

The skilful Shepherd

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Preacher: Steve Ellacott

[0:00] Hello and welcome to our pre-recorded service for Sunday 21st February.! This service is brought to you by Calvary Church Brighton. My name is Steve Ellacott and I am one of the Deacons.

If you are not a local, Brighton is a city on the south coast of the UK directly south of London. Our congregation in normal times is about 70 to 80 people.

And if you are one of our regulars, we thank you and thank you for joining with us in this virtual way, even though we would prefer to meet in person. If you are not part of our regular congregation, then a particular welcome.

I trust you will find something helpful in these extraordinary times. This week we are taking our second look at Psalm 78. But instead of a detailed exposition, we are going to explore this idea of the skillful shepherd king with which the psalm ends.

Should we call it a meme, after the Greek word mimeima, a thing imitated? This may seem an odd choice of word, as I believe it comes originally from Dawkins' book, *The God Delusion*.

[1:10] But actually, it's quite a useful term. A meme is an idea that spreads spore-like from mind to mind. As it does, it reprograms the mind where it finds itself.

You may find that strange, but Paul didn't have a problem with this idea. There he wrote, do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's word is, his good, pleasing and perfect will. That's what the word of God is supposed to do.

It's supposed to transform your mind. But don't take this virus analogy too far. A virus reprograms its target cell in order to reproduce itself, and if it mutates, it does so randomly.

But a meme interacts symbiotically. It grows in the mind of the host, and as it reproduces and spreads, it also expands. It accumulates subtleties and layers of meaning.

[2:11] It mates with other memes. Viruses don't reproduce sexually. Sometimes it splits into divergent strains. That's how ideas grow.

And that's how this idea of the shepherd king grew throughout the generations of scripture. We have a lot of material to cover, so I'm going to keep this introduction brief.

And we will split the sermon into two parts with a song between. The general confession of the Anglican Church reminds us that we stray like lost sheep.

So it seems appropriate to include that in our prayer. You might like to join me in saying it out loud as I read it. So let us turn now to prayer.

Father, as we come to you, we acknowledge that you are holy and constant, but we are not. We are so changeable. So we come to you in confession. Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep.

[3:16] We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against your holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done.

And we have done those things which we ought not to have done. And there is no health in us. But you, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare them, O God, who confess their faults.

Restore those who are penitent. According to your promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of your holy name.

Amen. Now we pray for this pandemic. Father, we thank you for the vaccines which may lead us out of this pandemic. We pray in particular that the rich nations might understand the need to provide this for poorer countries and that supplies might be made available for all. We give you thanks for the recovery of those of our own congregation who have had the virus. We pray for the family of our sister Colleen lost to this scourge and to other bereaved families, that they might find comfort in you.

[4:35] But above all, we pray that the message of Jesus Christ may shine out at this gloomy time. And so we turn to our study of your word, remembering that even in the valley of the shadow of death you lead us.

May we find rebuke that we need, but also peace and joy in your word. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. So we'll now listen again to Ruth's reading of Psalm 78 and then we'll turn to our study.

Psalm 78, a maskil of Asaph. My people, hear my teaching.

Listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth with a parable. I will utter hidden things, things from of old.

Things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us. We will not hide them from their descendants.

[5:44] We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power and the wonders he has done.

He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so that the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born.

And they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds, but would keep his commands.

They would not be like their ancestors, a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.

The men of Ephraim, though armed with bows, turned back on the day of battle. They did not keep God's covenant and refused to live by his law.

[6:55] They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them. He did miracles in the sight of their ancestors, in the land of Egypt, in the region of Zoan.

He divided the sea and led them through. He made the water stand up like a wall. He guided them with the cloud by day and with the light from the fire all night.

He split the rocks in the wilderness and gave them water as abundant as the seas. He brought streams out of a rocky crag and made water flow down like rivers.

But they continued to sin against him, rebelling in the wilderness against the Most High. They willfully put God to the test by demanding the food they craved.

They spoke against God. They said, can God really spread a table in the wilderness? True, he struck the rock and water gushed out, streams flowed abundantly.

[8:07] But can he also give us bread? Can he supply meat for his people? When the Lord heard them, he was furious.

His fire broke out against Jacob and his wrath rose against Israel. For they did not believe in God or trust in his deliverance.

Yet he gave a command to the skies above and opened the doors of the heavens. He rained down manna for the people to eat.

He gave them the grain of heaven. Human beings ate the bread of angels. He sent them all the food they could eat. He let loose the east wind from the heavens and by his power made the south wind blow.

He rained meat down on them like dust, birds like sand on the seashore. He made them come down inside their camp, all around their tents.

