

THE GOOD SHEPHERDESS

NO. 1115

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 1, 1873
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon:
 for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?
 If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock,
 and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.”*
Song of Solomon 1:7-8

THE bride was most unhappy and ashamed because her personal beauty had been sorely marred by the heat of the sun. The fairest among women had become swarthy as a sunburned slave. Spiritually it is so full often with a chosen soul. The Lord's grace has made her fair to look upon, even as the lily, but she has been so busy about earthly things that the sun of worldliness has injured her beauty.

The bride with holy shamefacedness exclaims, “Look not upon me, for I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me.” She dreads alike the curiosity, the admiration, the pity, and the scorn of men, and turns herself alone to her Beloved, whose gaze she knows to be so full of love that her swarthyness will not cause her pain when most beneath His eye.

This is one index of a gracious soul—that whereas the ungodly rush to and fro, and know not where to look for consolation, the believing heart naturally flies to its Well-beloved Savior, knowing that in Him is its only rest.

It would appear from the preceding verse that the bride was also in trouble about a certain charge which had been given to her, which burdened her, and in the discharge of which she had become negligent of herself. She says, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards,” and she would wish to have kept them well, but she felt she had not done so, and that, moreover, she had failed in a more immediate duty—“My own vineyard have I not kept.”

Under this sense of double unworthiness and failure, feeling her omissions and her commissions to be weighing her down, she turned round to her Beloved and asked instruction at His hands. This was well. Had she not loved her Lord, she would have shunned Him when her comeliness was faded, but the instincts of her affectionate heart suggested to her that He would not discard her because of her imperfections.

She was, moreover, wise thus to appeal to her Lord against herself. Beloved, never let sin part you from Jesus. Under a sense of sin, do not fly from Him—that were foolishness. Sin may drive you *from* Sinai, it ought to draw you *to* Calvary. To the fountain we should fly with all the greater alacrity when we feel that we are foul.

And to the dear wounds of Jesus, whence all our life and healing must come, we should resort with the greater earnestness when we feel our soul to be sick, even though we fear that sickness to be unto death.

The bride, in the present case, takes to Jesus her troubles, her distress about herself, and her confession concerning her work. She brings before Him her double charge, the keeping of her own vineyard and the keeping of the vineyards of others.

I know that I shall be speaking to many this morning, who are busy in serving their Lord. And it may be that they feel great anxiety because they cannot keep their own hearts near to Jesus—they do not feel themselves warm and lively in the divine service. They plod on, but they are very much in the condition of those who are described as “faint, yet pursuing.”

When Jesus is present, labor for Him is joy, but in His absence His servants feel like workers underground, bereft of the light of the sun. They cannot give up working for Jesus, they love Him too well for that, but they pine to have His company while they are working for Him, and like the young prophets who went to the woods to cut down every man, a beam for their new house, they say to their master, “Be content, we pray thee, and go with thy servants.”

Our most earnest desire is that we may enjoy sweet communion with Jesus while we are actively engaged in His cause. Indeed, beloved, this is most important to all of us. I do not know of any point which Christian workers need more often to think upon than the subject of keeping their work and themselves near to their Master’s hand.

Our text will help us to this, under three heads. We have here, first, *a question asked*, “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon?” Secondly, *an argument used*, “Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?” And thirdly, we have *an answer obtained*, “If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents.”

I. Here is A QUESTION ASKED.

Every word of the inquiry is worthy of our careful meditation. You will observe, first, concerning it, that it is *asked in love*. She calls Him to whom she speaks by the endearing title, “O thou whom my soul loveth.” Whatever she may feel herself to be, she knows that she loves *Him*.

She is black and ashamed to have her face gazed upon, but still she loves her Bridegroom. She has not kept her own vineyard as she ought to have done, but still she loves Him—that she is sure and therefore boldly declares it. She loves Him as she loves none other in all the world. He only can be called, “Him whom my soul loveth.”

She knows none at all worthy to be compared with Him, none who can rival Him. He is her bosom’s Lord, sole prince, and monarch of all her affections. She feels also that she loves Him intensely—from her inmost *soul* she loves Him. The life of her existence is bound up with Him. If there be any force, and power, and vitality in her, it is but as fuel to the great flame of her love, which burns alone for Him.

