

"I am the good Shepherd."John 10 vv.1-21.

Whenever someone who has been very ill recovers, there is joy in the home. Not only father, mother, brothers and sisters, but even friends and acquaintances are pleased to know it.

Probably you will answer: "Of course they are, that goes without saying."

Yes, boys and girls, you are right. It certainly ought to go without saying. Ought we not indeed to be pleased when such a sufferer is nursed back to health?

And yet ... alas ... how often it is not so. What a lot of hatred and cruelty there is in the world. That is the case nowadays, and so it was also earlier times.

The man born blind, about whom we read in the last chapter, was restored to sight by Jesus. What joy there must have been in Jerusalem. Joy? ... Just look what happened. The man was cast out. He was looked upon with hatred. Hard and angry words were cast in his teeth. Happiness? ... No, there was no happiness among the Pharisees. He is loaded with ridicule and scorn. He is thrust out of the Synagogue. He is made an outcast!

These then are the leaders, the teachers - the shepherds of the Jewish people. How cruel they are. Is it not awful?

But as the man later walked through the streets of Jerusalem, he was sought out by the Lord Jesus. He speaks to him kindly and comforts him in his sorrow.

And now, after this display of evil and cruelty by the Pharisees, the Lord Jesus begins to speak. He tells a parable.

Just listen.

In the land of Canaan many sheep were kept. The shepherds in those days journeyed about with their flocks. They took great care of their sheep.

The sheep folds in Eastern lands are different from those we know. A sheep fold there was nothing more than an open space, surrounded by a wall or a fence. Behind it a cave was often to be found in which the animals could find protection from cold and rain.

At the front there was an opening in the wall, through which the sheep could go in and out. But many sheep folds lacked a door.

Was that not dangerous then?... Could not the sheep then run away at night? ... Could not the wild beasts then creep into the fold unhindered to kill and tear apart their prey? ... No, not at all, for in that opening the shepherd himself would lie down. Nothing could enter the fold without going over or close by the watching shepherd. The shepherd was the door.

If a wild beast or a robber approached, then the shepherd would defend his flock with a lion-heart, though it might cost him his life.

In the morning the shepherd let his flock out.

We are used to seeing the shepherd walking behind his flock and driving it forward, but in the East the shepherd walks in front and the sheep follow him. If one of the animals falls behind, then the shepherd calls it by name and the sheep comes at once to its master. That animal knows the shepherd; it even recognises the shepherd's voice. If a stranger should call that sheep by name, then the animal would not come to the stranger, but would run away. The sheep can hear by the sound of his voice that he is not his master.

When the shepherd seeks new pastures for his flock, he leads the way. If a sheep should fall down some steep place, the shepherd finds that sheep, lifts it up carefully and lays it upon his shoulder. Cautiously he carries the wanderer back to the flock. He saves the animal from death.

So, boys and girls, I had to tell you this first, or you would not understand what follows.

When the Lord Jesus hears of the wicked behaviour of the Pharisees, He says: "I am the good Shepherd. ... I am the door of the sheep."

Now, what does He mean by this? ... Well, He is comparing the people to a flock of sheep and Himself to a shepherd. The Pharisees were no shepherds. They did not watch over the sheep, they did not comfort people, but they tore them apart or drove them away. Oh the Pharisees were more like wolves than shepherds. But the Lord Jesus is the good Shepherd.

The man born blind was rejected, cast out by the Pharisees, but the Lord Jesus sought him out. The Lord Jesus is a Shepherd to His people. He will care for His ~~xx~~ people. He will keep them and guide them safely through life. Not one of His sheep, not one of His chosen people shall ever be lost.

Enemies may try to destroy or corrupt God's people, but they will never succeed. The Lord Jesus will see to that. The Lord Jesus knows His sheep by

The greatest enemy of the Lord's people is the devil. He is always trying to destroy that people. But Jesus, the good Shepherd watches over them and cares for them.

Just as a shepherd in the East walks ahead and leads the way, so the Lord Jesus shows His people the way they are to walk.

A good Shepherd goes forth to meet the enemy. The Lord Jesus came forth to meet the enemy and He has defeated him.

A good Shepherd gives his life for his sheep, and the Lord Jesus gave His life too. He died the ignominious death on the Cross, that His people may live eternally, that He might save them from ruin.

An Israelite shepherd would fight to the death rather than forsake his flock and flee. He would do that ~~any~~ out of love for those dumb beasts. Thus also the Lord Jesus freely gave His life and died. He did this in love to His people. Can you see that the Lord Jesus is like a shepherd?

Neither is He the good Shepherd only to the converted Jews, but also to the Gentiles who through Him shall be converted.

Soon God's people shall be united in heaven. Then it shall be one flock. To all those "sheep", both Jew and Gentile, He is the only, the good Shepherd.

I know that this part is very difficult for you. Really perhaps too difficult, and yet I have told it you. Why? ... Well, when you hear your father read from the Bible at table that Jesus says: "I am the good Shepherd" ... or "I am the door of the sheep", then you will know a little of what that means.

Do you know who do not come through the door into the fold? ... Thieves and robbers! They climb up some other way and thus try to steal the sheep.

When an hireling goes with the sheep, then that hireling's first thought is for himself. If an enemy comes or if danger threatens then he flees and forsakes the sheep. Why? ... Well, they are not his sheep, he is only an hireling - a servant.

Look, there stand the Jews listening to Him.

But when the Lord has finished speaking many of their faces show a look of mockery. "He hath a devil, and is mad," they say scornfully. "Why hear ye him?"

But others say: "These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

And what do you say, boys and girls? ... Do you know the Lord Jesus? ...
Do you know His voice in your heart? ... And does the Lord Jesus know you?

Ask the good Shepherd to make you, through grace, a sheep of His flock.
Only then will you be safe. Only then will He care for you.

Would that not be a wonderful privilege? ...
