

Group Notes May 15 2011

The Good Shepherd

Welcome – Ice Breaker

Tell us about comedy shows that you really like. Are you able to recite scripts from your favourite shows (those of a certain age will be able to do whole sketches from Monty Python!).

Word 1– Sermon Summary; John 10: 1-10

Read this passage out loud in the group

This week's Bible story is about Jesus comparing himself to a Good Shepherd. We often picture shepherds as someone who looks after sheep and leading them where they need to go. The gospel writer assumes the reader will have some understanding of the scene he is describing. In the desert at night, sheep were often herded into walled enclosures that back against a cliff. This was for their safety, away from predators or rustlers. The sheep know their shepherd's voice well and will follow it, they will not follow a voice they don't know.

In the ordinary things of life we have voices and instructions that we follow. Many of us are used to using Sat Nav systems to get around unfamiliar places in our cars. Sat Nav systems are not always fully reliable, if the system hasn't been updated for road changes this can lead to exciting and interesting detours; the journey from J10 of the M6 into Walsall town with an old system is particularly challenging. We're also used to seeing and hearing impressionists (good and bad) on the TV. In our daily lives we are influenced and exposed to lots of outside 'voices'; adverts, media of all kinds, we would almost have to live a hermit's existence not to see or hear any of these outside voices.

In the Bible - Jesus tells us that his voice is the voice that we need to listen to. His voice is the true voice that will lead us and guide us and should be the only one to have any influence on us. Jesus uses simple everyday objects and events to illustrate profound biblical truths. The parables are great illustrations of this. In John 10 he uses the scene of the shepherd enclosing his sheep to give us a picture of our salvation and security in Christ. As previously mentioned the gospel writer assumes some knowledge of the scene he is describing and familiarity with sheep husbandry. The biblical times shepherd was well known for taking great care and having a personal devotion to their sheep (!). He would talk to them, sing to them and the sheep would recognise him and his voice. The shepherd would also be able to recognise his own sheep from a flock of others.

Also in these times the region would be dangerous, with bandits and robbers around, leading a flock of sheep safely through this region was a serious business. A good shepherd would always try to protect the flock, getting them to a safe pen and standing between them and the danger.

Word 2 – Discussion Questions

- Jesus uses the picture of a sheepfold as a 'figure of speech'; read again verses 1 -6, what spiritual truths is Jesus trying to convey?

- What do you think is meant by the description of Jesus as ‘the gate for the sheep’?
- The phrase ‘I am the gate’ is one of the seven I am statements in John’s Gospel
 - I am the light of the world
 - I am the resurrection
 - I am the way, truth and the life
 - I am the good shepherd
 - I am the bread of life
 - I am the true vine

Which of these is the easiest to understand, which is the most difficult, discuss this with the group

- In the bible Jesus describes his followers as *sheep*. What impressions (positive and negative) does this picture of sheep bring to your mind?
- In what ways do you feel part of ‘one flock’ and following ‘one shepherd’?
- We’re exposed to many outside influences and ‘voices’ how as Christians can we protect our minds from hearing and responding to these?
- Some of the adverts in magazines are for weight loss potions and pills, cosmetic surgery and for healing by telephone, what effect do you think this has on
 - You
 - Younger adults
 - Older adults

How can we ‘deal’ with these images that promote self doubt

Worship Ideas

Give everyone two pieces of paper and a something to write with. Ask each person to write the name(s) of people, events, songs, music or book that has influenced them positively on one piece of paper, on the other write things that have influenced them negatively. Ask the group members if they are comfortable to share these things, giving a brief explanation why.

Share this prayer together;

- Father God, in Jesus we have the true shepherd. We come together as the sheep of his fold to worship you and give thanks for this great gift. Help us to draw close to you that by your love and our attentive listening we may become so familiar with Christ’s voice that we will not be deceived or led astray by any other. Nurture and equip us as faithful leaders and ministers of your gospel according to Christ’s example. In Jesus’ name we pray Amen

Work and Witness

Each time you see or hear an advert this week, try and step back from it, and ask what it’s saying to you. Say the prayer above to help you to discern whether this is something you think Jesus would want to influence you.