

JESUS—THE SHEPHERD

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“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.”
Isaiah 40:11

OUR Lord Jesus is very frequently described as the Shepherd of His people. The figure is inexhaustible, but it has been so often handled that I suppose it would be difficult to say anything fresh upon it. We all know, and are very glad and comforted in the knowledge, that the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Shepherd, exercises towards us all the kind and necessary offices which a shepherd performs towards his sheep.

With gentle sway He *rules* us for our good, “Let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.” He *guides* us, “And when he puts forth his own sheep he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”

He *provides* for us, “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.” He *protects* us from all forms of evil. Therefore, “Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil, for He is with us: His rod and His staff, they comfort us.”

If we wander, He *seeks* us out and brings us back. “He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” If we be broken, He binds us up. If we be wounded, He heals according to His own Word, “I will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.”

The sheep is an animal of many diseases and many wants, and so the Christian is an individual of many sins and many infirmities. But as the shepherd endeavors to meet all the wants of his flock, so our Lord Jesus succors all the blood-bought company in all their needs.

We propose to illustrate the great doctrine of the text in a Scriptural, and therefore we hope in an interesting, manner. First, we shall consider in connection with the text, *Old Testament illustrations*. In the second place, *New Testament descriptions*. And in the third place, *Impressive applications*.

I. We commence with OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATIONS of the manner in which the Lord Jesus Christ discharges the office of feeding His flock like a shepherd.

Out of five great types we begin with *Abel, the shepherd slain*. The second man who was born into the world was a shepherd and was in many respects typical of our Good Shepherd. “Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.” Abel was a type of the Savior in that, being a shepherd, *he sanctified his work to the glory of God, and he offered sacrifice of blood upon the altar of the Lord*.

And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering. This early type of our Lord is not very full and comprehensive, but it is exceedingly clear and distinct. Like the first streak of light which tinges the east at the sunrise, it does not reveal everything, but it clearly manifests the great fact that the sun is coming.

Abel is nothing like so complete and perfect a portrait of our own Lord Jesus, as other shepherds of whom we have to speak. But as we see him standing a shepherd and yet a sacrificing priest offering upon the altar a sacrifice of sweet smell unto God, we discern there at once the picture of our Lord, who brings before His Father a sacrifice of precious blood, to which JEHOVAH ever has respect.

Abel, the sacrificing shepherd, was hated by his brother—hated without a cause. And even so was the Savior—the spirit of this world, the natural and carnal man, hated the better man, the accepted man

in whom the Spirit of grace was found, and rested not until His blood had been shed. Abel fell, and sprinkled his own altar and his sacrifice with his own blood. And he must be blind indeed who cannot behold the Lord Jesus slain by the enmity of man while serving as a priest before the Lord.

Abel is the type of Jesus the slain shepherd. Let us attentively consider him. We have been reading in the tenth chapter of John, this morning, that the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep—let us weep over Him as we view Him stretched upon the ground by the hatred of mankind at the foot of His own altar of sacrifice, pouring out His blood.

We read of *Abel's blood*, in the New Testament, that it *speaketh*. “He being dead yet speaketh.” “The LORD said unto Cain, The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me from the ground.” Herein we have a blessed type of the Lord—His blood had a mighty tongue, and the import of its prevailing cry is not vengeance but mercy.

*“The rich blood of Jesus slain
Speaks peace as loud from every vein.”*

It is precious beyond all preciousness to stand at Jesus Christ's altar, and to see Him Himself offered there as a whole burnt-offering acceptable unto God. To see Him lying bleeding there as the slaughtered priest, and then to hear the voice of His blood speaking peace in our consciences, peace in the church of God, peace between Jew and Gentile, peace between man and his offended Maker—speaking peace all down the ages of eternity for blood-washed man.

Abel is first in order of time, and Jesus first in order of excellence. The earth opened her mouth to receive Abel's blood, and Jesus' sacrifice has blessed this poor, sin-ruined world. Abel received divine witness to his righteousness, and Jesus obtained the same in the day of His resurrection. But fullness of other matters forbid us to linger.

