

PM Isaiah 53 The Beautiful Shepherd

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[0:00] Now we're going to read from the Old Testament another prophet, this time his name is Isaiah.

! And I don't know if this is the same number that you've got in a pew Bible, but in this Bible I've got it's 780.

And it's, as I say, this prophet called Isaiah. And it's chapter 53. Chapter 53. After Jesus rose from the dead, we read in one of the Gospels that he met two people who were walking along the road and they looked pretty sad. And he asked them why they were sad.

And he said, they didn't realise it was Jesus. He said, because the one that we had hoped would be the Saviour or the Messiah of Israel has been crucified.

And all our hope was resting on him. And later on they arrived at their house and he went into the house with them.

[1:22] And as they ate and they broke bread, they seemed to realise that this indeed was Jesus. And I think it's there that Jesus says, you know, these scriptures tell you about me.

And he was talking about these Old Testament scriptures. You've got to remember the New Testament didn't exist. And when the first early Christians who were Jewish went out, and you see that especially in Matthew's Gospel, they used the Old Testament scriptures to demonstrate that the historical person Jesus of Nazareth from Galilee was the Messiah.

And here is probably one of those sections of Old Testament scriptures that I'm sure they would have used. And I think you'll agree with me when we hear it being read and you read it yourself. Isaiah 53, reading from verse 1. Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

For he grew up before him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him.

[2:51] No beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted.

[3:55] Yet he opened not his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter. And like a sheep that before its shearers is silent. So he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.

And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death. Although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring.

He shall prolong his days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, shall the righteous one

my servant, make many to be accounted righteous.

[5:02] And he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many. And he shall divide the spoil with the strong. Because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors.

Yet he bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors. If that's not a graphic and vivid picture of the life and times of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, I don't know what is. Let's unite our hearts again in prayer. Let's pray. So if you can turn with me where we were this morning, actually in the New Testament in John's Gospel, back to chapter 10.

John's Gospel, chapter 10.

And we're going to read verses 14 to 18 together.

[6:28] We'll read these together. Chapter 10, verse 14. I am the good shepherd.

For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge or commission I have received from my Father.

So, this morning, we looked at the prophet Ezekiel, and we noted how he was severely criticising the religious leaders of Israel, and calling them unfaithful and false shepherds.

And then we moved into the New Testament, in chapter 10 here, and noted that following Jesus healing a blind man, and that blind man, the Pharisees getting a hold of him, in chapter 9, and they wanted to find out, were you really healed, and were you really born blind, and who was it?

[8:31] Who did this? And he told them it was Jesus. And he started to enter into dialogue with them, and they got a bit upset about that, and they said, how dare you who were born in sin, and all this sort of stuff, and they threw him out of the synagogue.

And then, Jesus met him, and he obviously told them what had happened, and he then started to speak to the crowds, but the Pharisees were in the crowds as well.

And he starts to, as we read, he began his speech with a figure of speech. Verse 6 of chapter 10, This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

In other words, here is evidence of their blindness. They did not understand what he was saying to them. So he speaks first in general terms, and in third person, if you want to put it in literary terms. But you notice, as we move through this chapter 10, he increasingly starts speaking in first person terms.

[9:56] So for example, as we go, he said in verse 7, I am the door of the sheep.

I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me, now he is not talking in general terms. Now he is not just using a figure of speech in general terms.

He is explicitly telling them that he is the one that he was talking about in the first six verses. All who came before me, he says, are thieves and robbers.

Just keep watching the first person there. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved. And so he goes on. And then he comes to these verses that we are going to look at this evening.

Verses 14 to 18. And most of the imagery and metaphor and picture language has been dropped. And it is now, one might say, much more prosaic, the language.

[11:06] Much more directly theological. I am the good shepherd, he says, in verse 14. I know my own and my own know me.

See how different the language has become as we get much more into this. And just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep and so on.

Much more direct and explicit language. Now, there's three things, I think, that I can notice that Jesus talks about in this section, verses 14 to 18.

