

Dear Friends,

Greetings to you! The theme for our morning's meditation is, 'The Good Shepherd.' In Chapter 10 of St John's gospel Jesus addresses the Pharisees and reminds them that anyone who does not enter into the sheep pen by way of the gate is a thief and a robber. By this he was indicating that there were people who were claiming to be shepherds but were truly not. He tells them that the one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep and the sheep listen to his voice and he leads them on. Jesus was indicating this to show that the Pharisees were in fact thieves and robbers whose only intention was to kill and destroy and that he was the true shepherd of the sheep. Jesus says that he is the gate and anyone who enters through that gate will be saved. He says that he has come that they may have life, and have it to the full or life abundantly. Jesus then makes a radical claim saying, 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.' He does not run away when he sees the wolves attack, whereas the hired hand would run away because he cares nothing about the sheep. Because he is the Good Shepherd, he knows his sheep, and his sheep know him. There is an intimate relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. He continues by saying that there are other sheep which are not of this sheep pen but he will bring them also into his pen. There will be one flock and one shepherd. The Jews who heard these words were again divided. Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?" But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

The Jews who opposed Jesus gathered around him in the porch and asked him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus did not give them explicit answers. He said that he had already informed them as to who he was but they did not believe. It is only to the Samaritan woman in 4:26 that Jesus specifically declared himself to be the Messiah; also to the man born blind in 9:37 that he is indeed the Son of Man. Yet his teaching and his miracles reinforced that he is indeed the Messiah. The miracles that he has been doing speak for him but they reject it. The miracles that he has been doing were not by his own authority but by the authority of his Father. Jesus states that the works that he had done served as a testimony to who he was and that it should have generated faith in them.

Jesus then gave the reason as to why they were not able to believe that Jesus was indeed the Messiah who had come to save the world. He said, 'you do not believe because you are not my sheep.' The Jews were agitated with this answer. Jesus further *states* ***My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*** The reason why they were rejecting Jesus was because they did not belong to him. To his own sheep he was the Good shepherd – The Messiah. The others cannot hear his voice. Jesus is at the same time a hidden and a revealed Messiah.

The Good Shepherd gives us eternal life. He is the source of that life. Nobody else can either promise or give us eternal life. He gives eternal life because he has given his life for us on the cross only to take it up

again. Our responsibility is to receive this eternal life which Jesus gives. When we receive it then we will never perish even though we die. Our eternal life is secure in the Good Shepherd's hands. The reference that we will not perish or be destroyed refers both to the final Day of Judgment as well as to the present life because he has promised that he has come to give us life and life abundant.

The Good Shepherd watches over us. He says, '**No one can snatch them out of my hand.**' Our Salvation is secure because of what Jesus has done for us. No matter how much the evil one tries to snatch us out from the hands of Jesus he will not be able to. No one will be able to snatch our salvation. No one can snatch us because Jesus is the Good Shepherd and he is not a hireling. He owns the sheep and therefore lays down his life for the sake of the sheep. The reason again why no one can snatch the believers away from Jesus is because it is the Father who has given the believers into the hands of Jesus and therefore no one can snatch it from the Father who is greater than all the powers and principalities. May we rest secure in the Good Shepherd.

Shalom

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