Further down the page of sacred history we find another shepherd. He is a more instructive type of the Savior, perhaps, than the first, but in Abel we discover a truth which is absent in all the others. Abel is the only one of the typical shepherds who dies at the foot of the altar, he is the only sacrificing shepherd.

And herein you see Jesus Christ in the very earliest ages set forth to mankind as the slaughtered victim. That whatever else the early saints might not see, yet they might know that the seed of the woman would shed His precious blood. This most vital truth is not withheld even for a little season.

Now we turn to *Jacob, the toiling shepherd*. Here is a type of the Good Shepherd not as dying, but as keeping sheep with a view to get unto Himself a spouse and a flock. Jacob left his father's house. He departed from all the joy and comfort of the house in which he was the recognized heir, both by his own purchase and his Father's promise.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, out of the love which He bore us, left His Father's house above and came down to tabernacle among men. Jacob repaired to his mother's brethren, and even so our Lord, on the mother's side, counts men His brethren. “He came unto his own.”

That vision which Jacob saw the first night after he had left his father's house, seems to me to be a representation of the great object which our Lord had set before Him as the intent of His mission here below. Jacob slept, and dreamed that he saw a ladder, the foot whereof stood upon the earth, while the top reached to the heaven of heavens, whence a Covenant God spoke to His chosen servant.

And so, before the Savior's eye, as the great reward of all His life's travail, He saw a ladder set up by which earth should be connected with heaven. He saw fallen man at the foot of it, but He beheld a Covenant God at the top, while the angels of God ascending and descending upon His own Person, as upon the divine road of communication by which prayer mounts and mercy descends.

As soon as Jacob arrived at the house of his mother's brethren, he began to work out of the love he bore to Rachel. And Jesus Christ no sooner descended upon this lower earth, than He began at once to labor to win His spouse.

Now there were in the house of manhood two daughters to both of whom Jesus must be affianced. There was first of all the Jewish church, which was in His eyes His Rachel, His dearly beloved, and He toiled for her. But in the days of His flesh His own received Him not. Though while He was here below, He declared that He was not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet Israel was not gathered.

Yet Jesus lost not His reward, for the Gentile church, the tender-eyed Leah, was His reward. “Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. And He said, “It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

Leah, the Gentile church, is far more fruitful unto Christ in spiritual children than the Rachel for whom He served in the days of His flesh. But the day comes when Rachel shall be more fully increased, when the fullness of the Gentiles having been gathered in, the Jew shall recognize Messiah, and the Jewish people shall own their King.

We understand from Jacob’s own description of his toil, that his labor in order to get to himself his spouse was of the most arduous character. And it will be well for the intelligent Christian to see Jesus Christ in just such toil, seeking to redeem unto Himself His own beloved, that they might forever be one with Himself in His own glory.

In the thirty-first chapter of Genesis, at the thirty-eighth verse, Jacob, while expostulating with Laban, thus describes his own toil, “These twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock I have not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee: I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus I have been twenty years in thy house: I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times.”

Even more toilsome than this was the life of our Savior here below. He watched over all His sheep till He could give as His last account, “Of all those whom thou hast given me I have lost none, but the son of perdition, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.”

His hair was wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night. Sleep departed from His eyes, for all night He was in prayer wrestling with God. One night it is Peter who must be pleaded for, another time another claims His tearful intercession. No shepherd sitting beneath the cold skies, looking up to the stars, could ever utter such complaints because of the hardness of his toil as Jesus Christ might have brought, if He had chosen to do so, because of the sternness of His service in order to gather unto Himself His people.

*“Cold mountains and the midnight air,
Witnessed the fervour of His prayer;
The desert His temptation knew,
His conflict and His victory too.”*

It is sweet to dwell upon the spiritual parallel of Laban having required all the sheep at Jacob’s hand. If they were torn of beasts he must make it good. If any of them died, he must stand as surety for the whole. And did not the Savior stand just so while He was here below? Was not His toil for His church just the toil of one who felt that He was under suretyship obligations to bring every one of them safe to the hand of Him who had committed them to His charge? Look upon toiling Jacob and you see a representation of Him of whom the text says, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.”

