

ROCHFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Welcome to

CHURCH AT HOME

Sunday 9th August 2020

SHEPHERD AND SHEEP

Read through this outline and join with everyone else at 11 am

HYMN MP 1008 (to read or sing)

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want,
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in You alone
And I will trust in you alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil.
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one.
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

(It would be good if you said this prayer out aloud)

*O Lord God our glorious, gracious, heavenly Father
You alone are worthy to be praised.*

*Thank You for Jesus He is a wonderful Saviour
Thank you for what He did for us upon the cross of Calvary.
Give us the strength. and the faith to trust You more
and follow You faithfully no matter what.*

AMEN

You may like to say the Lord's prayer also.

BIBLE VERSE FOR THE WEEK
"The Lord is my Shepherd " Psalm 23

THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP

Here I am about to talk to you, my Bible is open and then I remember we are sophisticated, urban centred men and women of the 21st Century. We are city people surrounded by tarmac roads and motorways. Towering office blocks, high rise flats, industrial parks, shopping malls are just some of the features of our today kind of world. A world where we are more concerned with cats and dogs as our pets, There lies my Bible and it talks about sheep, wheat, soils, vines and grapes -so it is all too easy for us to miss out on what is being taught, So I have a question for you "What do you know about shepherds and sheep ?" Jesus frequently referred to His audience as "sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:34)

Abel the first martyr was a shepherd and so were the patriarchs of Israel. Moses spent 40 years caring for his father-in-law's sheep. David, Israel's greatest king, served his father as a shepherd. Now here he is so much later in his life looking back and so he pens Psalm 23. Perhaps for you, just like me, a treasured favourite with the opening words "The Lord is MY Shepherd". One night on the Nilson Braga project in Brazil the car scheduled to pick me up at the close of the evening meeting (10:30pm) failed to turn up. So I began to walk back to where we were staying BUT I forked left and soon was lost. It was an extremely dangerous and unnerving experience as I soon realised my mistake. I began to sing the contemporary version of Psalm 23 over and over again "and I will trust in You alone, For Your endless mercy follows me. Your goodness will lead me home" Sometime after midnight in the most remarkable way a motor cycle would stop and the rider "would lead me home" then just vanish and go away.

Back to the Bible times. Sheep provided wool for clothing, meat to satisfy hunger, trade that supplied money and their sacrifice provided forgiveness. The celebration of the Passover feast regularly reminded them how they had been spared when they placed the blood of the lamb on the doorposts in Egypt. The instinctive reaction of John the Baptist when he first saw Jesus was to cry "Look! the Lamb of God" Ours is a world that has lost its way and is confused by the choices it has made. Now so fearful, so unsure, so uncertain, so unstable, so dominated by the many differing voices and opinions especially from the pandemic outbreak. For just a few moments travel back with me to discover the lessons of shepherd and sheep.

THE TRAGEDY of the sheep.

"All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6)

Using the analogy of the sheep is most apt. The natural instinct of sheep is to wander and stray and do their own thing. Cows, horses, chickens, pigeons all come home to roost but sheep will wander off and get lost. From the beginning of time the human race has been "straying from God". Recall what Jesus said to Zaccheus "the Son of man (Himself) is come to seek and save that which was lost " (Luke 19:9,10). By what we say, where we go, how we behave, how we rebel it is so true "we have gone astray" and are lost.

THE TRIUMPH of the Shepherd

1. He LOVES us.

" I am the good shepherd (who)... gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11)

Shepherds were known for the way they cared -feeding, protecting, searching for lost animals. David risked his life when the lion and the bear attacked his flock -it is how much a shepherd cares. Centuries later Jesus would assert "**I am the good shepherd**" and then demonstrates His love for us by meeting the challenge of Satan (our enemy) at the cross of Calvary.. Paul told the Ephesians "Christ loved us, gave Himself for us as an offering and sacrifice" (Ephesians 5:2)

2. He LOOKS for us

" a hundred sheep .. one gone astray , leaves the 99...seeks that one "(Matt 18:12)

Jesus was such an expert in painting word pictures so when He told the story of the shepherd seeking the lost sheep, everyone understood The relief on the shepherd's face when he found it. Onto his shoulders it went, called his friends, rejoice with me - what was lost is found (see Luke 15:4-9) BUT what a reflection of how Jesus looks for us - so as to bring us back to God. Be sure you have allowed Him to do that for you.

3. He LEADS us.

"...He goes before them and the sheep follow for they know His voice" (John 10:)

We who live in the Western world use dogs, in the Middle East the shepherd leads and with affection and obedience the sheep follow. The shepherd goes ahead not just to point out the way but is it practical, is it safe? All of the sheep would have a name, some would keep very close, they were the shepherd's favourites. They were more contented and happy, did not get into mischief or danger. Fanny Crosby wrote " I am Thine O Lord, I have heard Thy voice " with the resounding chorus "Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord" -so some things to face as we close. Have you lost your way, strayed somewhere else - come back. Are you allowing Jesus to be in charge of your life? Don't follow at a distance, listen out for His voice, follow Him closely.