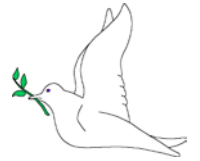


Living in the Light of the Gospel of John



#4

John 10, 11, 12

Tonight as I was feeding the sheep I couldn't help but think how similar we as human beings are to these sheep. Four of the ewes had gotten into the pen where we store the extra vales of hay. As I opened the gate to chase these four out about twenty-five more rushed in. After getting them all out I watched them for a while. One of the baby lambs kept getting separated from its mother. Over and over it would cry, as the mother kept reassuring it that she was near by. As I watched these sheep I began to reflect on how we are often like them in our relationship to God. If we are not rushing into places we don't belong then we are always crying out in fear that some how He has left us alone in this hostile world. That is why John 10, where Jesus declares in verse 11 "I am the Good Shepherd" is so important. As I read chapter 10 along with John 11, I receive so much hope as Jesus declares, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die."(John 11:25 NIV) What hope this provides both now and for all eternity. But this isn't just a promise for the future. Jesus makes a special promise to us now in the midst of our dark uncertainties, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in Me should stay in darkness."(John 12:46)

As we desire to get a better understanding of what it means to have Jesus as our Good Shepherd lets take a closer look at John 10. There we see Jesus describing the sheep pens where the sheep would go at night for protection. Often these sheep would mix with other sheep and would be separated as they responded to the voice of their shepherd. "When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them and his sheep follow him because they know his voice."(John 10:4 NIV) In this chapter Jesus is contrasting Himself with the Jewish leaders. They are the thieves, strangers and robbers who are blind and misleading the children of Israel while Jesus declares, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before Me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn't listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through Me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture."(John 10:7-9 NIV) Jesus is not only the good shepherd as verse 11 points out, He is also the gate. In John 14:6 He says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through

Me.” Going through Jesus, the gate provides us with both salvation and the substance (“find pasture”) necessary for daily living.

As we encounter trials, tribulations, disappointments, and uncertainties on daily bases, we must remember, “a thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I (Jesus) came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.”(John 10:10 The Message Bible) The devil, the world and the flesh (our sinful nature) tries to do everything it can to rob us of the wonderful life God has intended for each and everyone of us. I know when I dwell on the results of the thief and don’t believe in the goodness and grace of God, despair can over take me. I must not only recognize the pain in this world but also focus on the beauty and blessings that God has provided in abundance in so many different ways.

In both John 10:11 and John 10:14, Jesus declares that He is the Good Shepherd. He doesn’t run off like the hired hands do, but instead lays down His life for the sheep. Also He knows His sheep personally and Jesus is the fulfillment of Ezekiel 34:23 where the Sovereign Lord declares, “I will place over them one shepherd.” Jesus is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for you and me in order that our sins may be paid for through His blood on the cross. Not only did He die for our sins but He knows us, our needs, hurts, and pains and cares for us personally. Now we must develop the habit of prayer as we follow Jesus our Good Shepherd “Base your happiness on your hope in Christ. When trials come endure them patiently; steadfastly maintain the habit of prayer.”(Romans 12:12 Phillips translation) In addition to talking to Jesus our Good Shepherd daily through prayer we must read the word the revealed counsel of God (the Bible) and apply it to our daily lives. “Don’t fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the word go in one ear and out the other. Act on what you hear! Those who hear and don’t act are like those who glance in a mirror, walk away, and two minutes later have no idea who they are, what they look like. But whoever catches a glimpse of the revealed counsel of God-the free life-even out of the corner of his eye, and sticks with it, is no distracted scatterbrain but a man or woman of action. That person will find delight and affirmation in the action.”(James 1:22-26 The Message Bible)

As we pray and read the Word of God resulting in the opening our lives, minds and spirits to the Living Lord Jesus Christ we will begin to clearly recognize His voice. He has promised, “My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch

them out of My hand.”(John 10:27,28) What a wonderful thing it is to know that Jesus is hanging on to us. You never see the sheep holding on to the shepherd. The shepherd holds on to the sheep, and no one can snatch us out of His hand. What assurance does this give you at this time? How does Jesus declare His divinity in verse 30 and what reaction does He get from the Jews? In what way does Jesus respond to their accusations?

What wonderful unbroken communion Jesus has with the Father. “That you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.”(John 11:38 NIV) Jesus didn’t act unless He saw His Father act. He enjoyed an unbroken deep relationship with God, the Father. If we are going to be like Jesus we must strive to do the same thing. Jesus was so in tune with the Father that He could declare, “I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.”(John 14:11 New Revised Standard Version) Earlier Jesus has declared, “I am the Good Shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me-just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father,”(John 10:14,15 NIV) Jesus doesn’t get all upset when He hears Lazarus is sick. Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”(John 11:4 NIV) Oh how we need to seek God in order that we may get to know Him in this way.

