

All We Like Sheep

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[0 : 00] But it wasn't always this way. There was a time when each one of us was outside the flock of Jesus. For some of us, it was a long time.

For some of us, it was a short time relative to our age. But none of us were born followers of Jesus. Isaiah reminds us of this in Isaiah 53, verse 6.

God speaking through Isaiah, We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to our own way.

Sheep have a tendency to wander, to leave the way of the shepherd and to go off on their own path. And when it comes to animals, we kind of expect it.

But when it comes to you and I, we're not animals. We were created for a beautiful relationship with God. And we were given the best and the perfect way to walk in by our Creator.

[1 : 08] And what did we do? We went astray, like sheep often do. We turned to our own way, just like sheep often do.

And sadly, it was not an accidental or innocent or unintentional wandering or turning away from God, but a deliberate one.

Even a defiant one. I'm talking about Adam and Eve. The first human pair that God made. The Bible tells us that something happened that day.

That day that we turned away from God. Death came into the world. Corruption. Evil. Sin.

And ever since that day, just like sheep often do, every human being has had this same tendency to go astray. To turn away from the God who made us and loves us.

[2 : 11] Because of what happened that day long ago in the garden, it's in our very nature to do this. To rebel. To disobey.

To be selfish. And even to do things that we know deep down are wrong. Just as King David said in Psalm 51, he was confessing his sins to God there.

And he said, Surely I was sinful at birth. Sinful from the time my mother conceived me. And we might wonder at that.

Can David possibly mean that he was sinning and doing evil, even in his mother's womb? But let's not forget that this is poetry. What David means is that the inclination, the desire, the tendency towards what is wrong has always been there in me.

As long as I've lived right back to the very beginning, it's part of my very nature. So it's not that some people grow up and make bad choices to sin and do wrong, while others grow up and make good choices to obey God and do what is right.

[3 : 34] We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each and every one of us has turned to our own way.

As sheep often do, so have we. Much of the story of the Bible is God helping us to understand that this is what is going on in our hearts.

that we have a big problem. And even as he worked to reveal this truth to us over the centuries, we continued to go astray.

We continued to think, no, I don't have a problem, and if I do, I'm going to fix it myself. I can do this on my own. I don't need to listen to you, God.

This is kind of how the big story of Israel in the Old Testament goes. God revealed himself to them. He gave them wonderful promises. He gave them some commands and instructions, good ones, right ones.

[4 : 36] And what did they do? On the whole, except a few, they turned away from him. Again, and again, and again. They went their own way.

They did things that were evil. And this is a problem. God is love. But he is also just.

He will not tolerate wickedness and corruption in his world forever. He will not allow people to simply get away with the wrong things that they have done.

I mean, think about this. What would our nation be if there was never any consequence when people did wrong? Never any punishment for those who break the law.

What would our nation be if those who were in charge simply turned a blind eye to everything? It would very quickly spiral down into chaos, pandemonium, anarchy, a power struggle, a bloodbath.

[5 : 43] And there are some places in our world that operate like this today. Inevitably, inevitably, the strongest and most powerful rise to the top, and they rule oppressively over those who are weaker through violence.

And people cry out for justice in those places when they are wronged, when they are hurt, and often they get none. God will not allow this world, which he has made, to have that kind of an end to the story.

He is good. He is just. And while he has permitted people to go their own way to an extent and for a time, he will not allow us to go on in our corruption and selfishness and pride forever.

He would have to be corrupt to do that. And so chapter after chapter after chapter of Isaiah is God telling his people, Israel, that if they do not turn away from wickedness and turn to him, he is going to destroy them.

He is going to give them what they deserve. He is going to put a stop to the violence, to the murder, to the wicked ways.

[7 : 08] And just like with Israel, God has promised not only did he do that then, but to do that with the whole world someday. A day of final judgment.

A day in which the people of earth, all of them, receive what we are due. the Bible says that this world will be destroyed by fire and that everyone will enter into judgment and God will be the judge and he will see that everyone gets what they deserve.

so we have a problem, a big problem because according to God, all of us have gone astray.