They are the knowledge that exists between himself as the redeeming shepherd, the Messiah shepherd, and his sheep, his people, his followers, his disciples, those that believe in him.

Secondly, he talks, in a sense, as we'll see, about his mission. Other sheep I have of this fold that I must bring.

[12:18] We'll come to that. Secondly, and thirdly, I believe he talks about, this is simply my phrase, if you don't find it helpful, don't worry about it, the redemptive relationship between the Father and the Son.

Let me just ask you, as I ask myself, how is your relationship with Jesus Christ tonight? Because, you know, when we talk about a relationship with Jesus Christ, when we hear Jesus saying, I know my sheep and they know me, when we see all this language, we're actually at the heartbeat and pulse of authentic Christianity.

And so, we need to ask ourselves, how is my relationship with Jesus Christ? And we also need to ask ourselves, do we realise that we're saved for mission?

And thirdly, it's good to realise where the roots of this great salvation in Jesus Christ, how far deep and back they go.

So, these are the things that we're going to try and explore this evening. first of all then, it's a knowledge that exists between Jesus, the Messiah shepherd and us, the people of God, his sheep.

[14:14] He says there in verse 14, I am the good shepherd. Now, I want you to sort of notice this phrase good.

Because, in a sense, it's not the normal word or some of the other words that you find for good in the New Testament. this particular word that Jesus uses when he says I am the good shepherd, the word is kalos.

It's an easy word, isn't it? Kalos. K-A-L-O-S. It's a Greek word. And it means honourable.

It means noble. It means beautiful. And I like the meanings of the word.

I am the beautiful shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. I am the noble and honourable shepherd.

[15:30] Not like the hirelings that we were thinking about this morning. Not like the thieving shepherds that we were thinking about both back then and now.

And he says in verse 14 I know my own and my own know me.

now in Greek sort of history classical Greek with the great philosophers Socrates Aristotle Plato and all these people if you asked them what do you mean by knowledge by knowing they would have turned around and said it means that we mentally and intellectually and rationally understand something but that's not what the word means when it's used in the Bible.

This knowing is an experiential knowing. I remember going to a lecture by a professor at Stirling University and he was talking about the over rationalisation believe it or not particularly of reformed religion and he was saying it has lost the genius of Calvin's experiential Calvinism when Jesus says here I know my own this is no mere intellectual knowing this is no mere knowing about this is no mere acquaintance I know who they are this is a knowing that is beautiful that's callous this is a knowing that is noble this is a knowing that flows from his love and he says they know me it's also a mutual and reciprocal knowing it's not just that he knows about us or he knows us in the ways that I have just outlined but Jesus says here I know my own and notice these words my own for him isn't there now I belong to Jesus and Jesus belongs to me not for time alone but for eternity what a wonderful truth to be able to sing that I belong to Jesus and he belongs to me I know my own and my own know me not just in the sense that they know who I am and they know that I'm the saviour and I'm the Messiah and they could pass an exam on the kind of life trajectory of me in the gospels but knowing him as experiencing him in our walk and in our life and in all its ups and downs in all its vicissitudes in all its highs and lows and all its challenges and all its heartache and all its joy this knowing therefore is relational and this knowing its initiative comes through the goodness of the good shepherd that's why before he says about the knowing he says

[20:03] I am the good shepherd he's the one that initiates this astonishing intimacy and this astonishing relationship that he offers you and I do we know him do we really know him is he known by us and you know there's something even more remarkable in what Jesus is saying here because look what Jesus goes on to say look at the kind of comparison that he uses it's astonishing I am the good shepherd I know my own and my own me just as that is just like the father knows me and I know the father ah now here here is another deeper dimension of this intimacy and this knowing it's actually rooted and modelled on the knowing between the

father and the son that's what he's just said just as just like the father knows me and

