

The Flock of Christ

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[0 : 0 0] to a children's address and he said that over past weeks you haven't actually been having a children's address but since the schools are on holiday there may be some children present.

So for your benefit and anybody looking in online I'm going to say a few words to the young folk in particular but maybe not for everybody but particularly the younger folks.

Well the other day I was looking out the back door of our house and there's a series of power lines and electricity poles back from our house and on these electricity power lines there must have been a thousand birds all packed together and I was thinking well they must be anticipating a move from this particular location to go elsewhere. I was thinking that it's certainly the time when birds migrate and there's a sense in which you feel sad to see birds leaving us having spent the summer with us and having made our time here a time of pleasantness listening to their song and seeing them moving back and forth but now they're ready to go. I'm not quite sure what birds these were. They may have been starlings but I couldn't see them clearly. Starlings don't go very far away but as a rule migrating birds they travel very very far. I believe that the arctic tern which breeds in Iceland it's only a small bird weighs about 100 grams but a quarter pound. Nevertheless when it leaves Iceland to migrate it goes not only to the southern hemisphere but it goes to South Africa and South America and sometimes as far as Antarctica.

Now they go there to feed during the winter months here they follow the sun and they follow the place where they are able to get some feeding. And if that was the end of the story it would be a very sad story.

But what happens is having spent that time down there they return. They return to the place where they left from.

[2 : 4 1] Isn't that amazing? I knew somebody who was a prisoner of war in Germany during World War II and he spoke about this and he said we were able to catch some birds that were nesting in a particular place and we'll put a little ring on their leg and they would of course migrate at that particular time of year and the next year again they would be back in the same nest from which they left.

Well I think that's an amazing thing. Amazing. But the Bible isn't unaware of the habits of migrating birds.

And in the book of Jeremiah at chapter 8 the Lord is talking about the people to whom the Lord sent Jeremiah to preach. And the people were wayward and turning away from the Lord as if they were migrating away from the Lord because their practices weren't godly practices.

And however much Jeremiah would preach to them they just wouldn't come back to the Lord in repentance. Listen to what it says in Jeremiah chapter 8 at verse 6.

And then this is the point with the migrating birds.

[4 : 3 0] The scripture says even the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times and the turtle dove, the swift and the swallow observe the time of their coming.

But the Lord said, but my people do not know the judgment of the Lord. The swallows, the swifts, the turtle doves, the storks, the arctic tern, although they leave on a long journey, they do come back.

But the problem with us as sinners is when we sin against God, we don't want to come back. We want to come back. We want to come back.

We want to do our own thing. We want to do what pleases us and stay in the far country. Jesus, when he started preaching, he said, repent and believe the gospel.

John the Baptist said the same thing. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. We need repentance. And really, repentance means turning around, turning back 180 degrees.

[6 : 03] You're going, let's say, southwards where the arctic tern goes all the way to the south pole almost. But then when people repent, they turn around and come back to where they ought to be.

We are asked to come back to the Lord. That is the first directive of the gospel. Repent. Come back. And you know, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the good shepherd, he calls us to come to himself. Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.

I am meek and lowly in heart. You shall find rest unto your souls. My yoke is easy and my burden is light. May we all be able to do so.

Amen. Now, we say the Lord's Prayer together. Amen. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

[7 : 15] Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not to temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the iron is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen. I'd like to read from the Gospel according to John and chapter 10.

The Gospel according to John and chapter 10. Reading at the beginning.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

[8 : 28] But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them. And the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him.

But they do not know the voice of strangers. This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus again said to them, Truly, truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd.

[9 : 36] The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees.

And the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.

Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.

So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because 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, and I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.

[10 : 42] There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, He has a demon and is insane. Why listen to him? Others said, These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon.

Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? At that time the feast of dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon.

So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.

Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe, because you are not part of my flock.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

[11 : 47] My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one. The Jews picked up stones again to stone him.

Jesus answered them, I have shown you many good works from the Father, but which of them are you going to stone me? The Jews answered him, It is not for a good work that we are going to stone

you, but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said you are gods? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken, do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, you are blaspheming, because I said I am the Son of God?