One other point of resemblance there is here, namely, that when Jacob had thus purchased to himself his spouse, and had received a reward for all his toil out of the flock which he himself tended, he then conducted both his family and his flock away from Laban. This is a point never to be forgotten.

Shouldering His cross, Jesus went without the camp, and in so doing He speaks to each of us. “Let us therefore go forth without the camp, bearing his reproach.” He went to His mother’s brethren that He might fetch out His chosen from among men, and His voice to His spouse is, “Hearken, O daughter, and consider: forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy LORD; and worship thou him.”

Jacob coming back from Laban to the promised land is a true picture of Jesus Christ coming up from the world, followed by His church, to enter upon that better Canaan which has been given to us by a covenant of salt forever. The toiling shepherd never ceased his work till he has bidden farewell to Laban once for all, and has come to dwell in tents where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt before him.

And Christ’s work is not accomplished in us till He has made us like Himself, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Although these types are very full, I choose rather to give them to you as suggestions to think out for yourselves than to enlarge upon them myself.

Joseph is a type of Jesus, *reigning in the Egypt of this world for the good of his own people, while they are here below.* Remember Joseph’s history. We find that he kept his father’s flock with his brethren. So did our Savior when He began to teach and to preach. In the midst of the envious scribes and Pharisees He kept His Father’s flock.

They could not, however, brook Him in whom they discerned a royalty not in themselves. As Joseph wore a coat of many colors, indicative of princely rank and of his father’s love, even so Jesus Christ in the perfections of His nature, being something more than ordinary man, was soon spied out by envious shepherds as anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

Then began they to find fault with his words. He had seen a dream in which the sun and moon and the eleven stars were made obedient unto him. And as the envious scribes and Pharisees listened to the words of the Savior, and heard Him claim that He was the Son of God, and that He came down from heaven, they thought that He dreamed.

They charged Him with blasphemy, and straightway their hearts were set against Him, and they were determined upon His destruction. They sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. So our Joseph was sold into Egypt to the powers of evil. There He was falsely accused, though in Him was no sin.

Our Joseph, our blessed Shepherd, was cast into the prison of the grave, and there He abode for a while, but by and by He came out of prison and Joseph—Jesus—it matters not which word I use—Joseph was made ruler over all the land of Egypt. That same Shepherd of ours who was sold by His envious brethren, and who went down into the prison-tomb, is now exalted high above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named.

And even here, in this Egypt, where His people now dwell, Jesus Christ is King. Not a dog dare move his tongue in all the land of Egypt without the permission of Joseph, and surely no enemy can forge a weapon against Christ’s church here on earth.

***“He overrules all mortal things,
And manages our mean affairs.”***

The Father has committed all power unto His Son. Jesus Christ is King over Egypt’s realm.

Now observe the likeness between Joseph and Jesus in this respect. Joseph was of very singular advantage to the Egyptians. They must have starved in the years of famine, if his prescient eye had not foreseen the famine and stored up the plenty of the seven previous years. And Jesus Christ is of great service even to this wicked world.

It is by Him that it is preserved. The barren fig tree was spared because the husbandman pleaded for it, and the intercession of Jesus Christ spares the lives of the unregenerate. And though they will be swept away with the besom of destruction when their iniquity is fully ripe, yet meanwhile they are spared because of the mediatorial sovereignty of the great Shepherd.

Jesus Christ, like Joseph, rules over the land of Egypt, but Joseph ruled for a special purpose. God had sent Joseph to Egypt, but not mainly for the sake of the Egyptians. “God hath sent me hither to save your souls alive.” This was Joseph’s own testimony. Jesus Christ now has power over all flesh—why? “That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” The universal reign of Christ, in which respect His redemption comes to all the sons of men, has for its object that special redemption in which respect it comes only to His own people who are His sheep.

Perhaps some of you may wonder how I venture to call Joseph a shepherd. You grant me that in his early days he kept his father’s flock, but was he a shepherd while he was in Egypt? You will believe the dying words of his father Jacob, will you not? His father Jacob, when speaking of him said, “Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall; the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.”

