



TEEN TREE OF LIFE

The Good Shepherd

Part 3

November 21, 2021

Before you begin, ask yourself a very important question: Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins? If you answered yes, you will need to be sure that you are filled with The Holy Spirit. How do you do this? You name your sins to God The Father in His Son's Name. This is called Rebound. As a Christian, you must rebound any time you sin. This is taught in 1 JOH 1:9: *If we confess [name] our sins [directly to God], He [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Now, if you have never believed that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins, all you have to do is say to yourself that you believe in Him and you are saved! The Bible verse which teaches us this is ACTS 16:31: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."*

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly." (JOH 10:10 New American Standard Bible) As we learned last week, Our Lord's reference to an abundant life does not refer to having a lot of material wealth, nor is it a promise for an easy life. You may acquire things and you may have easy times but in following Christ, Jesus, the world will give you tribulation.

Our Savior gives a comforting message in JOH 16:33 (New International Reader's Version): *"I have told you these things, so that you can have peace because of me. In this world you will have trouble. But be encouraged! I have won the battle over the world."* These words are so comforting and reflect His Love for His sheep in such a beautiful way.

The abundant life is about the quality of life that is developed when you live in a personal, loving relationship with God. It's a life filled with the abundance of His Grace, Mercy, and Loving-Kindness. It is a life filled with the abundance of eternal purpose and meaning. It is a life filled with His Love, Joy, and Peace.

As we learned, Jesus is The Door for His sheep. The Pharisees were thieves and robbers. They stole, but Jesus provides. They destroyed, but Jesus builds. They killed, but Jesus gives abundant life. Jesus is The Only Door to that abundant life: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me."* (JOH 14:6 New American Standard Bible) And anyone that enters by another means is false and

will be separated from the sheep and cast out in judgment: ***“The one who planted the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seed stands for the people who belong to the kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the evil one. The enemy who plants them is the devil. The harvest is judgment day. And the workers are angels. The weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire. That is how it will be on judgment day. The Son of Man will send out his angels. They will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin. They will also get rid of all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace. There people will weep and grind their teeth. Then God’s people will shine like the sun in their Father’s kingdom. Whoever has ears should listen.”*** (MATT 13:37-43 New International Reader’s Version)

In JOH 10:11-17 (The Message Bible), The Lord Jesus Christ clearly states: ***“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd puts the sheep before himself, sacrifices himself if necessary. A hired man is not a real shepherd. The sheep mean nothing to him. He sees a wolf come and runs for it, leaving the sheep to be ravaged and scattered by the wolf. He’s only in it for the money. The sheep don’t matter to him. I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me. In the same way, the Father knows me and I know the Father. I put the sheep before myself, sacrificing myself if necessary. You need to know that I have other sheep in addition to those in this pen. I need to gather and bring them, too. They’ll also recognize my voice. Then it will be one flock, one Shepherd.”*** The Greek word for “good” here is kalos. It’s used here with the sense of excellence, and it contrasts Jesus Christ with the hirelings who are evil shepherds. The True Shepherd loves and cares for his sheep. The hireling only cares for himself. When danger approaches, The True Shepherd will defend while the hireling will run away.

Now, what we learn in JOH 10:11-17 about The Lord Jesus Christ as The Good Shepherd should also be true of His under-shepherds – our pastor-teachers. Pastors are called to care for, feed and defend the flock of God that is entrusted to them. Look at ACTS 20:28-31 (The Message Bible): ***“Now it’s up to you. Be on your toes—both for yourselves and your congregation of sheep. The Holy Spirit has put you in charge of these people—God’s people they are—to guard and protect them. God himself thought they were worth dying for. I know that as soon as I’m gone, vicious wolves are going to show up and rip into this flock, men from your very own ranks twisting words so as to seduce disciples into following them instead of Jesus. So stay awake and keep up your guard. Remember those three years I kept at it with you, never letting up, pouring my heart out with you, one after another.”***

The tragedy is that many men who are called pastors are no different from those evil hirelings described by Our Lord in JOH 10:11-17. They seek their own comfort and fleece the flock instead of feeding the flock. They protect themselves and run away from trouble instead of warning the flock of danger and defending it. They don’t want to cause controversy, so they preach what people want to hear instead of what God has commanded.

As we learned throughout this study, the shepherd is responsible for feeding the sheep and it must be done in the correct manner. As shepherds over their congregation, pastors have this same vital responsibility. This was set forth with great

emphasis in Jesus' discourse with Peter after The Resurrection when He inquired about Peter's love. Three times, Jesus gave the mandate to Peter to feed His sheep — to tend the flock: ***When Jesus and the disciples had finished eating, Jesus spoke to Simon Peter. He asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do?" "Yes, Lord," he answered. "You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord. You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." Jesus spoke to him a third time. He asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt bad because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He answered, "Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. (JOH 21:15-17 New International Reader's Version)***

Sheep without food soon grow thin, weak, emaciated, and sickly. Ultimately, they will die. It is the first responsibility of the pastor to make sure that the sheep under his care are fed, nourished, and nurtured by The Word of God. The New Testament reprimands the believer who is satisfied with milk and who flees from the serious study of God's Word by avoiding the difficult digestion of the meat He provides in His Doctrines. But a good shepherd weans his sheep from the elemental principles of milk that is given to babes, and he gives them a diet that will cause them to become strong and fully equipped to mature spiritually. That feeding is the responsibility of the pastor.

The pastor is there to encourage the sheep and to see to it that they grow into spiritual maturity in the Life of Christ, conforming to His Very Image. It is the responsibility of the pastor to equip the sheep by teaching them and training them. There is a difference between teaching and training. Teaching involves the imparting of information from one person to another. Training requires more hands-on participation, showing someone how to master a particular skill.

It's not enough for a pastor to simply communicate information through expositional teaching or to explain the doctrines of the faith to his flock. He is also called to see to it that they are trained in certain skills necessary for growth in the faith. It is the pastor's responsibility to teach his sheep how to pray, how to worship, how to evangelize, and how to be engaged in the mercy ministries of the church. In all of these areas, the pastor is to mirror and reflect The Ministry of Jesus Himself, Who gave of Himself completely to those given to Him by The Father. So, the pastor must see his congregation as a flock of sheep that is entrusted to him by The Father and by The Lord Jesus Christ.

God's sheep are able to hear Jesus' voice and through Him to become part of His Flock but it is essential that they are humble enough to recognize their need and yield themselves to the Commands of The Shepherd. The Pharisees did not understand because they were spiritually blind and could not recognize The Shepherd's Voice.

But what about you? Do you know The Shepherd? Do you hear the Shepherd's Voice? If so, are you following Him? That is the demonstration of being one of His sheep. Jesus' sheep will follow Him.

Jesus is The Good Shepherd. He protects and provides for His sheep. He has proven His Love for His sheep by laying down His life for them. He has proven the truth of His Promise by taking up His life again and rising from the dead. Jesus is The Good Shepherd. Is He your shepherd? Do you follow Him?