Each of us has turned away. We've all sinned against him and not just a little bit, but a lot in all kinds of ways. what we deserve is to be taken out, wiped off the face of the planet and even worse after that to suffer punishment forever in hell.

Now I know some of you might be thinking, hell? How could he? That sounds way too harsh. But as we read the pages of the Bible, God tells us that actually it's not way too harsh.

[8 : 42] Rather, we have the tendency to try to justify ourselves. We have the tendency to deny the seriousness of our offenses, of our sin.

The tendency to say, I know I've done some bad stuff, but hell? The truth is rebelling against the good and glorious God who created the universe is in itself an evil so great that yes, hell forever is what we deserve.

It's not overkill. It's justice. It's what's right. It's the punishment that fits our crime. So we're all in big trouble with God because we've all like sheep gone astray and turned away from God.

But here is the amazing and wonderful good news. There's more to this verse. We all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to our own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

What is he talking about here? Who is him? Despite the fact that we've rebelled and sinned and gone astray, God loves the people of the world that he has made.

[10 : 14] While there is justice in the heart of God, there is also great love, great mercy, great compassion for the people that he has made.

Make no mistake, the day that Adam and Eve rebelled in the garden was a day that God's heart was broken. The people who God made and loved had put themselves in a position where God owed them justice.

And yet in his heart of hearts, he did not want to give them what they truly deserve. or to see them suffer what was right.

And so God himself made a way for them to be rescued and saved from what they deserve. This is what the whole Bible is about. And not just a way for them, but it's a way for all people throughout the ages, a way to be saved, a plan to rescue, a plan that really works.

And God began revealing to us how it works little by little over the centuries. A free gift of forgiveness, of divine pardon for all who would simply turn to God and trust that he would look after it.

[11 : 44] And then as centuries went by, God revealed more and more about how this plan of salvation works, he let us know that we can't just be forgiven of the wrongs that we've done.

Just like a criminal can't just be forgiven for breaking the law. Somebody must serve the sentence that justice requires. And if it isn't you or me, then it has to be somebody else.

Somebody who isn't himself guilty of breaking the law. And so, God told through the prophets of a man who would come.

A man who would come and take the punishment that we deserve upon himself like a substitute so that justice would be done, the sentence would be served, and we could be spared what we deserve and fully pardoned.

Isaiah spoke of a servant of God who would come. This is what the whole chapter, Isaiah 53, is about. This special servant of God, a man who would be despised and rejected by people, who would suffer much and who would know great pain, a man who people would think of as very low and be a man who would be hated, a man who many would think was under God's curse and punishment because of his own sin and wickedness as they saw how brutally he was treated.

[13 : 30] But, as Isaiah tells us, a man who would suffer not for his own sins, but for the sins of others. Let me read you what it says in verse 5, just before these verses we've been looking at.

But he, this servant, was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

Transgressions and iniquities are just two different words for sins. And God tells us that this servant who would come would be pierced and would be crushed, not for his own sins, but for ours.

He goes on, he says, the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. So this servant of God who would come would have God's punishment upon him, yes.

And it would be a punishment, not for his own sins, but for ours. A punishment that would bring us peace with God. Hundreds of years later, after Isaiah spoke these words, they were fulfilled.

[14 : 56] this servant came. What God said would happen, happened. Jesus, the Messiah, came.

And while Jesus was loved and accepted by a few, many hated him and despised him and rejected him. Eventually, the day came when they conspired against him and killed him.

just as it says here through the words of Isaiah, they pierced him. They pounded nails through his hands and feet and nailed him to a wooden cross and hung him up to die.

And just as God foretold through Isaiah, the people looked up at him there and thought, here's a man who has suffered so brutally because he is under God's curse.

how great his sins must be. He's being punished by God. But the reality was this. He was pierced, not for his own sins, but for our sins, for our transgressions, in order to bring us peace with God, in order to bring us healing, to see our big problem with God cured.