Then there comes a sentence between brackets—“for thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel.” Joseph is here called the shepherd and the stone. I could not make out in meditation why he should be both a shepherd and a stone, but you remember that Jesus Christ was at once the Shepherd and the Stone which the builders refused, which afterwards became the headstone of the corner. And so Joseph in being a shepherd of his people, and in having been the cornerstone of the Israelitish race while they were in Egypt, was both the shepherd and the stone of Israel.

Beloved, it seems to me to be such a delightful thought to think that Jesus Christ is King today in the world. The Lord reigns—let the earth rejoice. Jesus Christ wears the crown this day of universal monarchy. “The LORD said unto my lord, sit thou on my right hand until thine enemies are made thy footstool.”

So that nothing happens now, but that which Jesus permits, ordains, and overrules. Let empires go to wreck—it is Christ who breaks them with a rod of iron, and shivers them like potters’ vessels. Let conflagrations burn down cities, and let diseases devastate nations, let war succeed war, and pestilence to famine, yet still our Joseph rules all things well, and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, that are called according to His purpose. The saints are in the world, but Christ reigns over the world for His church, that it may be kept and preserved in the midst of an evil generation.

You remember that remarkable saying, “Now every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians”—a strange thing, and yet in Egypt the shepherds found their shelter. Now every Christian is an abomination to the world, and yet it is in this world that at the present time we dwell in so much temporal comfort, under such excellent government, with so little disturbance.

To what can we attribute it to but this, that Jesus sits upon the throne and rules Egypt for the good of Israel. And the world is made subservient to the blessedness of the church of God. I must not tarry any longer, though it is a very tempting theme, but I want to take you on to the next shepherd.

Jesus Christ will be represented to you in quite a different character under the next illustration. Moses was not a ruler in Egypt, but quite a distinct character. Moses, when he kept sheep, kept them in the wilderness, far away from all other flocks. And when he became a shepherd over God’s people Israel, his business was not to preserve them in Egypt, but to conduct them out of it.

Here, then, is a representation of Jesus Christ as *the Shepherd of a separated people*, called from among men, and made to be a distinguished nation, not numbered among the people. Jesus, like Moses, might have been a king. The devil said to Him, “All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

The people would have taken Him, we read, and made Him a king, for He was naturally of royal race, but He refused. As Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, so Jesus Christ said, “Get thee behind me, Satan,” to all the pomp and glory of this present world, and preferred to take part with His poor, despised people, who were crushed down by the reigning powers in the Egypt of His days.

Now Moses began his mission, you remember, by going to Pharaoh and saying, “Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.” Jesus Christ begins as the Shepherd of the separate ones by demanding that they should be let go from the bondage of their natural estate. With a high hand and with an outstretched arm, he fetches out His people from among the men.

Plagues and marvels does he work, but he brings them all out. “Not a hoof shall be left behind,” not one child of God, not one sheep of His pasture shall be left in the Egypt of sin and death. They shall all be made to go without the camp—leaving even Goshen to go into a wilderness because they must be alone with God, and they cannot worship Him in a land full of idols.

I might dwell for a long time on all the transactions of Moses in Egypt, and especially upon the paschal supper, all of which were doubtless typical of Him of whom the text says, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.” Our main point is the great exodus of Moses, who at the head of all the tribes goes forth to Succoth. There they pitch their tents.

By and by they advance to Pi-hahiroth with the Red Sea before them. With Moses’ staff to lead the van they pass through the sea dry-shod, and come absolutely into the wilderness of separation, as, beloved, every heir of heaven is brought right out of Egypt, led through the Red Sea of Jesus Christ’s blood, baptized into Jesus, and brought out into the separated position in the wilderness.

Now, it is easy to see how Moses was a shepherd to the people while in the wilderness. He led them in all their wanderings. He was King in Jeshurun over the people whom God had given to him. When they wanted food, his prayer brought down the manna or the quail. When they needed drink, it was his voice that made the rock burst forth with floods or his rod that smote, and lo, the flinty rock gushed with torrents.

If there were Amalekites to fight, the uplifted arm of Moses did more than the sharp sword of Joshua. They sometimes received chastisement from him. He ground the golden calf to pieces, and strewed the powder on water and made them drink it.

