

Sermon Guide

Speaker : Pastor Robert Greene

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Sermon Series: The Drama of Redemption

Jesus Came to Give Us Life

John 10:1-18

Pastoral Note - We have to be careful not to make our relationship with Jesus a purely theological exercise in pedantry. Our faith is not meant to be academic and theoretical but intensely personal, extant, honest and both owned and applied.

"A strange melancholy haunts the inhabitants in the midst of abundance...the incomplete joys of this world will never satisfy the human heart" – Alexis DeTocqueville

"Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, 'Hey man, this is what is.' I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think, 'God, it's got to be more than this.' I mean this isn't, this can't be what it's all cracked up to be." When asked, "What's the answer?" Brady responded, "I wish I knew. I wish I knew. I love playing football and I love being quarterback for this team. But at the same time, I think there are a lot of other parts about me, things that I'm trying to find." – Tom Brady

These are the personal thoughts and observations of two men from different centuries. They both offer a picture of the visceral lingering dissatisfaction, that seems common to all men, with the things of this world even when living in a country full of freedom and abundance, and in the latter's instance, having, what all outside observers would consider, *it all*. Their thoughts naturally beg the questions "is it ever possible to be fulfilled?" If great material possessions, money, beauty, athletic prowess, intelligence, power, family and friends don't satisfy man, then what will? What are the "complete joys" and fulfillment that the heart of man is perpetually searching for and failing to find with the things on earth? What is life and how can it be had more abundantly?

Application Questions

Do DeTocqueville's words resonant with you? Do you have that strange melancholy, or a sense of emptiness in your life?

Are you always chasing after the next thing in the hopes that the emptiness will be filled or the melancholy quieted only to find that it still doesn't satisfy?

Abundant Life

John 10:10 "...I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

Jesus came to give abundant life to His people. He is uniquely able to fill the void, disperse the emptiness and quiet the strange melancholy that is a part of the soul of all men. John 17:3 "And this is eternal life that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Abundant life is eternal life and can only be had by knowing and being known by God through Jesus, the true Shepherd.

John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me"

The Shepherd Knows His Sheep

John 10:1-5 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

The relationship of a shepherd to his sheep is unique, and, upon inspection, has several parallels to the relationship God has with His people; so much so that it is no surprise that He so frequently employs the metaphor in the Bible.

In the eras when husbandry was the way of life for the majority of people in the world, shepherding and the nature of sheep would have been well understood. Most villages would have had shepherds and sheep and the characteristics of a good shepherd were well known. A good shepherd would bring his sheep to the sheepfold where he would bar entry with his rod at the gate so that he could inspect them for injuries, parasites and rot and then treat their maladies. It was his business to know every part of his sheep, including the parts the sheep couldn't see for themselves, so that he could attend to them well. A good shepherd uniquely named each of his sheep according to their particular constitution and daily called to them by their individual names. Thus the sheep knew their shepherd, his touch, his care and his voice and would only follow him.

“The shepherd is so familiar with his sheep, has handled them so much, that he knows their every trait, habit, and characteristic. He can predict their behavior under any given set of circumstances. He understands all their peculiarities. He is never surprised or taken back by their unusual idiosyncrasies. He is at ease with them, comfortable in their company, delighting in their management” – Phillip Keller

Application

Most people are acquainted with the idea of God as a shepherd but not necessarily with what it really means for Jesus to be their shepherd. If Jesus is your shepherd it means He knows you completely. He knows you better than you know yourself and you cannot surprise Him. Just like a sheep is unable to contort itself to see its underbelly and must rely on the shepherd to look for the mange that is present, God can see your underbelly and the problems that are there. What's more, He isn't surprised by what's there because He's seen it daily, knows the treatment for it and will lovingly address the malady (even though it may cause you to smart). To be known and loved in this way is what we most want though we often desperately fear it.

In every man there is something which to a certain degree prevents him from becoming perfectly transparent to himself; ...But he who cannot reveal himself cannot love, and he who cannot love is the most unhappy man of all.” – Soren Kierkegaard

Consider how in your life you have chased the desire for people to know you truly, not just their preconceived judgments of you, but rather the real you. Then consider the fear you experience when they get too close and the real you starts to bubble to the surface. You wonder that if they really knew you, all the innermost parts that aren't so lovely and amiable, would they be able to love you. Most often we answer that question in the negative and seek to hide away many parts of ourselves from others. Yet, as Kierkegaard aptly notes, if we are unable to reveal ourselves we are unable to give ourselves over to love and thus find ourselves in a most unhappy state. With Jesus, the Good Shepherd, we need never fear that the answer to the question “will they still love me if they knew all of me?” is “No”. He already knows you to the depth of your soul for nothing is hidden from Him, still loved/loves you and showed it by dying for you.

John 10:14-15 “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.”

The Father loves and delights in Christ, and conversely, Jesus loves and delights in the Father. They and the Spirit have been satisfied in one other for all of eternity. In these verses Jesus is communicating that if He is your Shepherd, the Father will know you as He knows Jesus. The Father will regard you with all of the joy, honor and admiration with which He regards His Son. To have and enjoy the grace that God has given through His Son on the cross is to experience the freedom that comes with recognizing that God knows all of you, including your foul sins, and yet loves and has redeemed you.

