

THE CHURCH GLORIOUS

The Joy Set Before Him

Discussion Guide
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Sermon Title

The Flock of God

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John 10:1-16; I Peter 5:1-4

Introduction: One of the most intimate images of the Church is the image of a flock being led by the Shepherd. The Twenty-third Psalm is one of the best known passages in the Bible because of the representation of the care, protection, and comfort of God like a Shepherd. But if there is a Great Shepherd and a flock, then we must be sheep in this analogy: there is a humility in this designation that may not be as appealing!

Sermon Outline

I. Old and New Testament References to God/Christ as Shepherd

One of the powerful images of God throughout the Scriptures is as a Shepherd. Both in the OT and the NT this theme is presented, from Genesis to Revelation. It carries the idea of One who guides, nourishes, comforts, protects, and disciplines.

- God will be a Shepherd to Israel: Genesis 48:15; Psalm 23:1
- In Isaiah 40 the Anointed One to come is a Shepherd for Israel: Isaiah 40:11
- Jesus is the Good Shepherd in the NT: John 10:1-16; Hebrews 13:20; I Peter 5:4; Revelation 7:17

II. Jesus Has Appointed "Assistants" in the Church, the Under-shepherds

- Jesus tells Peter to "shepherd My sheep" John 21:16
- Paul tells the elders at Ephesus to "shepherd the church of God" Acts 20:28
- Peter tells the elders to "shepherd the flock of God which is among you" I Peter 5:2
- Shepherds whom God has appointed must take this responsibility seriously!
 - It must be a selfless commitment to the flock of Jesus Christ
 - It must be undertaken with humility and grace and *pre-eminently* as examples
 - It comes with accountability to Jesus Himself for care of His sheep
 - It includes all the aspects of shepherding (Psalm 23; I Tim 4:11-16; II Tim 4:1-2)

III. The Church is a Flock and We are the Sheep (Psalm 23)

- Sheep need a shepherd: they literally were not designed for independent living!
- We need green pastures and quiet streams—teaching, training, & discipleship
- We need restoration and guidance—we will err alone and when left to our own ideas
- We need protection and correction—we miss danger and occasionally need rescue
- We need provision and healing—we were meant to be in a flock with a shepherd

Conclusion: It is the nature of sheep to eat the wrong things, to get into trouble, to stray, and generally to cause themselves grief. Yet, with the loving care of the Great Shepherd and His under-shepherds, the flock can thrive in safety. Sheep who stray from the flock need rescue, and those who are prone to wander repeatedly may need their legs broken!!

This is serious business. We have no option about being sheep or about being in the flock of God. Throughout the Bible He portrays this relationship and reminds us of our need. While the imagery is comforting, it is also humbling. It points out our dependence upon Him AND upon one another within the flock. It also points to the very serious and important role of the under-shepherds. We are reminded that we must pay attention to the flock, that we must pursue the strays, that we must teach, train, encourage, and rebuke if the flock of God among us is to be healthy.

Sheep seldom really know what they need, it is the Great Shepherd's responsibility to care for them and under-shepherds are responsible to Him for their oversight as well.

Psalm 23:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
² He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.
³ He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.
⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.
⁶ Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

¹² "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

¹³ "He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.

¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me,

¹⁵ even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

¹⁶ "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