If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father.

Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained.

[13:12] And many came to him, and they said, John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true, and many believed in him there.

Amen. May God bless to us that reading from his word, and to his name be all the praise. Let us again call on this name in prayer.

Let us pray. Lord, our God, you know all concerning us, there is nothing hidden from your all-seeing eye, and you know where we are needing strength and encouragement and wisdom, insight.

We ask for your Spirit to lead us and guide us in our words and in our listening as we seek to open your word now and meditate upon it for a short while together.

And we ask above all things that we would glorify your name through this service of worship.

Forgive our many sins, we pray.

[14:29] In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Well, I'd like to say a few words from this chapter we have read together.

And in particular, focusing on the words we have from verse 27 and the following verse, verse 28. When Jesus says in verse 27, My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

I and the Father are one. Now, although there is a chapter break at the end of chapter 9, much of the material in chapter 10 is closely connected to what we have in chapter 9.

[15:46] You see, Jesus had healed the man who had been born blind. the account we have in chapter 9 in John's Gospel.

But the Pharisees refused to believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, despite the fact that they had seen this miracle performed by him.

And at the beginning of chapter 10, he speaks to us about himself being the door into the sheepfold.

And those who had come before him were thieves and robbers, those like the Pharisees who lived not to the glory of God but for their own ends.

And they were misleading the people. But Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. Lord, I lead my people to places of safety and they will know my salvation and my blessing.

[16:59] And these people who were against the Lord Jesus, even in chapter 10, they still refused to believe in who Jesus is.

See, in verse 24 of chapter 10, it says here, so the Jews gathered around him and said to him, how long will you keep us in suspense?

If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. Well, he had said plainly and he had demonstrated plainly on many occasions that he was the son of God.

But Jesus answered them in verse 25, I told you and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me.

But you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. They were not part of Christ's flock. But then in verse 27, he focuses on his own flock and he tells us various things about them.

[18:12] He says, my sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life. They will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

My Father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.

And I'd like just to focus for a short while this morning as I'm able on these words we have from verse 27, 28 and into 29 talking about the flock of Christ under four headings.

First of all, their origin. Where are they from? Who are they? Secondly, their privilege. Jesus knows them. They are listening to his voice. Thirdly, their lifestyle. They are following him. [19:20] And fourthly and finally, their security. They will never perish and no one will pluck them out of my hand.

these four points, and we pray the Lord will enable us to find ourselves among this flock of Christ. Firstly, their origin. Where did they come from? Those who are Christians, those whom Jesus here names as his sheep, his flock.

where have they come from? Well, it says in chapter 17 of this same gospel that the Father has given them to Christ.

17 verse 2, since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

[20:27] God the Father gave this flock to Christ. And in verse 24 of chapter 17, the same thing again, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me.

So, Jesus is pointing us to where this flock has originally come from. they have been given to him by his father.

By his father. When and where? Well, it's clear that before the world was in eternity, God in three Persons made a covenant.

covenant. And in that covenant, God the father gave to God the son, his elect. He gave them to him in order to save them.

And the son joyfully received them, undertaking to come into this world in the fullness of times in order to work out a salvation through his perfect life and atoning death and then rise from the dead on the third day, ascending into heaven on the fortieth day, there to stand triumphant as the saviour of his people and sit down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

[22:10] they are the elect of God given to the son in eternity. Was there something about them that caused God to elect them more than others?

I mean, did God foresee that they were going to be good people, that they were going to love Christ, that they were going to believe in Christ Jesus when they came into this world?

No, it was nothing like that. The Bible reminds us, go back to the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 53, and he says there, all we like sheep have gone astray.

We have turned each one of us into his or her own way. That's the way we were, every one of us. Paul in Romans chapter 3 says, we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

There is none righteous, no, not one. But Jesus says, I have a flock, my sheep, and the Father gave them to me, and they were full of ailments and full of spiritual diseases and full of impurities and they were wayward in mind and in activity.