Application Questions

Have you truly experienced the freedom that comes with realizing that God knows you, knows your sin in all of its darkness and shame and He still both loves and has redeemed you?

The Sheep Know Their Shepherd

John 10:2-5 "But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

"This is best exemplified by the traveler encountering some sheep blocking his way. He tries vainly to get them to move, but "they would not recognize or respond to his voice. . . Even if the [traveler] should use the same words and phrases as that of their rightful owner they would not react in the same way. It is a case of becoming actually conditioned to the familiar nuances and personal accent of their shepherd's call . . . over a period of time sheep come to associate the sound of the shepherd's voice with special benefits. When the shepherd calls to them it is for a specific purpose that he has their own best interests in mind. His voice is used to announce his presence; he is there. It is to allay their fears and timidity; always the master's call conveys to the sheep a positive assurance that he cares for them and is acting in their best interests" – Phillip Keller

For the sheep to hear and to know the voice of their shepherd is to be constantly assured of the shepherd's care for them. It is their evidence of his affection and faithfulness to them; the sheep know their shepherd's voice.

Application Questions

Do you know His voice?

Does it set your fears at rest and instill courage where there has been timidity?

When you read Jesus' words do they assure you that He has your best interests at heart and of His constant care for you?

Is it a soul satisfying thought to you that Jesus, as your Good Shepherd, checks you over day after day, moment by moment and that He knows all your heartaches and understands all your needs?

The Shepherd Leads His Sheep

Eastern Shepherds don't get behind their flocks and drive them instead they go in front of them and lead them.

Application

When Jesus is your Shepherd He's right there with you. He doesn't give you a map and wish you well, but rather He is out in front, and has already seen the dangers, checked the trail and found the best place to pasture. Every place He will have His sheep go He's already been, including death. When we find

ourselves in the valley of the shadow of death, we need not fear because He's not only with us but he's been there before us. Whatever ugly painful experience you've had to go through, He has been there. He understands the hurt, pain and anxiety of your heart because He's acquainted with it, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15 "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." Though He leads us and has gone before us in our travails, He never leads us into sin. James 1:12-15 "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."

Life isn't an endless trek of dull purposelessness and darkness. The Good Shepherd is leading His sheep to green pastures. Psalm 23:1-3 "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." When Jesus is your Shepherd, He is leading you to green pastures; He is bringing you to your real home, His home.

The Shepherd Protects His Sheep

John 10:11-13 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 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 wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."

Sheep are naturally very tame, stupid and helpless beasts in the wild kingdom. They have no physical characteristic that allows them to defend themselves, whether on their own or in a flock, from wild animals. They can't run fast, have no horns or sharp teeth, emit no poisons, don't have tough skins or thick coats that protect them from the teeth of aggressors, or any ability to blend into their environment. They are wholly defenseless creatures at the mercy of any being that decides to cause them harm (which can include themselves). Shepherds know this about sheep and thus voluntarily take on the duty to protect them even at cost of harm to themselves.

John 10:17-18 "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

As The Good Shepherd, Jesus deliberately, willingly, and authoritatively decided to lay His life down and pour out His soul for His sheep. He decided when and how He would die. He chose to stop breathing and He did it because He was a willing sacrifice for the benefit of His sheep; the helpless, dimwitted, timid, wandering sheep that constitute men. He died so that they might live.

Application

Jesus knows you down to the depth of your helpless soul and loves you so much that he laid down His life. If Jesus is your shepherd then you are valued to Him. He is the Good Shepherd, all of creation exists and subsists because of His very word, and this same God, who laid aside His glory, took upon Himself your sin and died so that you could live. Is it yet not clear that He did it for joy and that you are a part of that joy? Hebrews 12:2 "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

"There was a profound and deeply moving sense in which all my life, all my strength, all my energy, all my vitality was poured into my flock. It simply had to be so if they were to enjoy an optimum life under my management" – Phillip Keller

There are two (2) voices and designs on your life. Jesus is the voice that would give you life and the thief's voice comes to take it away.

John 10:7-10 "So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

The thief's only purpose has always been about taking from you. As he did with Eve in the very beginning, he will seek to make you think that God is withholding a good thing from you, but reject that message for the lie that it is; following his words can only bring desolation. But God is a life-giver and His voice will bring vitality. He came to love you, lead you, guide you, protect you and feed you. He died in your place so that you could have life that is beyond your wildest imagination.

The only way in to abundant life is through the Good Shepherd, Jesus. You have to recognize and admit you need a shepherd to have eternal life and a relationship with God. In the same way that the shepherd is everything to the sheep, Jesus has to be everything to you. When Jesus is your everything you will find freedom and the green pastures of true peace and joy in an otherwise dark world.

Application Questions

Is Jesus your shepherd or your consultant? Are there places in your life and heart where you are prone to saying "hands off, I have this under control"?

Is Jesus your Shepherd?

If Jesus is your Shepherd, are you a healthy sheep? Are you being enriched in His Word daily?

God is a Shepherd who loves His sheep and His sheep need to follow His voice. When you don't read the Word, you can't hear His voice. When you can't hear His voice you will begin to wander.

Sermon Link : [Jesus Came to Give Us Life](#)

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