

The Great Shepherd

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Date: 19 October 2014

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[0 : 00] We want to focus on the shepherd, and that's what we've been doing.

We looked last week at the first of three key passages in the New Testament that when you put them together, they describe for us the ministry, really in a sense the complete ministry.

Of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our shepherd, and in these three passages that we're looking at, the title shepherd is used.

And it is a picture, of course, an image, but in these three places in Scripture, the word shepherd is a title.

It's a capital S, and so it's a title for the Lord Jesus Christ, given to Jesus. And that title, again, is shepherd, and indeed he is the shepherd.

[1 : 03] And as we looked last week at 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 25, Jesus is the shepherd of our souls. He's the shepherd and bishop of our soul.

And so Jesus is the shepherd. Now, as we continue that this morning, I want to show you something very interesting to begin with, and we'll get to the passage in Hebrews in a moment. You don't need to turn to it yet. Well, you can if you want to, but I want you to turn to an Old Testament passage, first of all, to kind of get us started. And it's something really very interesting in Numbers chapter 27 and verse 15.

So this is not the sermon. This is an introduction to the sermon, okay? But we have the shepherd mentioned here. And in this passage, we have something that I think ties in very easily and very wonderfully to our subject, the shepherd, of course, who is Jesus Christ.

Now, before I read the passage there in Numbers 27, you can find verse 15. But before I read that, let me just set this up, make sure we understand what's going on here, kind of the context, historical context.

[2 : 17] Moses is the leader of Israel, and Moses has been mightily used of God. And he has led God's people out of the bondage of Egypt, and you know that story.

But even beyond that, he has led them now through the wilderness wanderings, and he has led them to the very border of the promised land. And now Moses' work is almost finished.

And Moses, of course, you know why. We don't need to go into that. But Moses is not going to be allowed to enter into the promised land. And so here in verses 15, 16, and 17, we have Moses' prayer.

Moses' prayer. Moses' prayer. And so let me just read verses 15 to 17. Then Moses spoke to the Lord, saying, so you know he's praying here.

Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation. That would be the congregation of Israel, God's people. Set a man over God's people, who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation.

[3 : 31] Now, this is what I want you to see. That the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep which have no shepherd. Now, let me ask you, did God answer that prayer?

Well, of course he did. And who was the answer to Moses' prayer, according to the passage here? Who was this shepherd of the sheep?

I heard it over here. You see it. It's in the very next verse. It's Joshua. Joshua. So, you know, God says there in the very next verse, I give you Joshua. So Joshua is the answer to Moses' prayer in the immediate sense.

In the historical sense, in the sense of God directly and immediately answering Moses' prayer, Joshua will be the shepherd.

The shepherd of Israel. And we read about his leadership, his shepherding of God's people all through the book of Joshua. And even on into the book of Judges briefly.

[4 : 38] And so in the immediate sense, Joshua was the answer to Moses' prayer. But in the future sense, and there is implied here something future, something prophetic.

Moses' prayer would not be answered for some 1,400 years. Moses prayed for Israel, God's people, that the congregation of the Lord would not be as sheep without a shepherd.

And nearly 1,400 years later, Jesus would express that same burden recorded in Matthew chapter 9, verse 36. Where Jesus said, or where the Bible says, when Jesus saw the multitudes, that would be the multitudes of God's people, the Jews.

When he saw them, he was moved with compassion on them because they fainted. They were weak and were scattered, scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.

And so the same burden is expressed there. Now let me ask you the question again. Who then was the answer to Moses' prayer for Israel?

[5 : 56] The answer is Joshua. I know some of you thought I was going to say Jesus, and some of you get it. I did say Jesus in a sense.

I did say Jesus. See, the name Joshua, or as Wes said over here, Yeshua, in the language of the Old Testament.

Yeshua, or Joshua, is the name that means Yahweh is salvation. He is salvation. Now, guess what the name Joshua, or the Hebrew Yeshua, is in the Greek, the language of the New Testament.

Well, in the Greek, it's Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. And the name Jesus means Yahweh is salvation.

Yahweh is salvation. And so, you see, Moses prayed 1,400 some odd years before Jesus came. He prayed, God, give your people a shepherd.

[7 : 01] He said, God, don't let your people be sheep which have no shepherd. And God answered the prayer. God answered the prayer in the immediate sense.

He sent Joshua. But God answered the prayer in that he gave us Jesus, the Joshua of the New Testament. And so, 1,400 years after Moses, Jesus said, in that passage we looked at last week, John chapter 10, I am the good shepherd.