I know the father these are wonderful words because we believe if we go to John's gospel his very opening statement he said in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God the same was in the beginning with God and I remember the late professor MacLeod saying that this word with was towards and it conjured up the picture of the father and son in such harmony in such unison of their love and adoration as it were almost between one another and we'll see more of that in a moment or two and it's interesting that Jesus at 14 here he adds and I lay down my life for the sheep in other words I think Jesus is saying see everything that I've just said there issues from this laying down of my life for the sheep it not only issues from it that is the greatest expression of it so there's the first thing that Jesus is pointing out here is coming near the end of this oration about to I am the good shepherd this knowing is intimate it is relational it is experiential it is callous it is beautiful it is noble it is honourable and it is rooted and grounded in that knowing between the father and the son so we move on now to the second point that Jesus brings out in verse 16 and I have other sheep says Jesus that are not of this fold I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice so there will be one flock and one shepherd so as we see that Jesus indicates that he has other sheep not of this fold but notice notice fold and notice so there will be one flock and one shepherd the fold that he's talking about is Israel the people these early

Jewish believers those people that as Paul puts it are true Jews who follow in the footsteps of our father Abraham and his faith the flock is all the folds if you like and there's plenty of them in Protestantism as I learned when I went to the college and there was this big thing up that showed all the secessions and so on ever since the reformation and I was getting dizzy looking at it but yes so there's flocks but there's one fold now it's interesting is it not do you not think it's interesting I think it's interesting that I have other sheep says Jesus this is days before he was crucified by the way

[26:01] I mentioned that this morning isn't that interesting that Jesus has already indicated he knows that the scope of his mission is far wider than Israel he's indicating that with these words and they will listen to my voice because any who are my sheep will always recognise that voice I was sharing just a tiny bit of my testimony with Norman and Sheila this afternoon and Norman was asking me but what made you respond to these people that stopped you in Colbowie Road Clyde Bank and started witnessing to you you who had never known anything about the gospel and I tried to answer it but I really don't know but you know my sheep hear my voice there's one answer

Jesus indicates his other sheep he indicates that he knows he's not just the saviour of one particular country or one particular ethnicity or nation or people but he's got other sheep and surely these other sheep are of course the gentile nations all the other nations and so he says there will be one flock and one shepherd there will be one flock and one shepherd but I want you to notice a very important statement he makes I must bring them also he said

I must bring them also now that word must it's a those of us who've tried to grapple with the Greek we know this little verb *dei* is the transliteration if you like in English it's a powerful verb it's a verb that means of necessity and Jesus is saying I must bring them for they too are my sheep they too are people I have died for in North Korea in South Korea in Japan in the African nations he's a world saviour his sheep the scoping range of his sheep are worldwide and this here surely points to the mission of the church because if we ask ourselves the question how does

Jesus bring these people that he said he must bring he brings them through the church Matthew's gospel go into all the world and preach the gospel make disciples of all nations he brings them in through his spirit animating the people of God to reach his other sheep he enlists us as partners in his mission people talk about the mission of the church it's actually the continuing mission of Jesus Christ I must bring these other sheep and he says so there will be one flock one shepherd these are very very important words so there will be one flock one shepherd different foals but one flock every Christian has Christ as their shepherd every Christian every single Christian somebody once told me this story you probably heard it and he said that somebody was being shown around in heaven and as they were passing this mansion now it says my house are many mansions he said don't

speaking he says that's the free Presbyterians in there they think they're the only people here every Christian has Christ as their shepherd every Christian draws on the life of the living Christ every Christian is redeemed through the cross and resurrection of

[31:46] Christ every Christian is a member of his body why am I emphasizing that do we care you and I about that unity being visible and expressed!