[9:12] They ate till they were gorged. He had given them what they craved. But before they turned from what they craved, even while the food was still in their mouths, God's anger rose against them.

He put to death the sturdiest among them, cutting down the young men of Israel. In spite of all this, they kept on sinning.

In spite of his wonders, they did not believe. So he ended their days in futility and their years in terror.

Whenever God slew them, they would seek him. They eagerly turned to him again. They remembered that God was their rock, the most high God.

God most high was their redeemer. But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues. Their hearts were not loyal to him.

[10:23] They were not faithful to his covenant. Yet he was merciful. He forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them.

Time after time, he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath. He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return.

How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the wasteland. Again and again they put God to the test.

They vexed the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember his power. The day he redeemed them from the oppressor. The day he displayed his signs in Egypt, his wonders in the region of Zoan.

He turned their river into blood. They could not drink from their streams. He sent swarms of flies that devoured them and frogs that devastated them.

[11:34] He gave their crops to the grasshopper, their produce to the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamore figs with sleet.

He gave over their cattle to the hail, their livestock to bolts of lightning. He unleashed against them his hot anger, his wrath, indignation and hostility, a band of destroying angels.

He prepared a path for his anger. He did not spare them from death but gave them over to the plague. He struck down all the firstborn of Egypt, the firstfruits of manhood in the tents of Ham.

But he brought his people out like a flock. He led them like sheep through the wilderness. He guided them safely so they were unafraid.

But the sea engulfed their enemies and so he brought them to the border of his holy land, to the hill country his right hand had taken.

[12:47] He drove out nations before them and allotted their lands to them as an inheritance. He settled the tribes of Israel in their homes.

But they put God to the test and rebelled against the Most High. They did not keep his statutes.

Like their ancestors, they were disloyal and faithless, as unreliable as a faulty bow. They angered him with their high places.

They aroused his jealousy with their idols. When God heard them, he was furious. He rejected Israel completely.

He abandoned the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent he had set up among humans. He sent the ark of his might into captivity, his splendor into the hands of the enemy.

[13:49] He gave his people over to the sword. He was furious with his inheritance. Fire consumed their young men and their young women had no wedding songs.

Their priests were put to the sword and their widows could not weep. Then the Lord awoke as from sleep.

As a warrior wakes from the stupor of wine, he beat back his enemies. He put them to everlasting shame. Then he rejected the tents of Joseph but did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loved.

He built his sanctuary like the heights, like the earth, that he established forever. He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep folds.

From tending the sheep, he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel, his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart, with skillful hands, he led them.

[15:09] This is the word of the Lord. The words of the wise are like goads. They're collected sayings like firmly embedded nails given by one shepherd.

That's the advice of Ecclesiastes chapter 12, verse 11. We turn now to some of the words of the wise. Continuing our study of Psalm 78, we're going to focus this week on verses 65 to 73, and in particular on verses 70 to 72.

We read, He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens. From tending the sheep, he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel, his inheritance.

And David shepherded them with integrity of heart, with skillful hands, he led them. David is presented to us here as the skillful shepherd king.

Our task today is to unpack that idea as it is developed in the scripture. So to work.

[16:26] We'll trace the development of the idea through the Old Testament, identify the skill set of the skillful shepherd, and then show how the ideas are brought out and brought to convergence in the New Testament doctrine of the good shepherd.

We noted last week that David did not quite live up to his billing in verse 72. The fullest expression of the good shepherd meme is not David himself, as we shall see, but a second David.

But let's start at the beginning. Always a good place to start. There's a lot about sheep in Genesis. The livelihoods of Abraham, his sons and grandsons, revolved around the farming of sheep and goats.

And the sheep were central to the sacrificial system that was set up by Moses and Aaron. But the specific idea of the people as sheep needing a shepherd does not play a central role in the five books of Moses.

There is, however, one key passage in Genesis, and it throws a lot of light on verse 67 of Psalm 78. The occasion of this is when Jacob is nearing his death and he's blessing his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

[17:42] He puts his hands onto the grandsons, putting his right hand onto Ephraim, who was the second born, but Jacob gives him the first blessing.

And we read then, Then he blessed Joseph and said, May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who has delivered me from all harm, may he bless these boys.

May they be called by my name and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly upon the earth. Interestingly, the bow theme picks up here as well in reference to Joseph.

In verse 23 to 24, we read, With bitterness, archers attacked him. They shot at him with hostility, but his bow remains steady. His strong arms stay supple because of the hand of the mighty one of Jacob, because of the shepherd, the rock of Israel.

It's clear that Asaph has these passages in mind as he pens his poem. Joseph's descendants had not matched his skill in archery, Psalm 78 verse 9.