I'm the good shepherd. And so, he used, and it's even better when you think of it, that he used the familiar and often repeated I am kind of construction there.

We studied that some, I don't know, years ago. About the I am statements in the scripture. And so, Jesus used the I am construction here.

He said, I am is the great shepherd, is the shepherd, the good shepherd. And so, that means that the good shepherd, or the great I am, is the shepherd of the sheep.

[8 : 06] The one who spoke and everything came into being. He is the shepherd of the sheep. And David said in Psalm 23, the Lord, that's Yahweh, the I am, the great I am, he is my shepherd.

My shepherd. Now, if he is your shepherd, and I hope that he is, do you know then what he has done for you? I mean, fully know it.

And do you know what he is doing for you right now? Though, you may know it most of the time, we're not really thinking about it.

Do you know what he is doing for his sheep right now? And do you know what he will one day do for his sheep? Well, the Bible tells us in these three passages that we're going to be looking at.

We looked at one last week. Going to look at one here this morning. Next Sunday, look at the third one. The Bible tells us in these three passages what is the threefold ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, our shepherd.

[9 : 17] And again, as I pointed out last Sunday, the Bible reveals the threefold ministry of the shepherd, or the Lord Jesus, by using this title, shepherd. Shepherd.

Shepherd. And to help us understand the three aspects of the shepherd, the shepherd's ministry, the Holy Spirit inspired the various Bible writers to use three different adjectives in connection with this title shepherd.

An adjective, of course, qualifies the noun. You remember that from your grammar, right? And it tells us then something about the noun to which it is attached. And the noun is the word shepherd.

So the adjective then tells us something about the shepherd. And so these three adjectives then tell us three wonderful, amazing, exciting things about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we looked at the first of these last Sunday. It came out of John chapter 10, verse 11, where Jesus himself said, I am the good shepherd.

[10 : 21] And the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. So what is the adjective there? It is good. The good shepherd. And what then is the ministry of the good shepherd?

To die for the sheep. To die for the sheep. And so Jesus, the good shepherd, died on the cross, as we studied last week, in our place. He died as a substitute for me, for you, the just for the unjust, so that he might bring us to God.

This is the good shepherd. Jesus is the good shepherd. He had to be good. He died for the sheep. Well, we looked at all that last Sunday.

And so now I want you to turn to this second key passage in which the word or title shepherd appears. And it's Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 20.

Hebrews 13 and verse 20. And I want to read verses 20 and 21 because these go together. And everything that we're going to learn about Jesus, the ministry of the Lord Jesus in this passage, we're going to learn in these two verses.

[11 : 31] All right? So let me read verses 20 and 21. Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do his will, working in you what is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom glory be glory forever and ever.

Amen. So this is Paul's... I say Paul, Tom. I always have to make a little joke about that. I mean, why should I? He's just the chief of police. It's all right if he's wrong about the book of Hebrews, right?

So Paul then, giving kind of a benediction to this incredible letter, the letter to the Hebrews. Well, whoever wrote it, okay?

The benediction. He ends with amen. He's got a few more other things to say in closing. But this is his benediction to the letter. And so let's not just take it as an ending to the letter.

Let's find out what he says in this letter, in this benediction. All right, so then what is the adjective here? Say it. Great.

[12 : 52] The great shepherd. And what do you surmise from this passage? What do you glean from this passage? You understand from this passage.

What do you understand is the ministry of the great shepherd. The great shepherd lives for the sheep. Very clear.

He lives for the sheep. He is our living shepherd. Brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead. That great shepherd of the sheep.

Now, you know, it's good. It's a great thing for sheep to have a good shepherd. I think all sheep ought to have a good shepherd, right? And, you know, a shepherd that's willing to die for the sheep. Willing to lay down his life for the sheep. That's a good thing. Every sheep should have a good shepherd in that sense. But let me ask you something. What good is a good shepherd once he's dead?

[13 : 50] What good is he after that? And that brings up this thought. Aren't you glad that God's redemptive purposes, his redemptive plan did not end at the cross?

I mean, it goes on from there. See, Jesus, as he hung upon the cross and just before he died, he said, It is finished. But he did not say, I am finished, did he?

Because after the death of the good shepherd came the resurrection of the great shepherd. And so let's put this together, these two together. The ministry of the good shepherd is a dying ministry. And as we saw last Sunday, 1 Peter chapter 2 describes the dying ministry of the good shepherd. But this morning, the ministry of the great shepherd is a living ministry.