[16 : 24] We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him Jesus, the iniquities of us all, the sins of us all.

He punished Jesus in our place. God and as we've heard in the past weeks, it wasn't something that God forced on his servant, Jesus.

According to Jesus, it was something he chose voluntarily to do. I laid down my life for my sheep of my own accord. Lord, if it were not for what Jesus suffered, if it were not for his brutal death in our place, none of us would be sheep in the flock of God.

We'd all still be gone astray, lost, guilty, and without hope for that final day. And so this is something that we should never take for granted.

We have been saved. We have been brought into the flock of God. We have been put under the care of Jesus, our good shepherd. We have peace with God because of what Jesus did at the cross.

[17 : 54] We have the hope that someday we will be raised from the dead to life. never to die again because of what Jesus did for us on that cross.

And you wouldn't have had to do it but for our guilt and for our sin. That's what we want to remember this morning as we come again to the Lord's table.

We want to remember that Jesus' suffering before, at, and up on the cross was terrible. The bread that we partake represents his body and how it was broken as he died.

The cup that we drink from represents his blood and how it ran out of his body as he died. And our eating and drinking of it represents that we have taken unto ourselves this gift that his death is.

And we believe we're trusting in what his death accomplished, the forgiveness of our sins and peace with God. So in just a moment we're going to partake together of the Lord's table.

[19 : 11] Rod and Charles are going to come up and serve the bread and the cup and we'll hold on to them until everyone has been served. And then we'll eat and drink together in remembrance of Jesus.

But before we do, I just want to remind us one more time that partaking of this is not a casual thing. It's not a light thing. It's a very serious thing.

According to God's word, it's something that only those who believe in Jesus as Savior, Lord, King, Messiah should do. And so if you do not believe in Jesus like that, then I would ask that you not take of the bread and the cup when it's offered to you.

This is a serious matter. The Apostle Paul said this in his letter to the Corinthians. He was talking to them about what we're about to do, the Lord's table.

He said, So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

[20 : 18] Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ, eat and drink judgment on themselves.

That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. Fallen asleep means died. So, this is a serious thing that we do.

God wants us to do it in a worthy manner, to reflect seriously on the death of Jesus while we eat and drink. And so, before we do, we're going to take a few minutes of quiet.

And I want to encourage you in these moments to pray, to examine yourself, to talk to God, to think back over the things that you have done, said, thought that are wrong.

I want to encourage you to confess those things to God, to ask for his forgiveness. It was for real, everyday choices to sin that Christ suffered as he died on that cross.

[21 : 36] Choices that we've made. So, think about those choices. Confess them to God. Ask for his forgiveness. Celebrate solemnly the gift that his death is for us.

And then we will eat and drink together in the Lord's name. There can be a tendency as we hear these words sometimes to take them so strongly that we feel that in order to eat and drink, we need to be perfect.

But the whole reason Jesus died for us is because we aren't perfect. Because we've blown it. We've sinned. So don't think, I need to be worthy. I need to be good enough to come to this table, to eat and drink here.

No, that's not it. We all, every one of us, come to this table as sinners, as people who have blown it. And so to come in a worthy manner just means that we come to God in these moments acknowledging that to him.

Acknowledging that we're sinners with hearts that are truly sorry for our sins and hearts that are trusting in Jesus and what he did at the cross for our forgiveness and to save us.

[22 : 58] Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you so much for sending your son. Thank you that you did not just walk away from us.

Thank you that you stayed your justice and made a plan to save us. Thank you for sending Jesus your dear beloved son.

And Lord Jesus, thank you for willingly doing what you did to save us. humbling yourself, becoming like one of us and enduring the shame and the scorn and the suffering of the cross unto that point where you died.

I pray that you would bring that reality home into our hearts again in these moments and remind us and speak to us of your love. I pray that you would hear our quiet prayers in these next moments. life and come to Thank you.

[24 : 53] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[27 : 23] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[29 : 53] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.