[23:44] Nevertheless, I love them. God has loved his people with an everlasting love. That is their origin.

In themselves, they were wayward and sinful and lost. But so far as God was concerned, he had his eye on them from all eternity, having given them to his son in eternal covenant in order that he would save them.

My people. That is their origin. Secondly, their privilege. think of this.

Jesus knows them. Verse 27, the middle of the verse, I know them. Jesus knows them.

Jesus knew the lost sheep. And in that marvelous parable in Luke 15, he says that he leaves the 99 and he goes after the one sheep that was lost.

[25:00] The woman who had lost her coin, swept the house, lit a candle, everything that was necessary in order to reclaim her lost coin.

And of course, the prodigal son, who left home just to do his own thing, spend his life in riotous living, he came back.

Because he came to himself. Look, when we read these words, he came to himself, it shows that Jesus knew him where he was, that the spirit of God worked in his heart, in his conscience, in his life, that the spirit of God was dealing with him at the very core of his being, convincing him of sin and misery, of his lostness.

And he came to himself, and he acknowledges he had sinned against heaven and before his father, and that he was no more worthy to be called a son.

Jesus knows us exactly the same. He knows all of his people, and the time comes when they come to realize that he is speaking to them.

[26 : 26] They hear my voice. They hear my voice. Isn't it amazing, people who come to church on a regular basis, who are not yet converted, and the minister can preach powerfully and soundly, but it's like a noise that passes over them.

But when Jesus, who knows his elect people, begins to deal with them, the word of God becomes personal.

The word of God becomes a convicting and convincing word, and we hear the minister speaking words that are directed to us.

That's because Jesus, who knows us, he is speaking to us by his word and by his spirit. He convinces us of our sin and our misery, our lostness, our waywardness, our need, our inability to rectify the wrongs of our own life.

Maybe you're here this morning and that's exactly the way you are. God, the Lord has discovered to you who you are and what you're like. He has shown you your need as a sinner.

[27 : 58] And he's addressing you as a person who needs to listen to the voice of Christ in the gospel. And what does Christ say in the gospel?

Well, I mentioned this text already. He says, come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. In the Old Testament, the Lord is saying, look unto me, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else.

And he convinces us that there is no hope for us apart from Christ Jesus as Savior. And you readily agree with the scripture that says that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

And you must be saved when the scripture deals with you in that saving powerful way. What a privilege. And one more thing in relation to the way the shepherds dealt with their flocks in these Middle Eastern countries.

They would call their sheep by name. They would call them by name. I remember when I went to nest from Crossabust.

[29 : 18] I had left some sheep over in the Glebe in Crossabust. And after a few weeks, I was able to go across and collect them. And all I had to do was to stand at the gate of the Glebe in Crossabust and call them.

And they all ran up to me. And that's what the Lord Jesus does. He knows us personally. He has received his people in covenant.

And the amazing thing is when Jeremiah speaks of the love of God for his people, he says, I have loved you with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness have I drawn you.

And you feel the drawing power of the gospel. You feel the drawing power of the voice of Christ because he's addressing you personally through his word and spirit.

What a privilege that is. Many of us would count it a privilege to be called by the queen to be presented with some medal or some kind of recognition for who we are and what we're doing.

[30 : 39] We would go all the way to Buckingham Palace. But the thing is, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, he calls us by name and he makes known to us that there is no salvation for us apart from himself and we are enabled by his grace to embrace him as he is freely offered to us in the gospel.

What a privilege that is. What a privilege. So, Jesus knows them. They hear his voice because he calls them by name.

Thirdly, their lifestyle. It says here, they follow me. They follow me.

They are following me as they are hearing me. These verbs are in the present continuous. I hear him every day.

I follow him every day. Should be the refrain of every Christian. I listen to him and I follow him.

[32 : 03] How do we follow him? What is the first step on this new way which we are now taking as the flock of Christ?