It's a living ministry. And so let's see how Hebrews 13 describes the living ministry of the great shepherd. And so I want to give you four truths about our great shepherd from these two verses.

[14 : 57] We can find four things, at least four. There's really more than that. But let's just identify four truths, four things that these two verses tell us about the great shepherd.

And the first one is the provision of the great shepherd. The provision of the great shepherd. The word, looking back at last week's text, the word good, good in the good shepherd speaks of the love of the shepherd, doesn't it?

In fact, Jesus himself said in John 15, 13, Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. And that's exactly what Jesus did. And so the word good speaks of the love of the good shepherd.

But the word great in the great shepherd speaks something else, doesn't it? It speaks of the power of the shepherd.

The power of the shepherd. And so the cross demonstrated the love of God. The resurrection demonstrated the power of God.

[16:05] Brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead. And so what then is the provision of the great shepherd? Well, it's power. Power.

Not physical power. Though God may grant you physical strength, and I know that he does, and we thank him for that. But we're not talking about physical power, physical strength. He provides spiritual power.

Spiritual power. The power of the Holy Spirit operating in our lives. Do you know what our problem is as Christians? Well, one of them anyway. Do you know why we struggle sometimes in our faith? Struggle to walk according to God's word, and walk according to what pleases and honors God? Do you know why we are often so feeble in our service for the Lord?

Do you know why? Well, one of the reasons is because we're far more careful to live by the example of Christ. You know, crossing every T and dotting every I, and that's important.

[17:07] We're more concerned about that than we are desperate to live by the power of Christ. And we simply have to. And so, you see, we need more, much more than just simply the example of Christ.

Now, I don't want to minimize the example of Christ. That's important. We live according to his example and desire to. But Jesus, for example, was an example of an example.

All right, Jesus was an example of humility, wasn't he? I mean, think of the humility of Christ all the way to the cross itself. And I think we all ought to want to live just like Jesus lived, to be humble just like Jesus was humble.

I don't know about you, but I can go from genuine humility, which happens just sometimes. I can go from genuine humility to out-and-out pride without even thinking about it, without even batting an eye.

I know I've told this story before, and I think I've even heard Tom tell it in the course of his teaching. But I remember the story about Dr. Harry Ironside. He was a great, great preacher many, many years ago and was the longtime pastor of Moody Memorial Church in Chicago.

[18:24] And he was not only a great preacher, but he was a very well thought of, very prestigious kind of pastor in his city. But not just his city, his kind of prestige and fame and kind of extended way beyond Chicago and all around this nation, even the world.

He was a great pastor. People flocked to hear the great Harry Ironside preach. Well, as the story goes, he was struggling with pride.

And we can imagine that he would. And he just really struggled with this thing. And he prayed about it and agonized over it, the pride of his life. And he didn't know what to do about it. He just couldn't seem to find any victory over it.

And so he went to a godly friend of his, godly counselor, and said, You know, I've been struggling with pride. What should I do? And so this friend gave him a recommendation that's really quite unusual.

He said, what you need to do is get one of these sandwich billboards. You know, you've seen these before in movies, and I don't know if they still use them. Probably do in some of our big cities.

[19:34] And it's just simply a board, a sign board that hangs over the body in the front and on the back. You know, straps on the top. And the person walks around the city and advertises whatever he may be advertising.

So he said, I want you to put together one of these sandwich billboards and have printed on it the plan of salvation, the gospel. And then I want you to pick the busiest day of the week and go downtown Chicago, you being the great Harry Ironside, go downtown Chicago and walk the streets, those busy streets, wearing that sandwich billboard.

Very humbling experience for this very prestigious pastor. And so Dr. Ironside did that. He wore that sandwich billboard, walked all around the streets of Chicago, the busy streets of Chicago, and humbled himself before those people and declared the gospel at the same time.

When the day was over and he got home and he took that sandwich billboard off of his body, he said, you know, there's not another pastor in Chicago who would have done that. I mean, just that quick.

You know, isn't that your experience too? You know, we want to be humble and humble just like Jesus and not be prideful. And we can go from a humble moment to out and out pride in a blink of an eye.

[21 : 04] In fact, we can become very prideful about our humility, just like Harry Ironside. So how are we going to be humble, follow his example? We can't do it.

Not without the power of God. Jesus also is an example of obedience, wasn't he? I mean, and I want to be just like Jesus in my obedience to God and to his word.

But I don't know about you. I probably do know about you. But I find it difficult to be obedient. I mean, it's difficult. I find it sometimes nearly impossible to always submit to the will of the Father as Jesus always submitted to the will of the Father.

