



**SERIES – Believe: The Book of John**

**SPEAKER: Nat Crawford**

**Monday, February 13, 2023**

**Scripture: John 10:12-15**

**TITLE: The Shepherd, The Good One!**

From Genesis through Revelation, the biblical narrative is woven together around the theme of shepherding. Now, shepherding was foreign to most of our experiences, but it was a reality to those who first heard the words of Jesus. Let's take a quick look at shepherding in the Bible.

Abel, the second born man in history was a shepherd who lost his life over the jealousy of his brother for God's acceptance of his worship.

Abraham increased his great wealth by skillfully caring for his flocks. His daughter-in-law, Rebekah, is introduced to us as a shepherdess and her second born son was a masterful breeder of sheep.

All of Jacob's twelve sons were skillful and dedicated shepherds. So, even though it was a despised vocation in Egypt, and even though Joseph their brother who served as Prime Minister warned them not to mention it, what did these brothers tell the Egyptian Pharaoh when they were introduced? They proudly stated that they and their ancestors had been shepherds all their lives.

Then there was Moses, the Jewish boy who grew up the palace and received the very best leadership preparation and education available. But when it came time for Moses to lead, the Lord ignored his previous leadership credentials and instead, enrolled him in the wilderness institute of shepherding where Moses spent time caring for his father-in-law's flocks.

And David, the king who became the model for Israel's kings, was called from the sheepfolds to shepherd the people of God. Of David it was said in Psalm 78:72 "With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand." And in what is clearly his most popular writing, Psalm 23, the shepherd-king David was clearly thinking the patriarch Jacob who spoke in Genesis 48:16 of, "...the God who has been my shepherd all the days of my life to this day." With this line of inspiration David wrote "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1)

With that, let's take a look at today's passage from John 10:12-15

"He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the world snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the Good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep."

Shepherds—guiding and guarding—leading and feeding—keeping an undistracted eye on the lambs who were prone to wander, vulnerable to so many dangers and threats. This was the role to which kings, priests, and other leaders of God’s people were called. Yet the story of their shepherding is more frequently one of gross failure rather than glorious success. Repeatedly, the prophets the shepherds of Israel are exposed as self-serving, uncaring failures. The backdrop for this John 10 confrontation is painted vividly in Ezekiel 34 where God declares, “You have been feeding yourselves—eating the fat—shearing the flock to clothe yourselves—refusing to seek the lost and wandering—to risk anything to protect the defenseless—doing nothing to heal the wounded.” So God declared that one day He would send His own shepherd who would do all that a shepherd is called to.

In John 10 Jesus has pointed out three threats to the welfare of His flock.

- 1) Thieves—sly, subtle, sneaky, deceptive and self-serving, i.e. false teachers and leaders who exploit those under their care only for personal gain.
- 2) Robbers—direct, bold, violent, harsh, i.e. influencers who by intimidation and domination take what is not theirs to enlarge their own positions and possessions.
- 3) Hirelings—day workers, associates, assistants, i.e. people for whom it’s just a job and source of income to them. No relationship with those they serve. No personal investment in their welfare. No skin in the game, therefore no motivation for personal risk. Only self-serving and self-protecting.

This describes the religious leaders in Jesus’ time. Yet He was there because the Father was unwilling to let His own flock wander and flounder as sheep without a shepherd. This fulfilled His promise in Ezekiel 34:16, 22-23,

“I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice... I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. 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.”

To the ones who feel lost, wounded, unloved and vulnerable, Jesus comes to care. He speaks and we hear His voice. The gentle tone of His voice quiets our fears and comforts our hearts. Like the shepherd boy David who snatched the lamb from the jaws of the lion and seized the bear by the beard, Jesus puts His own life on the line for our lives. “I am the shepherd, the good one. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Or as David declared: “The Lord is my shepherd...no wants!”