

12.22.21 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

Title: “The Good Shepherd”

Scripture Reading: [John 10: 11-18](#)

Reflection: Rev. Evan Heerema

Shepherds come in both genders, in all shapes, and in all ages, at least in Israel. Good shepherds are a subset of shepherds in general. A good shepherd is not dependent on size or age, but on their level of commitment to the flock. A favorite picture of mine is of a woman and her daughter sitting in a field watching their flock of sheep, themselves being watched and photographed by a traveling group of American tourists who are listening and learning about the biblical image of shepherds. If you are a friend of mine on Facebook, you can see the adult woman and some of her sheep on my homepage. Her daughter has assumed more responsibility every year we visit this same place. A carefully thrown stone by the shepherd makes the sheep jump away from the danger and move back toward the flock.

The angelic messenger announced to shepherds “out in the fields” that a Savior had been born in Bethlehem. The infant Savior was the Messiah, the Lord. For the shepherds, their moment of grace had come. Being near the bottom rung of the social ladder, shepherds were even considered unclean by the religious authorities; but these shepherds had been “graced” by God out in a field, at night. (A guest pastor at Covenant CRC preached about Zacchaeus’s “grace moment” as being when Jesus looked up into the sycamore-fig tree and called Zacchaeus down. This pastor went on to say that Zacchaeus believed on the spot and responded immediately with grace.) I believe that the shepherds believed immediately and responded appropriately to God’s gift of grace. The text gives us no reason to think otherwise. They immediately got up, went to Bethlehem, and having seen the Messiah, “spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child.”

Those shepherds told whoever would listen about the One who would be the good shepherd for all of God’s people. If a good shepherd gave his life in defense of his flock, his name would be honored, and his family would be praised. But if a shepherd was found to have deserted his flock without putting up a fight, his name would be mud. Jesus is the opposite of a bad shepherd (the hired hands of John 10) who will flee at the first sign of trouble.

We know that Jesus stood triumphantly in a valley as dark as night, a valley filled with enemies seeking his life, for the purpose of protecting and defending his sheep and giving up his life only to take it up again as Victor King over all predators.

We have a good shepherd who gave his life to protect us. He calls us to trust him always and in every situation. He has already proved his worth in defeating his enemies and ours. Faith and trust are our responses to God’s “grace moment” in our lives.

Having witnessed God’s gift of deliverance we must go and tell from the mountaintops and into the valleys. There is a joy to and for the world and we have been chosen to give witness to it. May we never flee from our commitment.

Prayer:

Father God and shepherding Messiah, thank you for the promise of life and deliverance through the valleys that we still encounter. Forgive me for my times of weakness and fill me with the assurance of your forgiveness. Fill me with your power to go and tell about your grace, sufficient for all. In the name of the Victor-King, Jesus, Amen.

Action Item for the Day/Week:

It is pretty simple. Go and tell the good news to someone, by word, by text, by song, or card. And pray for God's power to work.

Songs for today:

[Go Tell It On The Mountain](#)