

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Like Sheep

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Sheep are timid animals who are easily frightened by sudden movement or a loud noise. A whole flock has been known to stampede in the presence of a jumping jackrabbit. The makeup of a sheep leaves it almost totally helpless in defending itself from predators. While grazing in flocks may be a protective measure, making it more difficult for a predator to attack one in a crowd than picking off a stray, individual sheep do at times wander off being captivated by a new food source. Sheep need continual attention and meticulous care. Not only are they inviting to predators, but their bodies attract harmful parasites, such as the wingless Sheep Ked (tick) and the Nose Bot fly which attacks the nostrils of the sheep.

Therefore, the shepherd adds a needed and practical element to sheep rearing. The calm voice of one caring shepherd can gain the confidence of an entire flock, allowing the familiar shepherd to guide and keep many sheep from harm.

Like sheep, we all have gone astray from God. We sinned; we needed a Savior; and Jesus paid the penalty for sin to save us and bring us back to God. Isaiah points this out clearly: “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us*

all” (Isaiah 53:6). Peter, pointing to Jesus’ punishment in terms of “healing stripes,” adds: “For ye were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (I Peter 2:25).

Jesus, as the “*good shepherd*” laid down His life for “*the sheep*” (John 10:11). Jesus also knows His own and His own know Him and they “*hear His voice*” (John 10:14, 27). Following Jesus as His sheep, we are led to “*eternal life*” (John 10: 28).

As sheep tend to wander astray even when gathered in a flock, we need to be humbled with this possibility after we have become part of the flock of God. The godly Psalmist ended his praise for God and His word with this humbling reality: “*I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; For I do not forget thy commandments*” (Psalm 119:176).

When Jesus looked upon the multitudes with compassion, He was moved “*...because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd*” (Matthew 9:36). Jesus saw them in need of spiritual food and godly direction. Therefore, as a good shepherd, “*He began to teach them many things*” (Mark 6:34). With violence harming residents in prominent cities

across our nation, people are fearful. Like sheep, we profit from interacting with others. The lockdown reaction to Covid-19 has taken away much needed personal interaction. People are depressed. Our world needs the teaching and guidance of the “*good shepherd,*” Jesus Christ. We, as His flock, need to lean on His comforting staff to overcome our fearful and depressing times.

When Jesus sent out His apostles into the world, He said, “*Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves*” (Matthew 10:16). “Behold” indeed! The wolves are in place and Jesus is sending his sheep into their midst anyway. The spiritual mission is more important than physical safety. Therefore, be wise as serpents; when persecuted in one city, flee to the next (Matthew 10:23). You will be hated by all men, and even be put to death; but if you endure to the end, you will be saved (Matthew 10:21-22).

As sheep considered as mere food for slaughter, God’s people can feel like sheep when suffering for the cause of Christ (Psalm 44:11, 22). But even in death, Paul encourages the Lord’s sheep with “*Nay in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us*” (Romans 8:36-37).