Mark well that it is not, “O thou whom my soul believes in.” That would be true, but she has passed further. It is not, “O thou whom my soul honours.” That is true too, but she has passed beyond that stage. Nor is it merely, “O thou whom my soul trusts and obeys.” She is doing that, but she has reached something warmer, more tender, more full of fire and enthusiasm, and it is, “O thou whom my soul *loveth*.”

Now, beloved, I trust many of us can speak so to Jesus. He is to us the Well-beloved, “The chief amongst a myriad.” “His mouth is every sweetness, yea, all of him is loveliness,” and our soul is wrapt up in Him, our heart is altogether taken up with Him. We shall never serve Him aright unless it is so.

Before our Lord said to Peter, “Feed my lambs,” and “Feed my sheep,” He put the question, “Simon son of Jonas lovest thou me?” And this He repeated three times. For until that question is settled, we are unfit for His service.

So the bride here, having both herself and her little flock to care for, avows that she loves the spouse as if she felt that she would not dare to have a part of His flock to look after if she did not love Himself—as if she saw her right to be a shepherdess at all depended upon her love *to* the Great Shepherd.

She could not expect His help in her work, much less His fellowship in the work, unless there was first in her that all-essential fitness of love to His person. The question therefore becomes instructive to us, because it is addressed to Christ under a most endearing title.

And I ask every worker here to take care that he always does his work in a spirit of love, and always regards the Lord Jesus not as a taskmaster, not as one who has given us work to do from which we would fain escape, but as our dear Lord, whom to serve is bliss, and for whom to die is gain. “O thou whom my soul loveth,” is the right name by which a worker for Jesus should address his Lord.

Now note that the question, as it is asked in love, is also *asked of Him*. “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest.” She asked Him to tell her, as if she feared that none but Himself would give her the correct answer. Others might be mistaken, but He could not be. She asked of Him because she was quite sure that He would give her the kindest answer.

Others might be indifferent, and might scarcely take the trouble to reply, but if Jesus would tell her Himself, with His own lips, He would mingle love with every word, and so console as well as instruct her. Perhaps she felt that nobody else could tell her as He could, for others speak to the ear, but He speaks to the heart. Others speak with lower degrees of influence—we hear their speech but are not moved thereby.

But Jesus speaks, and the Spirit goes with every word He utters, and therefore we hear to profit when He converses with us. I do not know how it may be with you, my brethren, but I feel this morning that if I could get half a word from Christ, it would satisfy my soul for many a day.

I love to hear the Gospel, and to read it, and to preach it—but to hear it fresh from Jesus, applied by the energy of the Holy Spirit! O, this were refreshment! This is energy and power! Therefore, Savior, when Your workers desire to know where You feed, tell them Yourself, speak to their hearts by Your own Spirit, and let them feel as though it were a new revelation to their inmost nature. “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth.” It is asked in love. It is asked of Him.

Now, observe what the question is. She wishes to know how Jesus does His work and where He does it. It appears, from the eighth verse, that she herself has a flock of kids to tend. She is a shepherdess and would fain feed her flock, hence her question, “Tell me where thou feedest?”

She desires those little ones of hers to obtain rest as well as food, and she is troubled about them. Therefore she says, “Tell me where thou makest thy flock to rest,” for if she can see how Jesus does His work, and where He does it, and in what way, then she will be satisfied that she is doing it in the right way, if she closely imitates Him and abides in fellowship with Him.

The question seems to be just this, “Lord, tell me what are the truths with which You do feed Your people’s souls. Tell me what are the doctrines which make the strong ones weak and the sad ones glad. Tell me what is that precious meat which You are wont to give to hungry and fainting spirits, to revive them and keep them alive. For if You tell me, then I will give my flock the same food. Tell me where the pasture is wherein You feed Your sheep, and straightway I will lead mine to the selfsame happy fields.

