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Lent Day 25: The Good Shepherd

4-5 minutes

Ezekiel 34:23-31 (ESV)

“And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken.

“I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord God. And you are my sheep, human

sheep of my pasture, and I am your God,” declares the Lord God.

The image of the people of God as a flock of sheep occurs several times throughout the Bible. In the earlier part of Ezekiel 34, the current shepherds (rulers of Israel) are rebuked for their abuse of power (34:1-22). The prophet describes a situation where they had grown fat and wealthy at the expense of the very people they were supposed to care for. We are told that because of that, God would bring judgment on them. The chapter changes in its focus as the warning turns into a promise for the future in the verses above. Not only will the Lord save his sheep, he will also appoint a king who, like David, will shepherd them in such a way as to bring lasting peace (v. 25). It was peace and rest which humanity lost through sin (Genesis 3:15; 4:8) and which prophets like Ezekiel had been pointing to ever since (Isaiah 9:6-7). This is where we lift our eyes to see Jesus, who is God’s ideal shepherd-king and the opposite of the corrupt leadership described in the earlier part of the chapter.

The gospel writers tell us that Jesus came to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind (Luke 4:18). It is Jesus who weeps over Jerusalem because they didn’t know what would bring them peace (Luke 19:41). It is Jesus who lays down his life for his sheep so that we might have peace with God and one another. And it is Jesus who will one day bring everlasting peace to the world through his return (Revelation 21). In the meantime, there are seasons of disappointment and suffering that can sometimes make us lose hope that God will fulfill his promise. The injustice of the world around us can make us cynical. It is at those times that we must reflect on Jesus as our good shepherd and remember that because he laid down his life

for his sheep, we will one day “dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for your love and care for your sheep. Thank you for laying down your life on the cross so that I might know your peace and be adopted into your family. During this season of reflection, in light of your love for me, help me to find ways to seek peace in my relationships and lay down my life for others. In Christ's Name, Amen.

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