
Pastoral Theology

Jesus' Compassion for Lost Sheep

Have you ever seen a flock of sheep without a shepherd? I'll never forget the time that I was playing golf someplace in this herd of sheep came from the fields next door and started running all over the fairway, interrupting the golf game. Nobody could... We didn't know where they're going to go. They'd go this way, then they'd go that way. And one would turn in the other direction and the next group would follow them. They were all over the place. Blind, it seemed. Aimless. Sheep without a shepherd. When Jesus saw people acting like that, he wasn't angry. He felt sorry for them. "These people need a shepherd."

Oh, how I love that image. It goes through all the Old Testament and all of the prophecies of the coming Messiah who will be a shepherd king, who will be the good shepherd, who will be the one who lays down his life for his sheep. And so in his

compassion, the good shepherd looks at these human beings who are acting like sheep without a shepherd and he will address their need immediately. So he began to teach them. So he began to teach them many things and now the day was far spent. And so the disciples come to Jesus and they said, "Well, this is a deserted place. We're outside the city now.

We're away from the villages. It's a nice grassy plain, but it is deserted here and it's late. Send them away."

So then they go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread for they have nothing to eat. "Jesus, it's time to call a halt to this. Seminar's over. You need to send them away so they can go into the villages before it's too late, before all the stores are closed so they can get something to eat." Jesus said, "You feed them. I've been feeding them here all day. Now it's your turn. You feed them."

And once again, they're flabbergasted. Their gast is definitely flabbered when they hear this. They say, "How do you expect us to feed them? It would take 200 denari. It would take a year's salary to buy enough bread to feed this mob. Where are we

going to get that kind of money? We don't have that kind of money here."

How many times have you heard that? We can't do this. We don't have what's necessary to accomplish this task. I learned when I was a kid, "I can't" never did anything except sit there and say whoa and alas about all the obstacles that stand before our mission. And that's the way the disciples were. "We can't do that. A whole year's salary."

Well, what do you have? See what you have. So they checked around and they said, "We've got a couple of loaves of bread and a couple of fish."

"Okay. That's all you have? You take what you have and let me bless it, and we'll see what God does when you give him what you have. We'll see what God does when you do what you can do." You do what you can do. You give what you can give and then get out of the way and watch God work.

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