“Then tell me how You make Your people to rest. What are those promises which You do apply to the consolation of their spirit, so that their cares, and doubts, and fears, and agitations all subside? You have sweet meadows where You make Your beloved flock lie calmly down and slumber. Tell me where those meadows are that I may go and fetch the flock committed to my charge—the mourners whom I ought to comfort, the distressed ones whom I am bound to relieve, the desponding whom I have endeavored to encourage—tell me, Lord, where You make Your flock to lie down, for then, under Your help, I will go and make my flock to lie down too. It is for myself, but yet far more for others that I ask the question, ‘Tell me where thou feedest, where thou makest them to rest at noon.’”

I have no doubt that the spouse did desire information for herself and for her own good, and I believe Dr. Watts had caught some of the spirit of the passage when he sang—

*“Gladly would I feed among Thy sheep,
Among them rest, among them sleep.”*

But it does not strike me that this is all the meaning of the passage by a very long way. The bride says, “Tell me where thou feedest thy flock,” as if she would wish to feed with the flock. “Where thou makest thy flock to rest,” as if she wanted to rest there too. But it strikes me the very gist of the thing is this that she wished to bring her flock to feed where Christ’s flock feeds and to lead her lambs to lie down where Christ’s little lambs were reposing.

She desired, in fact, to do her work in His company. She wanted to mix up her flock with the Lord's flock, her work with His work, and to feel that what she was doing she was doing for Him. Yea, and with Him and through Him. She had evidently met with a great many difficulties in what she had tried to do. She wished to feed her flock of kids, but could not find them pasture.

Perhaps when she began her work as a shepherdess she thought herself quite equal to the task, but now the same sun which had bronzed her face, had dried up the pasture, and so she says, "O thou that knowest all the pastures, tell me where You feed, for I cannot find grass for my flock."

And suffering herself from the noontide heat, she finds her little flock suffering too. And she inquires, "Where dost thou make Your flock to rest at noon? Where are cool shadows of great rocks which screen off the sultry rays when the sun is in its zenith and pours down torrents of heat? For I cannot shade my poor flock and give them comfort in their many trials and troubles. I wish I could. O Lord, tell me the secret art of consolation, then will I try to console my own charge by the selfsame means."

We would know the groves of promise and the cool streams of peace, that we may lead others into rest. If we can follow Jesus, we can guide others, and so both we and they will find comfort and peace. That is the meaning of the request before us.

Note well that she said most particularly, "Tell *me*." "O Master, do not merely tell Your sheep where You feed, though they want to know, but tell me where You feed, for I would fain instruct others." She would fain know many things, but chiefly she says, "Tell me *where thou feedest*," for she wished to feed others.

We want practical knowledge, for our desire is to be helped to bring others into rest—to be the means of speaking peace to the consciences of others, as the Lord has spoken peace to ours. Therefore the prayer is, "Tell me." "You are my model, O Great Shepherd. You are my wisdom. If I be a shepherd to Your sheep, yet am I also a sheep beneath Your Shepherdry, therefore teach me that I may teach others."

I do not know whether I make myself plain to you, but I wish to put it very simply. I am preaching to myself perhaps a great deal more than to you. I am preaching to my own heart. I feel I have to come, Sabbath after Sabbath, and weekday after weekday, and tell you a great many precious things about Christ, and sometimes I enjoy them myself.

But if nobody else gets blessed by them, I do, and I go home and praise the Lord for it. But my daily fear is lest I should be a handler of texts for you and a preacher of good things for others, and yet remain unprofited in my own heart. My prayer is that the Lord Jesus will show me where He feeds His people and let me feed with them, that I may conduct you to the pastures where He is, and be with Him myself at the same time that I bring you to Him.

You Sabbath school teachers and evangelists, and others—my dear, earnest comrades, for whom I thank God at every remembrance—I feel that the main point you have to watch about is that you do not lose your own spirituality while trying to make others spiritual. The great point is to live near to God. It would be a dreadful thing for you to be very busy about other men's souls, and neglect your own.

Appeal to the Well-beloved, and entreat Him to let you feed your flock where He is feeding His people, that He would let you sit at His feet, like Mary, even while you are working in the house, like Martha. Do not do less, but rather more, and ask to do it in such communion with Him that your work shall be melted into His work, and what you are doing shall be really only His working in you, and you rejoicing to pour out to others what He pours into your own soul. God grant it may be so with you all, my brethren.