They were equally dependent upon him for comfort too. His speech distilled as the dew and dropped as the rain, the small rain upon the tender herbs. Moses, like a shepherd, had to carry all the people in his bosom as God’s appointed messenger, and often did he find it a very weary load, so that he said, “I cannot bear the burden of this great people alone.”

You have here a suggestive type of Jesus Christ, the leader of the separated church. Brethren, I think we may all of us not only catch the idea but live it out, the church is in the desert now. We have left the world, we have left its maxims, its customs, its religion. We hate the world’s religion as much as we do its irreligion. We have forsaken it for good, never to go back again.

And though the flesh sometimes falls a lusting and would fain go back to the old bondage, yet, under the guidance of our greater Shepherd, who leads His people far away from Mizraim’s polluted shore, we march onward by devious ways to the promised rest.

The last type I mean to give you is *David*. This shepherd represents *Jesus Christ*, not at all as the others, but *as King in the midst of His church*. David, like Jesus Christ, begins his life with trials. He is anointed and straightway he begins to suffer. The world’s king recognizes him, fixes his eyes upon him, hurls the javelin at him, hunts him like a partridge on the mountains, and rests not till he himself is slain.

Poor David is the apt picture of Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh—hunted by the world’s king who would desire to put Him down and crush out His spark. David at length mounts to his throne, quietly and in peace he sits in Jerusalem as king over Israel and Judah. And even at this day, though the kings of the earth set themselves against Him, and their rulers take counsel together, yet this is the decree concerning our Lord, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.”

That same shepherd who of old snatched the lamb out of the jaw of the lion and delivered his sheep from the paw of the bear, that same Shepherd who, in pangs of death, took the lion of hell by the beard and slew him—that same Shepherd sits as King in the Jerusalem above, and all His saints delight to do Him homage.

All hail, Thou Son of David! Reign Thou forever! Hosanna unto Thee! Thine enemies cannot dispossess Thee. You have smitten them terribly and they shall yet feel the terror of Your arm. The Shepherd reigns, Jesus Christ is King of God's church, and one of these days the reign of David will blossom into the reign of Solomon.

We shall see Jesus Christ under a yet more glorious type, for He shall reign from the river even unto the ends of the earth. There shall be no war with the Ammonites, no war anywhere. All enemies shall have been put beneath His feet, and the kings of the nations shall bow before Him, and they that dwell in the wilderness shall lick the dust. May that millennial splendor soon dawn, when the Son of David shall be King forever and ever as the great Shepherd, reigning over all lands.

Think these five illustrations over, and there will be much instruction here concerning Him who feeds His flock like a shepherd.

II. Now let the Christian who is not weary follow me in three NEW TESTAMENT DESCRIPTIONS.

Jesus Christ the Shepherd is described in the New Testament, as I dare say you all remember, in three ways. He is first of all spoken of as the *good* Shepherd, next, as the *great* Shepherd, and thirdly, as the *chief* Shepherd. I do not know that any other adjective is appended to His name of Shepherd.

First, turn to the tenth of John, there you find Him described as the *good* Shepherd. "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Goodness is the special excellence which seems to gleam in the character of our Lord in His earthly life and in His passion for the sons of men.

As I look upon my Lord and Master here, despised and rejected of men, I know He is the great Shepherd, but His greatness does not strike me, His flock is so few. We read in the Acts that, "The number of the names together were about one hundred and twenty." "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of man, have not where to lay my head."

Herein is goodness, but the greatness is concealed. When He saw the multitude, He had compassion upon them, for they were as sheep having no shepherd. Here is the good Shepherd—He healed their sicknesses and wept over their sins—here is goodness indeed.

When it was time for Him to die, He crossed the brook Kidron, and suffered till He sweat great drops in the garden. He went to trial and condemnation, and then to the mount of doom to suffer, bleed, and die. Here is the good Shepherd—the good Shepherd bleeding for the sheep.

Can you tell me *how* good a Shepherd Jesus was? Can you measure the height and depth of the extraordinary goodness that dwelt in Him?—so good that He saved others, Himself He could not save—so good that when He rendered in His account, He could say, "I have lost none." He had kept them all safe, though He Himself had bowed His head and given up the ghost.

You will find, in Hebrews 13:20, that He is called the *great* Shepherd. Does that refer to his life on earth and to His death? Not at all. Kindly observe the context, "Now the God of peace which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will."

