Exploring the Bible—Gospel of John (12)

Life’s Shepherding

**Scripture Reading:**

9 I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved and shall go in and go out and shall find pasture. 10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly. 11 I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hireling and it does not matter to him concerning the sheep. 14 I am the good Shepherd, and I know My own, and My own know Me, 15 Even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must lead them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd. (John 10:9-16)

**Ministry Reading:**

Christ Laying Down His Soulish Life that the Sheep May Have the Divine Life

In verse 10 the Lord said, “I came that they may have life and may have it abundantly,” and in verse 11 He said, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” In these two verses two different Greek words are used for life. In verse 10 the Greek word is zoe, which is the word used in the New Testament for the eternal divine life. In verse 11 the Greek word is psuche, the same word for soul, which means the soulish life, that is, the human life. These two verses indicate that the Lord Jesus has two kinds of lives. As a man the Lord has the psuche life, the human life, and as God He has the zoe life, the divine life. He laid down His soul, His psuche life, His human life, to accomplish redemption for His sheep (10:15, 17-18) that they might share His zoe life, His divine life (10:10), the eternal life (10:28), by which they may be formed into one flock under Himself as the one shepherd. As the good shepherd, He feeds His sheep with the divine life in this way and for this purpose.

To Be Formed into One Flock by Life under One Shepherd

The shepherd, the divine life, and the human life are all for the flock. In verse 16 the Lord said, “And I have other sheep which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one shepherd.” Who are the sheep that are not of this Jewish fold? They are the Gentiles. And what is this one flock? The one flock signifies the one church, the one Body of Christ (Eph. 2:14-16; 4:6), brought forth by life, which the Lord imparted into His members through His death (John 10:10-18). Before, the fold was Judaism; now, the flock is the church. The sheepfold was, and still is, Judaism, but the flock is the church. The flock is the church which includes two peoples—the believing Jews and Gentiles. The Lord brings both together into one flock and under one shepherd. Now, the one flock and the one shepherd are the one Body and the one Head.

Why are the shepherd, the divine life, and the human life all for the flock? Because the people in the flock are fallen persons in need of redemption. As a man, the shepherd had the human life. He sacrificed His human life in order to accomplish redemption for His flock. In this way His flock was redeemed. Then His flock received His divine life, and by this divine life the sheep live together as the flock. Thus, the flock is formed into one unit, into one entity. This is not accomplished by the human life, but by the divine life.

In the human life we are condemned and divided; in the divine life we are accepted and united. In the divine life we are all one entity, meaning that we are one flock under one shepherd in one life. If we live by our human life and not by the divine life, we will only cause trouble. Furthermore, we would become strangers and stray away from the flock. Whenever you live by your human life, you are no longer a sheep but a stranger. A sheep is a regenerated person with the divine life. We all must live by the divine life and thus become genuine, real, and pure sheep. Then we shall all be in the flock. As long as we live by our human life, we will resemble a wild animal, perhaps a devouring lion or a wild horse. If we do not live by the divine life, there can be no flock. The flock is produced, kept, maintained, and formed by the divine life. How good it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Psa. 133:1). However, dwelling in unity simply means to dwell in the divine life. Praise the Lord that in the divine life we are truly one and love one another. This is not possible in our human, psuche life, but only in the divine, zoe life. We receive this zoe life through the redemption accomplished by our shepherd who laid down His psuche life. He sacrificed His psuche life to accomplish redemption for us all that we might receive Him as our zoe life. Now we are in the zoe life under one shepherd to be one flock. This is not an organization; it is a flocking together in life. It is wonderful. Hallelujah! The flock is not a matter of religion, but of life.

**Practice or Application:**

Fellowship, Interceding, and Mutual Care

In Peter’s first Epistle he says that the church is God’s possession and that God has allotted His possession to the elders (5:2-3). The churches are allotted to the elders as their allotments, their portions, entrusted to them by God for their care. The elders are the “keepers” who look after God’s possession. Although they are the leaders, Peter charges the elders not to lord it over the allotments. The elders should not be the lords to lord it over the churches. Instead, the elders should shepherd the flock of God. The function of the elders in the churches is absolutely necessary, but equal opportunity should be afforded to all the saints to speak in the meetings, to preach the gospel, to feed the new ones, to take care of the young ones, to perfect the saints, etc.

The group meetings are also for us to participate in the fellowship, interceding, and mutual care with the saints. In a group meeting a brother may say, “Saints, I must let you know that Brother So-and-so was in a car accident yesterday.” What this brother reports is a kind of fellowship. Then the saints may inquire about Brother So-and-so’s situation. They will ask about how serious his accident was and about whether he is at home or in the hospital. The brother will have to give more details concerning the situation of this brother. Spontaneously and automatically, the saints will begin to pray for this brother who had the accident. Others may ask concerning his financial situation, inquiring whether or not he has car insurance. Another sister may say that she found out that this brother lost his job last week. This fellowship will bring in the care and shepherding of this particular brother. Some of the saints will spontaneously bear the burden to supply him financially. An older brother in the group may say, “Maybe tonight two or three brothers could go to see this brother.” Then three brothers could volunteer to go and see the brother who had the accident. Their visit will comfort and shepherd this brother.

There should always be the fellowship in a group meeting. This fellowship, as a rule, always brings in the intercession, the prayer for one another. It also brings in the mutual care of the saints. This mutual care can be physical, financial, or spiritual, and it will result in a mutual shepherding. Therefore, the members of this group will not need the elders to do the majority of the shepherding. They will shepherd themselves mutually. If there are one thousand saints meeting together in a certain locality, the elders cannot be expected to shepherd all one thousand of these people. By the group meetings, however, the mutual shepherding of the saints will be thorough. All the members attending a group meeting know one another. Among them there will be a thorough, loving, and mutual shepherding.

Question for Discussion: What is the shepherding? How do we experience the Lord’s shepherding? Share with one another the experience of being shepherded or shepherding others.

Reference: Life-Study of John, Msg. 22