II. Secondly, here is AN ARGUMENT USED.

The bride says, "Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" If she should lead her flock into distant meadows, far away from the place where Jesus is feeding His flock, it would not be well. As a shepherdess would naturally be rather dependent, and would need to associate

herself for protection with others, suppose she should turn aside with other shepherds and leave her Bridegroom—would it be right?

She speaks of it as a thing most abhorrent to her mind and well might it be. For, first, would it not look very unseemly that the bride should be associating with others than the Bridegroom? They have each a flock—there He is with His great flock—and here is she with her little one. Shall they seek pastures far off from one another?

Will there not be talk about this? Will not onlookers say, “This is not seemly. There must be some lack of love here or else these two would not be so divided?” Stress may be put, if you like, upon that little word “I.” Why should *I*, your blood-bought spouse. I, betrothed to You before the earth was. I, whom You have loved—why should I turn after others and forget You?

Beloved, you had better put the emphasis in your own reading of it just there. Why should *I*, whom the Lord has pardoned, whom the Lord has loved, whom the Lord has favored so much—*I*, who have enjoyed fellowship with Him for many years—*I*, who know that His love is better than wine—*I*, who have aforesaid been inebriated with His sweetness—why should *I* turn aside?

Let others do so if they will, but it would be uncomely and unseemly for me. I pray You, brother and sister, try to feel that—that for you to work apart from Christ would have a bad look about it, that for your work to take you away from fellowship with Jesus would have a very ugly appearance. It would not be among the things that are honest and of good repute.

For the bride to feed her flock in other company would look like unfaithfulness to her husband. What, shall the bride of Christ forsake her Beloved? Shall she be unchaste towards her Lord? Yet it would seem so if she makes companions of others and forgets her Beloved. Our hearts may grow unchaste to Christ even while they are zealous in Christian work.

I dread very much the tendency to do Christ’s work in a cold, mechanical spirit. But above even that I tremble lest I should be able to have warmth for Christ’s work and yet should be cold towards the Lord Himself. I fear that such a condition of heart is possible—that we may burn great bonfires in the streets for public display and scarcely keep a live coal upon our hearth for Jesus to warm His hands at.

When we meet in the great assembly, the good company helps to warm our hearts, and when we are working for the Lord with others, they stimulate us, and cause us to put forth all our energy and strength. And then we think, “Surely my heart is in a healthy condition towards God.”

But beloved, such excitement may be a poor index of our real state. I love that quiet, holy fire which will glow in the closet and flame forth in the chamber when I am alone—and that is the point I am more fearful about than anything else—both for myself and for you, lest we should be doing Christ’s work without Christ. Having much to do, but not thinking much of *Him*. Cumbered about much serving, yet forgetting Him.

Why, that would soon grow into making a Christ out of our own service—an Antichrist out of our own labors. Beware of that! Love your work, but love your Master better. Love your flock, but love the Great Shepherd better still and ever keep close to Him, for it will be a token of unfaithfulness if you do not.

And mark again, “Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?” We may read this as meaning, “Why should I be so unhappy as to have to work for You, and yet be out of communion with You?” It is a very unhappy thing to lose fellowship with Jesus and yet to have to go on with religious exercises. If the wheels are taken off your chariot, it is no great matter if nobody wants to ride, but how if you are called upon to drive on? When a man’s foot is lamed, he may not so much regret it if he can sit still, but if he be bound to run a race, he is greatly to be pitied.

It made the spouse doubly unhappy even to suppose that she, with her flock to feed and herself needing feeding too, should have to turn aside by the flocks of others and miss the presence of her Lord. In fact, the question seems to be put in this shape—“What reason is there why I should leave my Lord? What apology could I make, what excuse could I offer for doing so? Is there any reason why I should not abide in constant fellowship with Him? Why should I be as one that turns aside? Perhaps it may be

said that others turn aside, but why should I be as one of them? There may be excuses for such an act in others, but there can be none for me. Your rich love, Your free love, Your undeserved love, Your special love to me, has bound me hand and foot—how can I turn aside?

“There may be some professors who owe You little, but I, once the chief of sinners, owe you so much, how can I turn aside? There may be some with whom You have dealt harshly who may turn aside, but You have been so tender, so kind to me, how can I forget You? There may be some who know but little of You, whose experience of You is so slender that their turning aside is not to be wondered at. But how can I turn aside when You have shown me Your love and revealed Your heart to me?

