

The Hireling and the True Shepherd

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

The true shepherd gives his life for the sheep, knows them intimately, and is known by them, demonstrating a deep and intimate relationship.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:35

Topics: "Thanksgiving And Praise", "Gods Righteous Judgment"

Description

Greek Word Studies for aid_number 34785 preaches on the concept of 'antapodidomi,' which means to give back in return for something received, emphasizing the obligation of Christians to offer joyful thanksgiving and praise to God for His blessings. This reciprocal action involves repaying, recompensing, or rewarding, acknowledging that all blessings ultimately come from God. The sermon highlights the importance of not seeking revenge but leaving room for God's judgment, as He is the one who repays according to His righteousness.

Transcript

IN OUR FIRST LECTURE' we saw that the people did not understand Christ. There were two things that they did not understand. The first thing that they did not seem to understand was the door of the sheepfold; the second, who the shepherd was. And we saw last Sabbath that he explained to them what the sheepfold was. And now he begins to show who the shepherd is: 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.'

It is exceedingly interesting to know the many names by which Christ calls himself in the Bible. There are above a hundred, I think a hundred and seven. He calls himself a rose: 'I am the rose of Sharon', and a lily: 'I am the lily of the valley' (Song of Solomon 2: 1). The reason why he has so many names is that one name would not describe him; he has so many offices that one name would not explain them; nay, all of them put together do not, for Paul said, 'Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ' (Ephesians 3:8).

Of all the names given, that of a shepherd is the sweetest.

We understand things best by figures; so, at the beginning of this chapter, he contrasted himself with a stranger, and in these words he contrasts himself with a hireling, whose own the sheep are not.

We shall consider these two things, the hireling and the true shepherd.

The hireling (verses 12,13)

There can be little doubt, I believe, that the hireling represents unfaithful ministers. Let us then go over the features, here laid down, of an unfaithful minister:

He is a hireling: that is to say, the end he seeks is the hire. You know, dear friends, that a minister should be maintained. It is written in the law, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn'... 'They that preach the gospel should live of the gospel' (I Corinthians 9:9, 14; 1 Timothy 5:18). But then, dear brethren, observe that this should not be the end of the ministry. The hireling here mentioned, is one who seeks the hire and not the flock. This was often complained of by the prophets. Isaiah complained of it in his day.

His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs; they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter (Isaiah 56: 10, 11).

Now, this is just the hireling. Jeremiah complained of them in his day:

For, from the least of them even unto the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet, even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely (Jeremiah 6:13).

This is the hireling again. Ezekiel complained of them in his day:

Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? (Ezekiel 34:2).

Paul complained of them in his day:

For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's (Philippians 2:20, 2 1).

Ah! brethren, this is the black mark of the hireling: 'He that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth' (verse 12). But, brethren, it is not merely the seeking money that marks the hireling, but seeking our own ease, our own honour, our own fame. Pray for ministers -- pray that they may not be given to covetousness.

Whose own the sheep are not. 'You know, dear brethren, that faithful ministers stand in a peculiar relation to the sheep. They are called fathers - watchmen that stand on the watch tower, etc. It is a relation that outlasts death. You know, dear friends, that Paul often calls himself a father: see I Corinthians 4:15; Galatians 4:19; 1 Timothy 1: 2; Philemon, 10th verse. Ah, friends, this shows you the union between the minister and the flock. He is a father -- he begets them through the gospel. It is not so with a hireling -- his own the sheep are not. God does not own him as a father. God does not own him in the conversion of souls. He cannot say as Paul said, 'My dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown' (Philippians 4: 1). He will not meet a crown of saved souls in the judgment. Ah! this is the mark of a hireling -- a withered branch. Pray that ours may not be so.

The hireling fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. 'You know that the ministers who are sent of God, take care of the sheep. Observe the apostle Paul -- what labours did he not undergo;

what sufferings did he not endure! (2 Corinthians 11:23). Hear how he prayed for them:

God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers (Romans 1:9).<

For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh (Colossians 2: 1).

How he cared for the sheep! And hear how he speaks to the elders at Ephesus: 'Remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears' (Acts 20:3 1). And observe, brethren, what tears he used to shed for them:

For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears (2 Corinthians 2:4).

I fear lest when I come, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned (2 Corinthians 12:2 1).

And then what thanksgiving he used to offer up to God:

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy (Philippians 1:3, 4).

For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before God (I Thessalonians 3:9).

