

Daily Devotional Guide

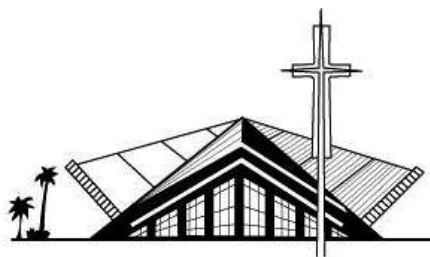
Monday – Today read John 10:1-2. Good shepherds would always gather sheep into a cave or a gated pen at night in order to protect them from robbers. Good shepherds would also sleep with the sheep for added protection. This is a powerful image for us as we consider Jesus as the “Good Shepherd.” He desires to love and protect us. From the very beginning the Messiah was referred to as a shepherd (Ezekiel 34:23).

Tuesday – Read John 10:3-4. In these two verses we are reminded that we can know Jesus personally. Jesus knows us by name and we know the sound of his voice. How do we recognize his voice when he calls to us? Well, we must become familiar with it by spending consistent time in heartfelt prayer. Only those who follow the shepherd can discern his voice.

Wednesday – Read John 10:5-8. There are so many voices in the world that seek our attention. Which ones do we listen to and follow? Which ones do we avoid? This is why we need a shepherd who can guide us away from the wrong voices. Whose voice are you listening to today?

Thursday – Read John 10:9-10. Jesus says that when we choose to follow him we will find freedom and “pasture.” Jesus puts it another way: “an abundant life.” Jesus knows us best and will provide what we need to live life to the full. All other invitations are cheap imitations of the real thing.

Friday – Read John 10:11. This verse proves the good shepherd’s love for us. Jesus did lay down his life for us. What other proof do we need of the good shepherd’s commitment to us?



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~ The Good Shepherd ~ *A Shepherd to Follow*

Sunday, May 15, 2011

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor
Scripture Lesson: John 10:1-11

The story is told of a famous actor that went back to his hometown to be honored by his people. He was the guest of honor at a big dinner party. After dinner, he gave a speech. He had a beautiful speaking voice, so after his speech the people asked if he would read some lines from great literature. He agreed. Then an elderly pastor in the community asked if we would recite the 23rd Psalm. He hesitated and then agreed on one condition – that the pastor would recite it after him.

The actor recited the psalm eloquently and when he was finished everyone applauded. The elderly pastor’s attempt was feeble and frail, but when he was finished there was not a dry eye in the house. The actor cut the silence by saying, “I know the psalm, but he knows the shepherd.”

Do you know the shepherd? This is the central question of the Christian faith. As we read through the New Testament, we see that the central question is not “What is your denomination?” or “Do you believe in the virgin birth?” The central question of the New

Testament is “Do you know the shepherd?”

There are three kinds of people in the world. There are those who know nothing about Jesus Christ, those who know something about Jesus Christ, and those who know Jesus Christ. It is a safe assumption that you are in one of the last two categories. Do you know the shepherd?

Christianity is not a religion; it is a relationship. Sometimes this gets lost under the guise of religiosity. Sometimes this fact gets lost under the machinery of church and denominations. I will tell you that I do not get up here on Sunday mornings to perpetuate a religion, a political view, or a theological opinion. I get up here on Sunday morning to perpetuate the love and power of Jesus Christ! Do you know the shepherd?

My concern is that many people come to church just because they enjoy the programs and music or because it is something they always done. But do they know the shepherd? I come across people all the time who have put this patchwork picture of Jesus together

based upon what their grandmother said about Jesus or based upon what they read in a book. And Jesus is saying, "I don't want you to know about me. I want you to know me." Do you know the shepherd?

This is one of the unique aspects of our faith – knowing God personally. Most of the country will not challenge you with the assertion that there is a God or higher power. They do polls all the time that show that the majority of the American people believe in the existence of God. Even eastern religions believe that some kind of mystical force or energy exists in the world. But only the Judeo-Christian tradition dares to claim we can know God personally.

Nowhere is this more clear than in our scripture lesson for today. Jesus makes a bold statement. Not only does he say that he knows His sheep, but he says His sheep know him! So I am here to proclaim to you today that the King of Kings and Lord of Lords wants a relationship with you! I am here to proclaim to you today that the Rock of Ages wants to guide and empower you! I am here to proclaim to you today that Emmanuelle wants to walk with you!

Perhaps some are wondering how we can be so sure that the God who created this big world cares about us. In verse 11 of our text we get all the proof we need. Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep." What other proof do we need? God came down in a human being and said, "You want to know how much I love you? I love you this much!" And he got up on a cross and died for you and me.

Recently I came across an interview of a retired military paratrooper. The interviewer asked, "How many times have you jumped out of an airplane?" The man replied, "None." The interviewer was puzzled and said, "I thought you were a paratrooper." He said, "I was, but I never jumped out of an airplane. I have been pushed many times, but I never jumped!"