“Oh, by the banqueting house where I have feasted with You, by the Hermonites and the hill Mizar, where You have manifested Your love, by the place where deep called to deep, and then mercy called to mercy, by those mighty storms and sweeping hurricanes in which You were the shelter of my head, by ten thousand thousand mercies past which have been my blessed portion, why should *I* be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?”

Let me address the members of this church and say to you, if all the churches in Christendom were to go aside from the Gospel, why should you? If in every other place the Gospel should be neglected, and an uncertain sound should be given forth—if Ritualism should swallow up half the churches, and Rationalism the rest, yet why should *you* turn aside?

You have been peculiarly a people of prayer. You have also followed the Lord fully in doctrine and in ordinance, and consequently you have enjoyed the divine presence, and have prospered beyond measure. We have cast ourselves upon the Holy Ghost for strength, and have not relied upon human eloquence, music, or beauties of color, or architecture.

Our only weapon has been the simple, plain, full Gospel, and why should we turn aside? Have we not been favored for these many years with unexampled success? Has not the Lord added unto our numbers so abundantly that we have not had room enough to receive them? Has He not multiplied the people, and increased the joy?

Hold fast to your first love and let no man take your crown. I thank God there are churches still, a few in England, and yet more in Scotland, which hold fast the doctrines of the Gospel and will not let them go. To them I would say, why should you turn aside? Should not your history, both in its troublous and its joyous chapters, teach you to hold fast the form of sound words?

Above all, should we not try to live as a church, and individually, also, in abiding fellowship with Jesus. For if we turn aside from Him, we shall rob the truth of its aroma, yea, of its essential fragrance. If we lose fellowship with Jesus, we shall have the standard, but where will be the standard-bearer? We may retain the candlestick, but where shall be the light? We shall be shorn of our strength, our joy, our comfort, our all, if we miss fellowship with Him. God grant, therefore, that we may never be as those who turn aside.

III. Thirdly, we have here AN ANSWER GIVEN by the Bridegroom to His beloved.

She asked Him where He fed, where He made His flock rest, and He answered her. Observe carefully that this answer is *given in tenderness to her infirmity*, not ignoring her ignorance, but dealing very gently with it.

“If thou know not”—a hint that she ought to have known, but such a hint as kind lovers give when they would fain forbear to chide. Our Lord is very tender to our ignorance. There are many things which we do not know, but ought to have known. we are children when we should be men, and have to be spoken to as unto carnal—unto babes in Christ, when we should have become fathers.

Is there one among us who can say, “I am not faulty in my knowledge”? I am afraid the most of us must confess that if we had done the Lord’s will better, we should have known His doctrine better. If we had lived more closely to Him, we should have known more of Him. Still, how very gentle the rebuke is. The Lord forgives our ignorance and condescends to instruct it.

Note next that the answer is *given in great love*. He says, “O thou fairest among women.” That is a blessed cordial for her distress. She said, “I am black,” but He says, “O thou fairest among women.” I

would rather trust Christ's eyes than mine. If my eyes tell me I am black, I will weep, but if He assures me I am fair, I will believe Him and rejoice.

Some saints are more apt to remember their sinfulness and grieve over it, than to believe in their righteousness in Christ and triumph in it. Remember, beloved, it is quite as true today that you are all fair and without spot, as that you are black, because the sun has looked upon you. It must be true, because Jesus says so.

Let me give you one of the sayings of the Bridegroom to His bride, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." "Ah, that is a figure," say you. Well, I will give you one that it not a figure. The Lord Jesus, after He had washed His disciples' feet, said, "He that is washed needeth not except to wash his feet for he is clean every whit." And then He added, "And ye are clean."

If you desire an apostolic word to the same effect, let me give you this, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"—*anything*—any little thing or any great thing either. Jesus has washed His people so clean that there is no spot, no wrinkle, nor any such thing upon them in the matter of justification before God.

*"In thy Surety thou art free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee;
With His spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One."*

How glorious is this. Jesus does not exaggerate when He thus commends His church. He speaks plain, sober truth. "O thou fairest among women," says He. My soul, do you not feel love to Christ when you remember that He thinks you beautiful? I cannot see anything in myself to love, but He does, and calls me, "all fair."