Do you perceive? He is not the great Shepherd when He dies—He is the good Shepherd, but He is the great Shepherd when He is brought again from the dead. In resurrection you perceive His greatness. He lies in the grave slumbering, He is the good Shepherd then, having laid down His life for the sheep. Life appears again in Him—the stone is rolled away, the watchmen are seized with terror, and He stands out the Risen One—no more dying—now He is the great Shepherd.

He manifests Himself for forty days among His own disciples, and then at last taking them to the hill of Galilee, a cloud receives Him out of their sight, and up He mounts as the great Shepherd. When he has told them to go to Jerusalem, they sit waiting till the time of the fullness is come, and suddenly there is heard the sound of a rushing mighty wind, and fiery tongues sit upon all of them.

Who has given this boon to each? Who is it? This is the great Shepherd. He has ascended on high and has received gifts for men. The Shepherd still you see, but now he is the great Shepherd, the Shepherd riding in triumphal state through the midst of New Jerusalem, amidst the acclamations of

angels, and sending to His sheep down below the precious gift of apostles, and ministers of various orders, according to His own will. He was the good Shepherd before—He is the good Shepherd now—but He is also pre-eminently the great Shepherd.

Let us delight to think of this greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us extol and bless Him. Observe, carefully, that while the good Shepherd lays down His life that you may have life, and have it more abundantly, He is the great Shepherd for another purpose. What does it say? “Make you perfect in every good work to do his will.”

Yes, He dies to wash away your sins, but He rises for your justification and your complete sanctification, that as the Lord left His grave clothes behind Him, you may leave your sins behind you, and as He left the tomb behind Him, never to enter it, you may leave the old dead world in which you once lived and live in newness of life.

We have a third text remaining—the first epistle of Peter, fifth chapter and fourth verse. Here you have the Savior called the *chief* Shepherd. When is this? In Peter He is not the good Shepherd—He is not the great Shepherd—He is all that, but He is a great deal more—He is the chief Shepherd. When will He wear this title?

Do you notice, beloved, this one thing, let me have your hearts here. While He is the good Shepherd He is all alone, no other mentioned. While He is the great Shepherd He is still alone, and only a bare hint of others, but when He is the chief Shepherd, it is implied that there are others among whom He is chief.

Notice, then, that in the atonement Jesus is alone—there is no one with the good Shepherd. In the resurrection for our justification, He is alone—no one aids the great Shepherd. But at the second advent He will be with His people chief among many. Read the verse, “And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

So you see Christ is the *chief* Shepherd at the second advent. Then shall the world be astonished to find that though alone in atonement, and alone in justification, He is not alone in service or in glory. Then every minister who has fed His sheep, every teacher who has fed His lambs—all of you, holy men and women, who have in any way whatever contributed under Him towards the guidance, and the government, and the feeding, and the protection of His dear, blood-bought flock—you shall appear.

He has no crown, you perceive, as the good Shepherd. We do not read of a crown for Him as the great Shepherd, but when He comes with the crown wherewith His mother crowned Him, then shall you also appear with Him in glory, having the crown of life that fades not away.

I do not know whether this peculiar circumstance interests you, but it did me when I observed it—*good* in His dying, *great* in His rising, *chief* in His coming. It seems to me to gather such force—*good* to me as a sinner, *great* to me as a saint, *chief* to me as one with Him in His glorious reign. I pass, as it were, through three stages—a sinner, then I look to the good Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep.

I reach higher ground and I am a saint—I look to the great Shepherd to make me perfect in every good work to do His will. I mount higher still—I die, I rise again, I walk in resurrection life and now I look to the chief Shepherd, and hope to receive at His hands the crown of life which He shall give to me, and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing—the good, great, chief Shepherd. May God give us grace, meditating upon these things, to know them and enter into them.

III. In conclusion I promised one or two IMPRESSIVE APPLICATIONS.

The first application is one of *comfort and satisfaction* to you who are poor, needy, weary, and troubled lambs or sheep of the flock. Our own text runs thus, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.” What next? “He shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”

The lambs have not the value of mature sheep, yet they are the most thought of under the great Shepherd. They might fetch the least price in the market, but they have the greatest portion of His heart. You needy, troubled ones, I want you to look here and note down in your memories that though there are promises for all saints, there are special promises for you.

