy that is so much like our God's with us. Even we today, sitting, surrounded by concrete, and living in big towns, can understand, and can relate to shepherds.
- Shepherding was not an easy job. A good shepherd never left the sheep alone. A single sheep could easily go astray or become a victim of a wild animal. A good shepherd never took a vacation, a coffee break, a mental health day. Shepherding

was one continuously search for the right type of grass for one's sheep. It involved daily walking many miles, at a sheep's pace. It involved long, often lonely hours.

- And for any modern day shepherds, you will know that sheep are strange animals: they are communal, therefore always needing others around them, but they can be stubborn and forgetful as they seek solitude. Sounds familiar?
- And if they get lost, they are helpless. When they realize that they have strayed, they pathetically remain. They fall apart. A lost sheep often lies down, bleats out a mournful cry, and then often simply refuses to move.
- Maybe this is where you are today.
- Maybe you too have gone astray, following the wrong path, and ending up in a place where you are lost and alone, and feeling helpless.

Part 2: IMAGE 1 of 2

I want to paint for you TWO images about shepherds.

- (1) Let's turn to a parable spoken by Jesus. This is the parable of the lost sheep from Luke 15:3–6. Could you pause for a moment to just imagine: the helplessly lost animal. It's a fat

sheep with a patch of dark scruffy fur on its tail. It has gone astray -- in its endless quest to satisfy ITS appetite, it turned its back on the rest, and followed a particularly sweet patch of clover right out of sight of the shepherd and the rest of the sheep. Suddenly it panics when it finds itself alone. It spins around, and gets tangled in a bush and falls into a small crevice. And just when it seems that sheep will be lost forever, along comes a familiar voice calling its name. The Shepherd finds our lost sheep, using his Shepherd's crook to gather his precious creature. Now, how do you get this lost sheep home? Because it is so helpless the shepherd lovingly, and with great rejoicing, picks up that defenceless animal, and places it upon his shoulders (v. 5). This is the way one carries a disabled sheep. It shows his care and concern, and his rejoicing. Now, if you too have gone astray, think about this wonderful image. The shepherd who, out of love, seeks the lost sheep, then with great rejoicing, places it on his shoulders.

- One day when I was a pre-teen, my younger sister became lost in Church. She just stubbornly went the way she wanted to go, ignoring me and the way she should go. And then she realised

that she was alone. I was following her just out of sight, and so she was easily found. She was most upset, and just wanted to be held. We have all had those times in our lives when we need to be cared for, when we need to be carried -- when we feel so lost that we become helpless and we refuse to move -- being so paralysed by fear. And it is Christ our Saviour who picks us up and with rejoicing returns us home with joy.

- The first image is of the shepherd carrying the lost one which he loves on His shoulders, the legs of the sheep crossing over His heart.

Part 3: Image 2

- The second image involving shepherd is from John 10, and it is about the sheep-fold. During the day the sheep would roam the fields under the care of the shepherd. At night the sheep slept in an pen enclosed by rocks or thorny shrubs called a sheepfold. Now, it could be that many shepherds would use the same sheepfold, so in the morning, how would a shepherd collect his own sheep from the mob? The answer is simple: The sheep know the shepherd's voice. And the shepherd would name all his sheep "Fuzzy ears, black back, squint eye." It did not matter

how many other sheep were in the sheep-fold, they all knew their shepherd and the shepherd knew them. Some of us get concerned about being known by God. Know this truth: the shepherd, our God knows you, and you will know His voice.

- Did you know that a sheepfold was made so that there was only one way in or out— only one doorway, or gateway, one way through which the sheep, or any predators could enter?
- And there was not a gate, a door, a draw-bridge with cannons and armed soldiers at the entrance. And the shepherd did not put his sheep in the sheep-fold and go sleep in the Holiday Inn. Instead, the shepherd used his own body to block the only entrance into the sheep-fold -- any wild animal wishing to get at the sheep had to first go through the shepherd. John 10:11: the shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. It a marvellous image -- the shepherd, tired after watching the sheep -- struggles to get his sheep into the narrow opening of the Sheep-fold -- yet still lays his body down to block off the entrance, to protect his sheep. Can you see him laying down his own body to defend the sheep? The sheep sleep well under this protection.

Part 4: JESUS The SHEPHERD

- The two images of the shepherd are marvellous, and in it we can see Christ. Jesus the Christ, is the true shepherd. For us all, for all His precious creation Christ, the Good Shepherd, laid down His life for His sheep, as we remember at this table. Do you feel lost? Have you gone astray? Remember always that Jesus guards His sheep at all times, and He will be the shepherd who lovingly carries those who have gone astray.
- Do you know Him? John 10:27 says: *“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”*
- His sheep know His voice -- though lost in the sheep-fold among other sheep -- when the master's voice sounds the sheep will respond. No matter what the trials which will come -- no matter what the tribulations -- no matter how bleak the sun may be -- Christ is the worthy one, The Good Shepherd, Jesus, will lead you, and guide you, and direct your steps everyday of your life, and for all of eternity, as you are held with His loving care.

Conclusion:

- Let’s prepare for this table with the Shepherd’s Psalm: Psalm 23: *“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still*

waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever."

- The Lord IS My Shepherd. Is He Yours?