I think it must be that He looks into our eyes and sees, Himself, or else this—that He knows what we are going to be and judges us on that scale. As the artist looking on the block of marble sees in the stone the statue which he means to fetch out of it with matchless skill, so the Lord Jesus sees the perfect image of Himself in us, from which He means to chip away the imperfections and the sins until we stand out in all His splendor.

But still it is gracious condescension which makes Him say, "Thou art fairest among women," to one who mourned her own sunburned countenance.

The answer contains much sacred wisdom. The bride is directed where to go that she may find her Beloved and lead her flock to Him. "Go thy way forth by the footprints of the flock." If you will find Jesus, you will find Him in the way the holy prophets went, in the way of the patriarchs, and the way of the apostles. And if you do desire be to find your flock and to make them lie down—very well, go you and feed them as other shepherds have done—Christ's own shepherds whom He has sent in other days to feed His chosen.

I am very glad, in speaking from this text, that the Lord does not give to His bride in answer to her question some singular directions of great difficulty, some novel prescriptions singular and remarkable. Just as the Gospel is simple and homely, so is this exhortation and direction for the renewal of communion.

It is easy, it is plain. You want to get to Jesus and you want to bring those under your charge to Him. Very well, then, do not seek out a new road, but simply go the way which all other saints have gone. If you want to walk with Jesus, walk where other saints have walked. And if you want to lead others into communion with Him, lead them by your example where others have gone.

What is that? If you want to be with Jesus, go where Abraham went in the path of separation. See how he lived as a pilgrim and a sojourner with his God. If you would see Jesus, "Come ye out from among them, be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing." You shall find Jesus when you have left the world.

If you would walk with Jesus, follow the path of obedience. Saints have never had fellowship with Jesus when they have disobeyed Him. Keep His statutes, and observe His testimonies, be jealous over your conduct and character, for the path of obedience is the path of communion.

Be sure that you follow the ancient ways with regard to the Christian ordinances—do not alter them, but keep to the good old paths. Stand and inquire what apostles did and do the same. Jesus will not bless you in using fanciful ceremonies of human invention. Keep to those which He commands, which His Spirits sanctions, and which His apostles practiced.

Above all, if you would walk with Jesus, continue in the way of holiness, and persevere in the way of grace. Make the Lord Jesus your model and example, and by treading where the footprints of the flock are to be seen, you will both save yourself and them that hear you. You shall find Jesus and they shall find Jesus too.

We might have supposed that the Lord would have said, “If you want to lead your flock aright, array yourself in sumptuous apparel or go get your music and fine anthems. By these fair things you will fascinate the Savior into your sanctuaries.” But it is not so.

The incense which will please the Lord Jesus is that of holy prayer and praise, and the only ritualism which is acceptable with Him is this—pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widow, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. This is all He wants. Follow that, and you shall both go right and lead others right.

Then the Spouse added, “Feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents.” Now, who are these shepherds? There are many in these days that set up for shepherds, who feed their sheep in poisonous pastures. Keep away from them. But there are others whom it is safe to follow. Let me take you to the twelve principal shepherds who came after the Great Shepherd of all.

You want to bless your children, to save their souls, and have fellowship with Christ in the doing of it—then teach them the truths which the apostles taught. And what were they? Take Paul as an example. “I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” That is feeding the kids beside the shepherds’ tents—when you teach your children Christ, much of Christ, all of Christ, and nothing else but Christ. Mind you stick to that blessed subject.

And when you are teaching them Christ, teach them all about His life, His death, His resurrection. Teach them His Godhead and His manhood. You will never enjoy Christ’s company if you doubt His divinity. Take care that you feed your flock upon the doctrine of the atonement. Christ will have no fellowship with a worker unless he represents Him fairly, and you cannot represent Christ truthfully unless you see the ruddy hue of His atoning blood as well as the lily purity of His life.

“Feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents,” then will you teach them the atoning sacrifice, and justification by faith, and imputed righteousness, and union with the risen Head, and the coming of the great One, wherein we shall receive the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body from the grave.