Jesus Christ will take care that the lambs and those who are with young, shall be specially housed. Notice this in Jacob, whom I introduced to you as the toiling shepherd—when he met with Esau, Esau wanted him to accept a guard to go with him, but he said, “My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die.”

Jesus, the good Shepherd, will not travel at such a rate as to overdrive the lambs. He has tender consideration for the poor and needy. Kings usually look to the interests of the great and the rich, but in the kingdom of our great Shepherd, He cares most for the poor. “He shall judge the poor of the people.” The weaklings and the sickly of the flock are the special objects of the Savior’s care.

A proof of this you find at the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel, sixteenth verse, “I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was sick.” Inexpressibly comforting words to the broken, sick, needy, Christian!

You think, dear heart, that you are forgotten, because of your nothingness, and weakness, and poverty. This is the very reason why you are remembered. There is a mother here this morning—she has seven children. I know what child she has been thinking of while we have been preaching. She has not been thinking of John, who is married and away, nor of Mary who is in health, nor of Thomas who is sitting by her side. But she has been thinking of the poor little one at home in bed, and she has wondered whether it has had any sleep this morning, and whether it has been well taken care of. You know that my guess is correct.

Now Jesus Christ, our loving Shepherd, if He should forget those of us who are strong and in sound health, will be sure to recollect the sickly ones. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd—He shall gather the lambs with His arms and carry them in His bosom. He shall gently lead those that are with young.

A second application containing *comfort* and *warning* too. Sinner, to you our Lord Jesus Christ now represents Himself as being a Shepherd who is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Here are his own words, “What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing; and calleth together his friends and his neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me for I have found the sheep which was lost.”

Such is Jesus now, looking after stray sheep. Where are you, where are you this morning? The great Shepherd comes after you, and oh, what joy will be in His heart—what joy there will be in heaven when the great Shepherd shall throw you on His shoulders and bring you home.

But hark you. Did you ever notice that the same Shepherd who saves the lost, will curse the finally impenitent? He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats, and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall He say unto them on the left hand “Depart ye cursed.”

What lips are those which pronounce those dreadful words? The Shepherd’s lips. The lips of that same Shepherd who flies over the mountains to the lost sheep—of whom, I trust, it will yet be said, “We were as sheep going astray, but we have now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of our souls.” That same seeker of the lost and gatherer together of them that are scattered, will say, Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell prepared for the devil and his angels.

Oh, sinner, may you know the Shepherd as binding up your broken bones, and healing your wounds, and rejoicing over your saved soul, for if you do not, you will have to know Him in another and more terrible character, when He shall curse you, separating you from His own sheep as the Shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.

So we shall conclude with these words, which may be for both *saint and sinner*. Let it never be forgotten, that in all we have said about Jesus Christ, still, as a Shepherd, He is pre-eminently to be preached as the suffering One. I began with Abel and I must conclude with Abel. Zechariah has

recorded these remarkable words of JEHOVAH, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man who is my fellow, saith the LORD. Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.”

O sinner, you have most of all to do today with the Abel-shepherd—with the Shepherd dead at the altar, with the Shepherd with His blood crying up to heaven, with the sword of JEHOVAH in His heart. You shall know about the toiling-shepherd by and by. The Shepherd reigning in Egypt, the Joseph you shall know soon. The Shepherd of the separated flock, you shall follow ere long. The Shepherd reigning in Jerusalem, the David you shall rejoice to serve. But now you have to do with the Shepherd bleeding and dying.

Listen to these words and I have done—“All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned, every one to his own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Herein is Jesus to be seen, suffering, bleeding, dying, on yonder accursed tree. He is there, the Shepherd to whom if we look we shall live, and live forever.

God enable you to turn those poor eyes of yours which have been red with weeping over sin, or red with the drunkenness of wickedness, and see in Jesus Christ your iniquity put away, JEHOVAH reconciled, and your souls eternally saved. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 10:1-18 and 24-29

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.