And Jesus also is an example of love. Unconditional love. He was certainly an example of that all the way to the cross and beyond.

And, you know, I want to love people just like Jesus loved people. I mean, I know I want to. I know I should want to. We don't always want to, do we?

[22 : 07] But we should want to love people just like Jesus loved people. But I'll be honest with you, in the ministry, you run across some people from time to time who they somehow think they have the gift of troublemaking.

The Holy Spirit gift of troublemaking. And it's not in the Bible, but they think it's there. And they say God gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers and some thorns in the flesh.

And I'm the thorn in the flesh. Preacher. And I say, well, bless God, you really are. Well, I don't say that to their face.

And what am I to do? I'm to love people like that. To love everyone unconditionally as Jesus loved unconditionally. I mean, after all, he loved me even while I was a sinner and rebel and hated him. But I can't love like Jesus loves, not on my own. You can't either. Can't do it without the power of God. And so power, clearly, is the provision of the great shepherd.

[23 : 17] And what kind of power is it? It's resurrection power. That's a whole lot of power. That brought up, again, the Lord Jesus from the dead.

It's resurrection power. Now, how do I get it? You're thinking. Well, you have it. If you're a born-again believer, you have it. Because the resurrected Jesus lives in you.

He lives in us. And so then we want to know, how then can this power become active, more active in my life? How does this resurrection power become a consistent operational thing in my life?

How can that happen? Well, it happens through intimacy with Christ. This is the key to it. I mean, he already lives in you.

The resurrected Jesus lives in you. But Peter said, Christ in you, the hope of glory. He lives in you. He lives in you. And so, how then can his life and the power of his resurrection become an active thing, a prevalent, dominant thing in our lives?

[24 : 32] It comes through intimacy with Christ. Intimacy with him. Paul wrote in Philippians 3.10. The entire chapter of, third chapter of Philippians is an incredible chapter in the Bible.

But in verse 10, Paul really is expressing his main goal of life. He said, that I may know him. I may know him.

Not just know about him. He's using a word in the context of it means intimacy. To have that kind of a closeness and communion and love for and constant presence of God in your life.

To know him. To have intimacy with Christ. This is what Paul said. Philippians 3.10. That I may know him and know the power of his resurrection.

He goes on to say also his suffering. That's the part we don't like. But it's there. But the power of his resurrection. That I may know him.

[25 : 40] See, it comes through intimacy. So, the provision of the great shepherd. One who lives and lives in you. The provision, his provision is power. Second, notice the purpose.

The purpose of the great shepherd. Verse 21. Make you complete in every good work to do his will. That's the purpose of the great shepherd.

Again, putting things together here. The purpose of the good shepherd that we looked at last week.

The purpose of the good shepherd was to satisfy a holy God because of our sin.

And he did that through dying. Through dying on the cross. But the purpose of the great shepherd is to sanctify his sheep.

And he does that by living in and living for and living his life through his sheep. And really, it is the purpose of the great shepherd that defines for us the provision of the great shepherd that we were talking about a while ago.

[26 : 47] The provision of power. It's the purpose that defines that for us. Because, you see, his power is in us not so that we can do miraculous things.

You know, like physical healings and prophesying future events and speaking in tongues and some other mystical phenomena.

It's not there for that. Adrian Rogers once said, The power of God is not in us so that we can toot our horn, but rather so that we can get on down the road in the Christian life.

You see, and Paul put it this way in our text. He said, To make you complete. That's his purpose. To make you complete. The New American Standard uses the words equip you.

That's the same idea. Or we might even use the word mature you. To complete you. To equip you. To mature you. For what? For every good work to do his will.

[27 : 50] That's the purpose of the great shepherd. The purpose for him giving you the power. The resurrection power. To complete you to every good work to do his will.

Now, Paul is talking here about sanctification. That's the theological teaching here or concept. Sanctification. And Paul really gives us a good description of sanctification right here in our passage.

And all you have to do is just kind of follow the text. And I'll kind of paraphrase, add a few things here. But in verse 20, it is the God of peace. Verse 20. That's God the Father, of course.

Who, who, we could say, with the same power that brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead. That's the power of the resurrection. God activated.

God activated. He activated that power in the lives of his blood-bought children. Verse 20. Through the blood of the everlasting covenant. It was the blood of the cross.

[28 : 54] That God accomplished these things. And he is doing this in order to accomplish a progressive work. An ongoing work. The work of sanctification. Sanctification.

Making them complete. Or equipped in every good work to do his will. In short, we could say, to make us like his son Jesus. That's what he's doing.