I speak the truth and lie not when I say that if we want to teach a congregation so as to bless them, and keep in fellowship with Christ at the same time ourselves, we must be very particular to teach nothing but the truth—not a part of it, but all of it.

Preach that blessed doctrine of election. Oh, the deeps of divine love which are contained in that blessed truth! Do not shirk it or keep it in the background. You cannot expect Christ’s presence if you do. Teach the doctrine of man’s depravity. Lay the sinner low. God will not bless a ministry which exalts men. Preach the doctrine of the Holy Spirit’s effectual calling, for if we do not magnify the Spirit of God, we cannot expect that He will make our work to stand.

Preach regeneration. Let it be seen how thorough the change is, that we may glorify God’s work. Preach the final perseverance of the saints. Teach that the Lord is not changeable—casting away His people, loving them today and hating them tomorrow. Preach, in fact, the doctrines of grace as you find them in the Book.

Feed them beside the shepherds’ tents. Ay, and feed the kids there—the little children. I begin to feel more and more that it is a mistake to divide the children from the congregation. I believe in special

services for children, but I would also have them worship with us. If our preaching does not teach children, it lacks some element which it ought to possess. The kind of preaching which is best of all for grown-up people is that in which children also will take delight.

I like to see the congregation made up not all of the young, nor all of the old—not all of the mature, nor all of the inexperienced, but some of all sorts gathered together. If we are teaching children salvation by works, and grown-up people salvation by grace, we are pulling down in the school room what we build up in the church, and that will never do.

Feed the kids with the same Gospel as the grown-up sheep, though not exactly in the same terms. Let your language be appropriate to them, but let it be the same truth. God forbid that we should have our Sunday schools the hotbeds of Arminianism, while our churches are gardens of Calvinism. We shall soon have a division in the camp if that be so. The same truth for all—and you cannot expect Christ to be with you in feeding your little flocks unless you feed them where Christ feeds us. Where does He feed us but where the truth grows?

Oh, when I read some sermons, they remind me of a piece of common by the roadside, after a hungry horde of sheep have devoured every green thing. But when I read a solid Gospel sermon of the Puritans, it reminds me of a field kept for hay, which a farmer is at last obliged to give up to the sheep. The grass has grown almost as high as themselves, and so they lie down in it, eating and resting too.

Give me the doctrines of grace and I am in clover. If you have to feed others, take them there. Do not conduct them to the starved pastures of modern thought and culture. Preachers are starving God's people nowadays. Oh, but they set out such beautiful China plates, such wonderful knives and forks, such marvelous vases and damask tablecloths! But as for food, the plates look as if they had been smeared with a feather, there is so little on them.

The real Gospel teaching is little enough. They give us nothing to learn, nothing to digest, nothing to feed upon. It is all slops and nothing substantial. O for the good old corn of the kingdom. We want that and I am persuaded that when the churches get back to the old food again—when they begin to feed their flocks beside the shepherds' tents, and when in practical living Christians, the saints get back to the old Puritanic method, and follow once again the tracks of the sheep, and the sheep follow the tracks of Christ—then we shall get the church into fellowship with Jesus and Jesus will do wonders in our midst.

But to get that, each individual must aim at winning it for himself—and if the Lord shall grant it to each one of us, then it will be granted to the whole, and the good times which we desire will certainly have come.

My beloved, do you desire to work with Christ? Do you want to feel that Jesus is at your right hand? Then go and work in His way. Teach what He would have you teach, not what you would like to teach. Go and work for Him, as He would have you work, not as your prejudices might prescribe to you. Be obedient. Follow the footsteps of the flock. Be diligent also to keep hard by the shepherds' tents and the Lord bless you more and more, you and your children, and His shall be the glory.

I have spoken only to God's people. I wish there had been time to speak to the unconverted too, but to them I can only say this—may God grant you grace to know the beauties of Jesus, for then you will love Him too. May He also show you the deformities of yourselves, for then you will desire to be cleansed and made lovely in Christ.

And remember, if any one of you wants Christ, *He* wants *you*. And if you long for Him, He longs for you. If you seek Him, He is seeking you. If you will now cry to Him, He is already crying after you. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." The Lord save you for His name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—SONG OF SOLOMON 1

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.