There are some people who need to be pushed to do the right thing. Churches are filled with people (not ours of course) who need to be pushed to give to the church and

serve Christ in some capacity. But you know what? Jesus Christ did not have to be pushed. He willingly gave his life for you and me so we could be free. By doing this Jesus Christ proved once and for all that God is not some vague force or magical idea. Jesus Christ proved once and for all that God is a personal loving power who loves us beyond our wildest dreams. This is the kind of love that can change you and me.

I remember when I was changed by love in the 1st grade. I had a wonderful 1st grade teacher by the name of Mrs. Jones. She was wonderful for many reasons, but one of the things that made Mrs. Jones special was that she taught me to read. I would sit at her desk everyday and sound at the words as she encouraged me. One day it just clicked and I could read. I could read just about anything she put in front of me. She was so excited. She took by the hand and led me to the principal's office where she called my mom and shared the good news. She told everyone in the office, "This boy can read!" She took me around to several classrooms and told everyone I could read. I felt like a million bucks.

I will never forget what Mrs. Jones told me that day. She said, "Charley, you can do anything you want as long as you put your mind to it." I had the courage to believe her. So whenever I read a book or read the Bible I think of Mrs. Jones and the way she opened my eyes to the person I could be. She told me face to face that she believed in me. So when I wrote my first book, guess who received the first copy? Mrs. Jones.

When God looked down at you and thought how proud he was of you, he didn't send a committee or an angel; God came Himself to personally show you how much he loves you and believes in you. Don't you think this shepherd is worth knowing? He believes you are worth knowing and loving. Believe me; nothing could replace living life knowing the loving shepherd.

If you've ever had a hunger in your soul, a thirst in your heart, or longing in the depths of your being, it could be you are trying to

live life without the love of the shepherd.

U2 is a famous rock band. Several years ago they had a popular song that played on the radio all the time. You can still hear it today. It is entitled, "I Still Haven't Found What I am Looking For." Here are some of the lyrics:

I've climbed the highest mountain

I've run through the fields

I have run, I have crawled

I've scaled these city walls

But I've still haven't found what I am looking for"

Do you feel like that today? Maybe you have tried every pleasure the world has to offer and you still feel empty. Augustine said it best: "There is a God shaped void in all of us that only God can fill." Only a relationship with God can fill that void in your life. Money and power will not do it. Escapades won't do it. Trophies and honors won't do it. Only Jesus Christ will do it.

Andrea Crouch recorded 15 albums and won 9 Grammy awards. He worked on musical scores for The Lion King and The Color Purple. He was also nominated for an Academy Award. But Crouch has not always been on top of the world. He had no formal musical training and still cannot sight read music. He overcame stuttering and dyslexia. He lost his mother, father and brother in the span of two years. But Crouch has always relied on a power that has seen him through. He wrote about it in his favorite song, "Through It All." Here are the words:

I thank God for the mountains

I thank God for the valleys

I thank God for the storms He's brought me through

For If I'd never had a problem

I wouldn't know God could solve them

I wouldn't know what faith in God could do

Through it all, I've learned to trust in Jesus, I've learned to trust in God

Through it all, through it all, I've learned to depend upon God's word."

Oh, I can testify to you today that through it all I have also learned to depend upon the shepherd. I have the power of his Spirit. I have the assurance of answered prayer. I have the encouragement of his love. Do you know the shepherd?

I know some hold back from embracing the love of the shepherd. The biggest barrier I know is intellectual hang ups. People think they have to have all their questions answered and doubts solved before they can embrace Jesus. Let me tell you that we come into the faith heart-first, not head-first. There are some things that can only be understood by the heart. Besides, this side of heaven you will never have all your questions answered and doubts relieved. We all have doubts. But one thing you can never doubt is Jesus' love for you. I'm not asking you to give intellectually assent to every tenet of Christian doctrine. Today, I'm asking to embrace Jesus' love for you and to carry that love with you in your life. Knowledge and understanding will follow.

Karl Barth was one of the greatest theologians of the last 200 years. No theologian has had a bigger influence on the theology of the Protestant Church than Barth. Toward the end of his life, Barth gave his last lecture at the University of Chicago's Divinity School. He was ill and very weak, but he managed to get through his lecture. The host of the lecture told the large gathering of faculty and students that Dr. Barth would love to answer their questions, but he was just too weak. He said, "So I will ask one question on behalf of all of us." He turned to Dr. Barth and asked, "What is the greatest theological insight you have ever had?" Every student had pen and paper ready to write down what this theological giant was going to say. Barth replied, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

Give your heart to the shepherd today. He loves you and wants a relationship with you. Pray, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart today. Forgive me and cleanse me of all my sin. Put a new and right spirit within me. Walk with me and guide me every day. I will rely upon your strength. Amen."