[19:01] Why? Because they had not relied on the shepherd, the rock of Israel. And Asaph tells us in verse 67 of the psalm that in spite of Jacob's blessing, God rejected Ephraim and chose Judah as the clan for his shepherd king.

But of course, in this verse in Genesis, we notice that it's God himself who is the shepherd. On other occasions, we read that God chooses a shepherd. Before we leave the books of Moses, we will just note one other passage.

In Exodus 3 verses 1 and 2, we read of the call of Moses. Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire, it did not burn up. We note that Moses himself was a shepherd tending sheep on the occasion when God called him to lead the people.

But this idea of God as shepherd or Moses as shepherd do not appear to be important themes in the books of Moses. The theme seems to become dormant in the time of Samuel until the time of Samuel and David when the idea of the shepherd king begins to gather traction.

[20:38] Why is this? Well, partly because David was a shepherd on Samuel 16, 11. When David is appointed king, how do the Israelites acknowledge him?

2 Samuel 5, 2 says, In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And so the Lord said to you, You shall shepherd my people Israel and you shall become their ruler.

Then immediately after that, we read, David captured the fortress of Zion, the city of David. These details are actually repeated in 1 Chronicles 11.

Chronicles is a later retelling of Israel's history and the shepherd meme is given more weight. So what is the promise to David?

When discussing David's plan to build a temple, the prophet Nathan reports the Lord's words. Whenever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their leaders whom I commanded to shepherd my people, Why have you not built me a house of cedar?

[21:55] Now then, tell my servant David, This is what the Lord Almighty said. I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel.

I have been with you wherever you have gone. Now I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name like the names of the greatest men on earth.

The hint there is that David will not build the temple. But her successor will build the temple. Even when David gets things wrong and steals at Uriah's wife, the prophet Nathan comes to him with a sheep parable.

In this respect, David's shepherding skills had failed him. David acknowledged this on a later occasion when he gets in trouble again after he's taken a census of the people and they're struck down by plague.

When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the Lord, I am the one who has sinned and have done wrong. These are but sheep.

[23:03] What have they done? Let your hand fall upon me and my family. We have here the hint of David being prepared to give up his life for the sheep.

But God does not require that of him. But when the shepherds do not do their work properly, we find that the people become scattered.

Much later, when Ahab and Jehoshaphat are contemplating an alliance, this idea has become common currency. So in 1 Kings 22, 17, we read, Then Micaiah answered, I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd.

And the Lord said, These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace. This idea of the people of God being sheep who so often become lost and scattered is beginning to gather weight. It's perhaps in the Psalms and in the later prophets that the idea reaches its full development.

Psalms 23, 28 and 100 all refer to the Lord as shepherd.

[24:31] Psalms 44, 49 and 74 compare the people of God to scattered sheep. Easy prey for a predator because of the Lord's anger. Psalm 77 describes Moses and Aaron as shepherds.

Psalm 80 is a prayer for the Lord as shepherd of his people to come to their aid. Psalm 95 has a particularly famous passage.

Psalm 95 verse 7 to 8 says this, for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture who flock under his care. Today if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts as you did in Meribah as you did that day at Massa in the desert.

We meet here the idea that perhaps the sheep won't listen to the voice of the shepherd and what happens if they don't? Well, Psalm 119 finishes these words.

Psalm 119 verse 176 I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant for I have not forgotten your commands.

[25:51] Then, of course, the prophets go to town on the whole idea. In Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel the shepherd idea suffuses the whole. We only have time to select a few examples.

So from Isaiah chapter 40 verses 10 and 11 The Lord tends his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms.

He carries them close to his heart. He gently leads those that have had young. And another well-known passage in Isaiah 53 verse 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray.

Each of us has turned to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Jeremiah blames the leaders for the people's failure and promises a new David.

Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture, declares the Lord. Therefore, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people.

[27:11] Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you've done, declares the Lord.

I myself will gather the remnants of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture where they will be fruitful in increasing number.

I will place shepherds over them who will tend them and they will no longer be afraid or terrified nor will any be missing, declares the Lord. The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up to David a righteous branch, a king who will reign wisely and do what is right, just and right in the land.

Ezekiel writes quite extensively on the subject. Here is just an extract. Therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord.

This is what the sovereign Lord says. I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for the flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so the shepherds can no longer feed themselves.

[28:24] I will rescue my flock from their mouths and when it will no longer be food for them. For this is what the sovereign Lord says. I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.

As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on the day of clouds and darkness.

I will tend them in a good pasture and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. I myself will tend my sheep and make them lie down, declares the sovereign Lord.

I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy.