That's the purpose. To make us like Jesus. Who, by the way, was the only one whose works were good. Who also, by the way, was the only one who always did God's will.

And he's making us just like him. That is the purpose of the great shepherd. The living shepherd. And he will not fail in this.

So the provision of the great shepherd. The purpose of the great shepherd. And then third notice. The pleasure of the great shepherd.

[29 : 55] The pleasure of the great shepherd. Look at it. Verse 21. Working in you what is well-pleasing in his sight. In God's sight.

The Father's sight. Working in you what is well-pleasing. You know. The Bible says that Jesus lived to please the Father.

God the Father. At his baptism, you remember, God the Father spoke. And he said, this is my beloved son. In whom?

In him. I am well-pleased. Even Jesus had this testimony of himself. In John 8, 29. He said, and he that sent me is with me.

The Father has not left me alone. For, and listen to this. I always do those things that please him. That was Jesus' testimony.

[30 : 51] All right. So here's the point. It is this same Jesus. The one who always pleases the Father. This same Jesus lives in every born-again believer. Lives in you.

He lives in us. Working in us. Working on us. Because we need a lot of work. Living in us.

Working in us. Working on us. Working through us. Through us to accomplish all that pleases the Father. So Jesus was here on this earth. And everything he did pleased the Father.

He ever lived to please the Father. And now Jesus is gone. He went by way of the cross. And then to the tomb. And then was resurrected. And he lives today. And he lives in your heart.

And so all that pleasing of the Father, he's doing through you. Or he wants to. God, you see, has done for us all that is needed for our salvation.

[31 : 52] That's what the good shepherd did. God is doing in us all that is needed to please him. And that is what the great shepherd is doing in our lives.

Philippians 2.13. Again, one of my favorite passages from one of my favorite books in the New Testament. Philippians 2.13. For it is God who works in you.

That's the same idea of what we're talking about here. It's God who works in you. To both. Two things. Both to will.

That means to give you the desire. We certainly need that. And to do. The will and to do. The desire and the power. To do what pleases him.

For his good pleasure. I want to move on to the final point here this morning. And then put all this together. Father. So finally. I want you to see.

[33 : 01] The praise. Belonging to the great shepherd. The praise belonging to the good. The great shepherd. Verse 21.

To whom be glory forever. And ever. Amen. That's how. How this ends. This benediction. But it helps us put all this together.

And we put all this together. And this is what we discover. The ministry of the great shepherd. Is to live. For. And in. And through his sheep.

Right. That's what we've been. Been discussing. Certainly. Ours is not a dead shepherd. We. We do not believe in. And serve. A dead savior.

Who's still lying in some. Unmarked. Unyet. Discovered. Grave. Somewhere around Jerusalem. He lives.

[33 : 57] And he lives in. Me. And you. To do what? To give me power. To live the biblical. Christian life.

The spirit filled life. A life according. To God's word. And God's desire. He gives me the power. That's what the great shepherd. Give me power. To live the Christian life.

Absolutely. But not just that. But also. To perfect me. Mature me. Equip me.

Complete me. And you. Yes. Absolutely. But that's only a part of it. What else?

To enable me to do what. Pleases God the father. Yes. Because we. Should. All want to. Please the father.

[34 : 55] God the father. But it's even. Much more than that. Because the ultimate ministry. Of the great shepherd. To his sheep.

Is. To accomplish. In and through. The sheep. What the sheep. Must do. And were. Created to do. And ordained to do. But. Are. Completely. Unable to do. In ourselves. And what is that? To bring glory.

And praise. To God the father. That's what the great shepherd. Can. And must. Accomplish.

In you. To. It's what we were created. For. And an ability. That we. Lost. Because of sin. What we lost.

[35 : 50] In Adam. We gain. In Christ. Living through us. To bring glory. To God. The father.

That's the ultimate. Ministry. Of the great shepherd. Of the sheep. And put all that together. All these various things. Power. Purpose.

The ability to please the father. Praise the father. Put all that together. Understanding. This is the work. Of the great shepherd. In the life of the believer.

If you put all that together. Then you have to ask yourself. Do I see that going on in my life? Does this.

Really. Describe. Describe. All these various things. The work. Of the great shepherd. Does this really describe. What is going on in my life. Right now. And if the answer to that is.

[36 : 49] No. I don't think so. I don't see it. And one or two things. Is the answer. Either he's not your shepherd.

Or. Or. You. Have strayed from him. Like sheep are prone to do. And you need to come back. To the shepherd. And bishop of your soul. Thank you.