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, but oddly, when He heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed on where He was for two more days.”(John 11:5,6 The Message Bible) It doesn’t make sense. When there is a need, in this case it is Lazarus who is sick, why would Jesus wait for two days? Martha even raises the issue in verse 21 when she says, “Master, if you’d been here, my brother wouldn’t have died.”(TMB) In other words, “why did you wait Jesus, why didn’t you act sooner,” For five months now I have been asking Jesus to meet a need in my life. I have prayed and have asked others to join me in prayer, yet I have not witnessed a resurrection yet in that area. It is so hard to wait. As I have waited I have been reminded of Gen.18:25(b) where it says, “shall not the judge of the earth do right.” If only I could do something but God is using this to show me that he alone is in control. As a result I can only wait and pray knowing that He is in control and will make the right move at the right moment. Many also told Jesus in John 11:32, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”(NIV) Jesus waited because He was about to do a miracle much greater than they had ever witnessed.

The right time arrives and Jesus declares, “Lazarus died. And I am glad for your sakes that I wasn’t there. You’re about to be given new grounds for believing. Now let’s go to him.”(John 11:14 The Message Bible) The bigger and

the more impossible the situation is the greater God will be glorified when the miracle takes place. Even though Martha had stated that if Jesus had come earlier our brother may not have died, she affirmed her faith by declaring,”(John 11:22 NIV)

In John 11:25,26 Jesus declares, “I am, right now, Resurrection and Life. The one who believes in Me, even though he or she dies, will live. And everyone who lives believing in Me does not ultimately die at all. Do you believe this.”(The Message Bible) How are you going to answer Jesus? If you do believe this how is it making a difference in your life? We see the communion between Jesus the Son of God and His Father God as Jesus thanks Him for leaving Him and then asks for His direct intervention so “that they may believe that you sent Me.”(verse 42) “Then He shouted, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ And he came out a cadaver, wrapped from head to toe, and with a handkerchief over his face. Jesus told them. ‘Unwrap him and let him loose.’(John 11:43, 44)

The impossible has happened. A miracle has taken place. Death the ultimate destroyer as a result of sin has been conquered. As a result many put their faith in Jesus while the religious establishment plot to kill Him. Now six days before the Passover Jesus comes to a dinner given in His honor by Mary, Martha and Lazarus. During the dinner Mary takes an expensive perfume, pours it on Jesus feet and wipes them with her hair. What an example of how the spirit represented by the perfume desires to flow through our lives anointing the one who gave His life for us. Such an anointing takes place as we offer Christ a sacrifice of praise in not only word but also deed. As this takes place there are always critics like Judas who want to use the poor to line their pockets. He complains that this oil was being wasted and should have been sold and the money given to the poor. The fact is Judas could care less for the poor. “He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as a keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.”(John 12:6 NIV) Jesus reminds us we have the poor with us always and have opportunities to help them. The question is how many will? The crowds grow as many hear of the resurrection of Lazarus. As this happens the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus because many were putting their faith in Him.

The next day the crowd gathers as Jesus comes into Jerusalem. Shouting their hosannas they wave palm branches. Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey fulfilling Zech.9:9. After the celebration Jesus declares, “Time’s up. The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of

wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal.”(John 12:23-25 The Message Bible) Not only is Jesus speaking of His coming death and resurrection but is challenging each of us to die to ourselves and start engaging in a reckless love that helps others who are hurting and in need.

Jesus clearly speaks of His death in verse 32 when He says, “When I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”(NIV) Now Jesus challenges each of us not to walk and live in the darkness of fear. Instead He says, “Walk by the light you have so darkness doesn't destroy you. If you walk in darkness, you don't know where you're going. As you have the light, believe in the light. Then the light will be within you, and shining through your lives. You'll be children of light.”(John 12:35,36 TMB) Unless we walk in the light of the love of Christ daily we will be like the people Isaiah spoke of in Isaiah 6:10 and Jesus quotes in John 12:40, “He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn-and I would heal them.”(NIV)

We must stay in God's Word daily so that the world does not blind us to the reality of His love. Jesus has promised, “I am Light that has come into the world so that all who believe in Me won't have to stay any longer in the dark.”(John 12:46 The Message Bible) Let us believe Him even at this period of darkness when those who don't believe try to make wrong look right and right wrong. The only way we know the difference is by remaining in the light of the Scriptures and trusting Jesus our Lord and Savior.

This week please join me in studying John 13, 14,15. As we study these dynamic chapters let us not only be hearers of the Word but doers also. This involves believing the Words of Jesus and living our lives in His light and love.

Larry Rice