Jesus said by this shall all people know that you are my disciples that you have loved one for another isn't it a tragedy that Christians have divided over baptism isn't it a tragedy that Christians have divided over the form of baptism isn't it tragedy that people can say we are Baptists and Europe Episcopalians and da da da da the basis of unity and oneness is Christological it's to do with

Jesus Christ any person who is looking to Jesus Christ as their saviour and has put their lot in with him is a member of the flock that Jesus is speaking about here I am not saying that you will be able to have unhindered unity with different groups but I am saying you might be able to work with them in some way!

this brings me to my final point so Jesus has spoken about the knowledge between the shepherd and the sheep Jesus has spoken about the fact that he must bring the other sheep that he has and Jesus has confronted us and challenged us with there is one flock and one shepherd and finally for this evening in verses 17 and 18 I'm calling this tentatively the redemptive relationship between the father and son so if we look at verse 17

Jesus says this for this reason the father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again now I'll come back to that bit about I lay down my life that I may take it up again is the bit I'll come back to take it up again but what I'm thinking about just now is what are we to understand by these words for this reason the father loves me because I lay down my life are we to think that the father's love for Jesus is conditional in some way has been merited and of course the answer from everything else that we know in the gospels and everything else that we know that

[35:53] Jesus has said particularly in John's gospel of course not the love of the father and the son not only is it exquisite and unspeakable and mysterious but it's eternal and it's a love not for any reason if you like it's a love because God is love and we don't need another reason so what does he mean and that's why I'm calling this the redemptive relationship it's like when the father and the son shall we say sat down together and said our purpose is to redeem humanity fallen humanity fallen sinners that have spoiled throughout history of tens of thousands of years through me being willing as father to spare you and

Jesus saying and me being willing to be spared and I think that's what he's trying to say John he's trying to say even the being of God the father and the son could see that this was something that was so worthy and so callous so beautiful and that they loved if you like the Christ who was willing to say here am I send me it's not talking about as I say the eternal love between father and son it's talking about the father and son's will being so knitted together and being so one Jesus could say actually at verse 30 of this chapter I and my father are one now that might not be some people might want to jump and say oh there's

Jesus saying he's one with God it might be but it might not be it might just be that Jesus is saying in the context he is one with God but in the context of that statement that verse 30 he might simply be saying our wills are in absolute harmony and they're one especially in relation to me laying down my life but before I leave that verse there in chapter 17 I want you to notice something then there's only one more verse to go I lay down my life that I may take it again now what's important here is that word the demonstrative that because in Greek it's known as a purpose clause it's stating what the purpose of laying down his life was and from a grammatical point of view and from a point of view of what is the meaning of what is being said here and how are we to understand it he's basically saying the cross wasn't an end in and of itself imagine that for some reason there could have been the cross ok and it would have absolved humanity but there was no resurrection a thought experiment the point is

God had far more in mind than simply absolving us from our guilt and sin what he had in mind was entering into this relationship with us what he had in mind was the constructing and building of a new humanity a new heavens and a new earth where dwells righteousness where we would have

new physical bodies where there would be no weeping and no sorrow it was something far more and for that there was the resurrection not only to put its stamp of acceptance on the crucifixion but to launch the new humanity the cross was never to be the end or an end in itself it functioned as part one or a prelude to the triumph of

Jesus Christ over every enemy and all for his sheep bear this in mind Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said and I agree with it that Jesus is the Christ for others in everything every breath he took every step he took every word he uttered every action he performed and particularly the cross of course wasn't for himself he was the Christ for others as we close here at verse 18 I want you also to notice this Jesus says following saying I lay down my life that I may take it up again no one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord no one takes it from me but

[42:51] I lay it down of my own accord what we're seeing here is there was no compulsion on Christ to go to the cross Christ went to the cross in utter freedom his hand was not forced he said as I spoke a moment ago here am I send me Kalos is he not a beautiful Christ but then there's this last thing as we close while he says no one takes it from me and

I lay it down of my own accord he adds I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again I don't really like the word charge I prefer the word commission this commission I have received from my father see when you go through the gospel of John this is what you hear Jesus saying all the time the words I speak are not my own they're the father's the actions I do they're not my own they're the father's and of course even at the cross the father and son together redeeming God was in Christ says one of the letters of Paul reconciling the world to himself is this beautiful Christ yours Amen