Well, I'm going to come back to this word we have spoken of already in relation to the returning migrating birds. It is a following of repentance.

repentance. We have turned our back upon the lifestyle we have been living without God and without hope in the world.

and we have felt his arm turning us around and we are enabled and are happy to turn our back upon our sinful lifestyle and follow Jesus.

Repentance unto life is a saving grace whereby a sinner out of a true sense of a sin and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ does with grief and hatred of his sin turn from it unto God with full purpose of and endeavour after new obedience.

[33 : 17] That's the catechism definition of repentance. We cannot truly follow Jesus without true repentance.

No we cannot. So it is a turning and following in repentance. repentance. And then there is this aspect to it.

It's a following of faith. Repentance and faith as if they're two sides of the same coin. Those who turn unto God from their sin, they follow him in faith.

They want to please him. They want to worship him. They want to serve him. and that's the way we have it here. They follow me. They follow me.

When the apostle is writing these marvellous words of exhortation to the Christians, he says, running our race or your race with patience, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith or of your faith.

[34 : 32] Looking unto Jesus. And that word, looking unto Jesus, involves this idea, looking away from anything and everything else and focusing on him.

Focusing on him. Oh, there are many voices calling for our attention as we seek to follow Jesus. There is the world with all its allurements.

There is the flesh with all its residual power. And of course, the flesh is still a power in the experience of the Christian. The confession of faith says that there is a remnant of corruption still within the believer as long as he's in this world.

In other words, you are not perfectly holy yet. There is still corruption there. And that corruption seeks to have satisfaction. corruption and the world and the flesh is calling to it.

And the devil seeks to manipulate things in your life in such a way as to bring you down into sin of some kind. hand. But it has to be looking unto Jesus.

[35 : 50] He has strength for you. He has grace for you. He promised the apostle Paul, he who cried three times that the Lord would alleviate his problem, whatever it was.

He says, no, but my grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in weakness. that's why we continue running always looking to Jesus that's our lifestyle that's our life but of course it's also a life of obedience not pleasing yourselves but seeking to please him to be obedient to him that is the way forward however difficult it might seem this is the way he says walk ye in it and whatever your hand finds to do do it as unto the Lord every day and in every situation of life it's a walk of and a lifestyle of obedience and before I go on it's also a lifestyle of love we love the word of God don't we that's why we sit with it and pray over it every day we love to come to the house of God to hear it hear the word of God expound it we love the house of God because the scripture says that the Lord loved the gates of Zion more than every other dwelling place of Jacob are you able to say that? are you able to say that you love the Lord's day? that you love the Lord's people? that you love the Lord's cause?

it's always disconcerting when you see sheep at a fank or in a situation where there's a few of them together fighting each other there's something that's not right there the people of God should love one another out of a pure heart fervently that's what the apostle Peter says out of a pure heart fervently because we love him we love everyone who belongs to him it's a lifestyle of loving faithful repentant obedience my sheep that's the mark on their ear remember in the olden days they used to mark the ears by cutting a certain pattern of cuts into the ear of the lamb shortly after birth kohoroth you had to have a very sharp knife it seemed awfully barbaric but everybody thought it was the way to do it nowadays they put a clip in the ear

I think but in the olden days every family had its own kohoroth mark on the ear I still remember the one we had in back but every one of God's people has these marks upon them they are repentant repentant people hating sin and loving holiness they are people of faith they are people of obedience they are people of love and Jesus says my sheep they hear my voice I know them and they follow me that's their lifestyle but finally their security verse 28 I give them eternal life well I think that's an amazing statement because it is still in the present continuous

[40 : 06] I am giving them eternal life when did he begin to give them eternal life or when he gave them himself when he gave them a saving knowledge of himself this is eternal life that they might

know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent and he's giving them this eternal life in such a way that they are new creatures in Christ Jesus all things have passed away behold all things have become new what does it mean to have this eternal life given well what kind of life is it it's a spiritual life a spiritual life it is a spiritual dimension that has come into your heart into your soul that wasn't there before you see when God in the moment of regeneration deals with us he plants in our heart and soul these saving graces that immediately begin to act and work in relation to God he gives us eternal life think of just one thing think of when Jesus stood at the grave of