I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers' (Ephesians 1: 16).

This is the mark of a true shepherd. But a hireling cares not for the sheep, he does not and cannot weep for the sheep, he has no anguish of heart for them. Pray that we may so love Christ that we may care for the sheep.

He flees away when the wolf comes: 'But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth' (verse 12). The wolf is taken in Scripture to represent two things, either false ministers or heresy. 'For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock' (Acts 20:29). The grievous wolves are evidently those false teachers who bring in another gospel which is not another. See also Matthew 10: 16, 'Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves' etc. There you see the wolves are evidently those men who bring the sheep before the councils. The time when the wolf comes is the time to mark who the true shepherd is. He stands between them when heresy comes in, or when a persecuting world stretches out its hand towards them; that is the time for the true shepherd to stand between the fold and it; but ah! the hireling flees. The time when he can get no more his own ease, his own comfort, is the time he flees. Pray that Scotland may have true shepherds; not those who care not for the sheep; not those whom God has never owned in the conversion of souls; not those who will flee in a time of heresy or persecution. Pray that the true shepherds may be known in a time of heresy or persecution, and that the day may never dawn on Scotland when it will be given over to hireling ministers.

I come now, secondly, to consider the true shepherd

Oh! it is sweet to turn from looking at the hireling to the true shepherd: 'I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep Christ here gives us three marks of the true shepherd.

The true shepherd gives his life for the sheep. Jacob was a good shepherd to Laban. You remember his care of the sheep; he says, 'That which was tom of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night ...' (Genesis 31:39, 40). But he did not give his life for the sheep.

David was a good shepherd. You remember when a lion and a bear came and took away the sheep, that he went after it and rescued it, and slew both the lion and the bear (I Samuel 17:35). Yet David did not give his life for the sheep.

But Christ gave his life. The sentence was written against the sheep: 'Thou shalt die'; Christ came between and died for them. Observe, brethren, that it was not merely temporal death that he died; but it was equal to eternal death. It was death under iniquity: 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities' (Isaiah 53:5). It was a death under sin: 'The wages of sin is death' (Romans 6:23). And observe, it was freely done; he did it out of free love; therefore it is always said, 'He gave himself for us.' Love one another, even as Christ loved the church, 'and gave him self for it' (Ephesians 5:25). There is one Mediator 'who gave himself a ransom for all' (I Timothy 2:5, 6). Brethren, observe that Christ so loved the sheep that he gave his life. 'What are these wounds in thy hands? ... These are the wounds I have received in the house of my friends' (Zechariah 13:6).

Brethren, if ever you and I get to heaven, this is what we will see, 'A Lamb as it had been slain' (Revelation 5:6). Are you attracted by the sight? What are you made of, that you do not see this love? O brethren, to whom will you go if not to him? Observe what he offers -- himself. 'I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep', that is, I am willing to give myself to you.

I know my sheep, as the Father knoweth me. 'You know, brethren, how completely the Father knows his Son. He knew him from all eternity: 'Then I was by him as one brought up with him, I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him' (Proverbs 8:3 0). Brethren, so Christ knows his sheep. 'He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world' (Ephesians 1:4). You know, brethren, that the Father knows him with a love of delight. So Christ knows his sheep with the same love: 'Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee'; 'As the lily among thorns, so is my beloved among the daughters!' 'My dove, my undefiled is but one, she is the only one of her mother' (Song of Solomon 4:7; 2:2; 6:9). Christ delights in every one of his sheep. And you know the Father knew Christ during all the time of his sufferings on earth. So Christ knows his sheep in all their temptations. And you know the Father will know Christ to all eternity. So Christ says, 'I know my sheep.' Christ knows his sheep to all eternity. 'They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my Father's hand' (John 10:28,29). Ah, brethren, is there any shepherd like this shepherd?

I am known of mine. 'The sheep know Christ, and Christ knows the Father. Christ has a perfect acquaintance of the Father: 'O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee' (John 17:25), so the sheep know Christ: he manifests himself unto them. Ah, brethren, has Christ made himself known unto you? Has he given you an understanding to know him that is true, and are you in him that is true? This is the mark of all his sheep. 'I am known of mine. 'And this is one of the excellencies of Christ to his own. He lets fragrance forth when he passeth by, and we follow him. Brethren, has he let out his fragrance to you, and do you follow him? Are you known of him even as he is known of the Father?

Amen.

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