I will shepherd the flock with justice. As for you, my flock, this is what the sovereign Lord says. I will judge between one sheep and another and between rams and goats.

[29:30] Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water?

Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet? Therefore, this is what the sovereign Lord says to them.

See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep, because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you've driven them away.

I will save my flock and they will no longer I will judge between one sheep and another. I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them.

He will tend them and be their shepherd. I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I, the Lord, have spoken.

[30:43] The other prophets have much to tell us also. In Micah we read, I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob. I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel.

I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture, the place will throng with people. Zechariah has a lot to say on the subject.

In chapter 11 he castigates the bad shepherds and warns the people they'll get the bad shepherd that they deserve. But he also says the Lord their God will save them on that day as the flock of his people.

They will sparkle in the land like jewels in the crown. Zechariah 9.16 And there is this intriguing passage in chapter 13 which you will recognise.

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me, declares the Lord Almighty. Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered and I will turn my hand against the little ones.

[31:57] Where is Zechariah going with that idea? Well it was a long time before the people found out. So what then can we summarise this Old Testament teaching?

What are the key features of this shepherd idea? First of all the people are foolish as sheep and without a shepherd they're going to get into all kinds of trouble.

This of course is the theme of most of Psalm 78 as we looked at last week. Secondly, that the leaders of the people are under shepherds, but very often they are bad ones. Thirdly, that sometimes the Lord himself takes the role of shepherd, but also and vitally there is this promise of the branch of David, the shepherd king who truly leads the people with skill and judgment.

So supposing you were advertising for the job of this skillful shepherd, what would be your bullet points in the job description?

[33:13] What is the vital skill set, the essential abilities of the shepherd? Well, we can perhaps list them. David made the point of when he's applying for the job of facing Goliath.

David said to Saul, your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear come and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. In summary, then, the good shepherd is a man of integrity. He knows sheep, he can tell one from a goat. his job is to defend the sheep, to call the sheep, to gather the sheep together, and if he discovers that some of them got lost, it is his job to seek the sheep who are lost, and when they're gathered, he feeds them and leaves the sheep to safe pasture.

David fulfilled that to some extent, as Psalm 78, 72 tells us, but then after that it all went wrong again. It seems that the hope of Asaph in verse 8 of the Psalm, that they would not be like their forefathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.

It seems that this was a vain hope, and that of course is why the prophets called out for a new David. Now of course you know where I'm going with this.

[34:47] I'm going to tell you that the true skilful shepherd is not David, but Jesus. But after our song, we will go through the steps to see how and why Jesus fulfills this role.

the Lord's my shepherd shepherd of not once, he makes me down to life.

In pastures green he leadeth me, the quiet horse is mine.

My soul he doth restore again, and me to walk the day within the paths of righteousness in for his own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through death's dark veil, yet feel I fear none ill, for thou art with me and thy rod and staff be comfort still.

[36:35] My table thou hast furnished in in presence of my foes my hair thou dost with oil anoint and my cup overflows Goodness and mercy mercy O life shall surely follow me and in God's house more my dwelling place shall be be then let's pick up the trail now in the New Testament

Psalm 78 verse 65 has warned us to expect something unexpected God acts when the sheep are threatened as Psalm 78 makes clear the shepherd king must be in the tribe of Judah and the line of David so we have the testimony of Matthew opening the case by quoting that that verse Micah 5 verse 2 but you Bethlehem in the land of Judah are by no means least among the rulers of Judah for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel later Peter would identify the one who seeks the lost sheep for you were like sheep going astray but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls Hebrew takes the identity of the shepherd as obvious making it into a blessing may the

God of peace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus the great shepherd of the sheep equip you with everything good but it is Jesus own actions and words that clinch the case he is the one who loves the sheep and gathers them together Matthew 9 36 says when Jesus saw the crowds he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd such an echo of what we heard in the Old Testament there's the famous parable of the lost sheep of course it is the job of the shepherd to find the sheep that are lost Matthew 18 12 to 14 what do you think if a man owns a hundred sheep and one of them wanders away will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off and if he finds it

I tell you the truth he is happier about that one sheep and about the ninety-nine that did not wander off in the same way your father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost the skillful shepherd can tell the difference between a sheep and a goat can separate those who are truly of his flock for those who are not Matthew 25 32 to 33 reads all the nations will be gathered

before him and he will separate the people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats he will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left but then of course there's that remarkable passage in Zechariah 13 that we've already seen awake oh lord against my shepherd against the man who is close to me declares the lord almighty strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered

I will turn my hand against the little ones that must have been very puzzling to Zechariah and his hearers at the time why would the lord strike his own shepherd yet Jesus himself claims that prophecy when he is arrested and the disciples are scattered in Matthew 26 verse 31 it was the will of the lord to strike the shepherd as he gives his life for the sheep and it's Jesus own testimony which is the strongest evidence that he is the good shepherd John chapter 10 verse 1 16 1 to 16 expands this idea in detail as Jesus explains exactly how and why he is the good shepherd I tell you the truth the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate but climbs in by some other way is a thief and a robber the man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep the watchman opens the gate for him and his sheep listen to his voice he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out when he has brought out all his own he goes on ahead of them and his sheep follow him because they know his voice but they will never follow a stranger in fact they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice

[42:33] Jesus used this figure of speech but they did not understand what he was telling them therefore Jesus said again I tell you the truth I am the gate for the sheep all whoever came before me were thieves and robbers but the sheep did not listen to them I am the gate whoever enters through me will be saved he will come in and go out and find pasture I have come that they may have life and have it to the full I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep the hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep so when he sees the wolf coming he abandons the sheep and runs away then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it the man runs away because he is a hired hand shepherd I know my sheep and my sheep know me just as the father knows me and

I know the father and I lay down my life for the sheep I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen I must bring them also they too will listen to my voice and there shall be one flock and one shepherd a little later we read the miracles I do in my father's name speak for me but you do not believe because you are not my sheep my sheep listen to my voice I know them and they follow me these passages in John if you like are Jesus CV he fits the job profile perfectly he fulfills also those prophecies that talk of the Lord as shepherd that ambiguity is removed because the son and the father are as one case proven Jesus is the fulfilment of the skillful shepherd of

Psalms 78 well it's a long trail but we come to Jesus but what does that mean for you and me are you not sure whether you're one of the sheep or not he addresses those words follow me to everyone but do they ring true or does it sound like a scam do you recognise the voice of the shepherd and will you follow him if you do hear his voice don't ignore his call did you follow him once but you seem to have wandered off and got lost as we were thinking a week or two back then the good shepherd is seeking you listen for him he will come to your rescue and there will be delight in heaven but if you're a goat if you're one who's never really listened who's never really followed who's never been a disciple then take warning the shepherd knows those who are his and of course there's a word here for those who are leaders in the church if you are you're an under shepherd and the boss has high standards you will recall that

Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him and then each time Peter was told to feed the sheep Peter learned that message well he would later write to other leaders of the flock 1 Peter 5 2 to 4 be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care serving as overseers not because you must but because you are willing as God wants you to be not greedy for money but eager to serve not lording over those entrusted to you but being examples to the flock and when the chief shepherd appears you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away asap finishes his psalm with these words David shepherded them with integrity of heart with skillful hands he led them the shepherd king is on the case but unlike even David this shepherd laid down his life for the sheep the shepherd it turns out is also the sacrificial lamb!

of which Moses wrote so much but even that is not the last word in one of those mysteries in which the book of Revelation delights the Lamb that was slain is now on the throne we read for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd and he will lead them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes and God gave them manna like rain and from heaven provided their grain bread of the angels to eat till they were replete the wind he set free from the skies in the east the south wind blew to replenish their feast with wood till they needed no more and quails like sand on the shore their camp was covered round!

[48:37] above up all their tents and across the ground but God was moved to wrath young men were cut down in their heart!

and and love! God help us to their redeemer!! they refused to repent and believe ending their days full of fears in weakness their years!

peace while still under judgment they cried in their pain God help us to their redeemer again and though all the prayers they said arose from hearts that were dead the Lord forgave them all in mercy he listened and heard their call these preachers of a day a bread that is passing away time and again they rebelled their emotion and trust they withheld putting their God to the test and losing their rest the rivers of

Egypt had turned into blood crocs jumping everywhere gnats like a flood came flight and the plate falls and hail and locust darkness prevailed and then each firstborn son struck down on the pass overnight each one but God's flock safely led protected and guided and bare!

up to the hill he had brought to the holy land which they had sought God saw the tribes safely come and gave them their home but just as their fathers had done long before disloyal faithless they sinned even more they tested and flouted his rule servivals and played the fool the true God gave them up removing their sanctuary and their home the all passed from the land and into the enemy's hand death came to men young and strong and the maidens had no wedding song people and priests to the sword by word from the

[52:26] Lord until once again as from sleep he awoke he rose of enemy power he broke to cure the tribe of his love and I am towering above and they live from the sheep to shepherd his people to guard and keep for God's word will not break his flock he will never forsake we will finish our time together then with that benediction from Hebrews now may the God of peace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our

Lord Jesus that great shepherd of the sheep equip you with everything good for doing his will and may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever Amen