Lazarus and Martha had said to Jesus well he is no dead four days there is a decaying aroma of this body but Jesus spoke Lazarus come forth and he who had been dead came forth how did that work well accompanying the voice of Christ there was this power that brought life into his very body and enabled him to respond to the command that Christ had given and this is what happens every time a person is raised spiritually a person is born again because Christ's word is a word of power a word of command and also a word of enabling that works faith in us and that faith immediately obeys the voice of the one calling us

I am giving them eternal life he is giving them fellowship with himself he is giving them the graces they stand in need of he is giving them fellowship with himself he is giving them the life that will never end oh there's so much that could be said concerning these words I am giving them eternal life the psalmist goes so far as to say this that the Lord gives grace and glory and he will withhold no good from them who live uprightly this is a day of grace this everlasting life we have it through the grace of God changes our perspective on life on everything and now we seek to worship him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light and he goes on

I am giving them eternal life and this is a promise they shall never perish neither shall anyone pluck them out of my hand they shall never perish or they shall never perish they shall never be lost they shall never go to our lost eternity never because Christ is holding them none shall pluck them or snatch them out of his hand remember what he said at another time I will build my church upon this walk that is on Christ himself and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it if we are in Christ's embrace doesn't matter what comes our way doesn't matter how hard the providence doesn't matter how broken hearted and disappointed circumstances may be the Lord who has begun the good work in you he will perform that work until the day of

Jesus Christ none shall pluck them out of your hand oh the devil will try his utmost to break this connection between you and your Lord and if he realises he cannot break it he will make your journey through the wilderness as uncomfortable as he possibly can when you see that marvellous version of Revelation chapter 7 when John is granted to see the great multitude around the throne and he's wondering who they are and he's asked who are they and he's I don't know you know and the angel says to him these are they who have come out of the great tribulation and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb they have come out of the great tribulation and there's a sense in which there is tribulation in the experience of every

[46 : 35] Christian every child of God every one of the sheep of Christ it may come to you in one way come to me in another way but those who are in Christ's embrace need not fear none shall snatch them out of your hand and then he says verse 29 my father who has given them to me he is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand I and the father are one well he's talking here about the trinity the persons of the trinity the almighty trinity father son and also the holy spirit he who created the universe who sustains every fibre of the universe as far as the universe extends he does that and if he's able and he is to uphold the universe from reverting to nothing which he's able to do and is doing if he were to withdraw his voice of might and power the universe would revert to nothing but he is pleased to sustain the universe in being well he is the one who knows you where you are and he is the one who knows you what you're like he knows the forces arrayed against you and he says don't fear

I have given you grace I will give you glory and nothing nothing can intervene between me giving you grace and you coming to receive the glory at last may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray help us Lord to take to heart what you have said to us in your word that you have a flock given to you by the father and that although they are wayward in themselves nevertheless you have undertaken to call them out of darkness into your marvelous light and you have given them to follow you and grace to follow you and you have given us also a promise that you will take us to be with yourself at last in glory may that be true of each one of us we pray in

Jesus name amen let us conclude our worship at this time singing from the Scottish Psalter and Psalm 23 the 23rd Psalm the Lord's my shepherd I'll not want he makes me down to lie in pastures green he leadeth me the quiet watered by my soul he doth restore again and me to walk doth make within the paths of righteousness even for his own name sake through to the end of the Psalm to God's praise the Lord's my shepherd the Lord's my shepherd I days fight and He The quiet waters shine.

My soul be done with a storm again. And be to all the pain.

[51 : 18] Within the paths of righteousness. In forest, all may say.

Yet though I walk in desert, Yet will I fear the hill.

For thou art with me on thy wall, And sadly come forth still.

My table thou hast furnished, In presence of my foes, My heaven thou lost with oil anoint, And my cup overclosed.

Goodness and mercy all my life Shall surely follow me.

[53 : 12] And in God's heart forevermore, My loving grace shall be.

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God the Father, And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Rest upon and abide with you all, Now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen.