

Rev. Seth D. Bode † Sermon 400, 11-22-2020 † Christ the King

“Lord God, you have appointed me as pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”



EZEKIEL 34

¹⁰ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

¹¹ “For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. ¹² As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. ¹³ I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. ¹⁴ I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁶ I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

²³ I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. ²⁴ I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.



We all need shepherding. Of all creatures, sheep are the most helpless and defenseless. They easily wander away from the flock and are beset on all sides by dangers, especially in the open stretches, on the mountainsides, and in the deep ravines.

We Christians are like sheep. We cannot by our own power and strength remain with the Good Shepherd. We have three master enemies, the devil, the world, and our flesh, who are always seeking to destroy our souls. They are so powerful that, like sheep among wolves and wicked watchers, we stand defenseless. We need a shepherd. Fortunately ...

He Leads Me With A Shepherd's Care

1. He seeks me through thick and thin

The ancient Israelites mourned beside the waters of Babylon as Ezekiel wrote this. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were being thrown into the fiery furnace around this time and Daniel was telling dreams to the earthly king. The people were desolate, and in the eyes of the world, it was the end of Hebrew history.

The Hebrews in exile could not trust their earthly government to protect them and take care of them. They could not buy into earthly shepherds to truly seek after them and help them. As you read verse 10, in fact, God makes it known the shepherds are no longer allowed to tend ***themselves***, and God promises to snatch the sheep out of their mouths. To their earthly shepherds, the Hebrews were mutton. They were veal, raw meat for the taking. Fresh victims for abuse, the Jews could not find a king in this green-blue ball that might care. They had goofed it all up, failed at the “following” part.

Does this sound unlike sinners stuck in sin? It may seem that we are at the end of human history. The world is overturning and the mountains are collapsing. These are End Times, and the consequences wouldn't be like this if we had not sinned. We goofed it all up. We failed at the “following” part.

We need shepherding. Badly. And we need it with a Shepherd who leads with a care.

There are two words for “seek” in our text, and they are both repeated. We might say “seek” and “search.” Who could be this Shepherd who seeks and searches?

Through what obstacle will this Shepherd seek and search to have His sheep? Will He seek and search through thorns and thistles, brambles and bushes? Will He search and seek through gloomy clouds and shrouded darkness? Will He search and seek through human flesh and pointed nails? Will He seek and search through hateful sneers, mocking men, and angry enemies? Will He seek and search through wounds and stripes and scattered friends and traitors? Will He seek and search through life and death to be my Shepherd King?

A resounding YES.

For no one has sought us like Jesus Christ. No one has searched for us like the Son of God in the flesh, Christ our King. No one has gone through thick and thin to remove our sin.

To those in exile at the end of Hebrew history, the Father sent His Spirit to speak through His prophet. He is against those cruel shepherds of the exile age and End Time. He snatches His beloved sheep out of the mouths of the shepherds and wolves. He promises a return to grazing country, to green mountainsides, and to rich pastures again.

But He promises that return spiritually, through the Messiah to come, who would seek and search for their souls.

2. He tends me like no other king

By the time Ezekiel wrote this, King David was dead for 400 years. Since the time of David, the Hebrews called their own kings “shepherds.” The men who followed in David’s line, however, did not shepherd the Hebrews in the paths of God. So God made a promise: the Lord God Himself, the King of kings, would shepherd His people.

You and I may learn the gospel meant for the Hebrews, and we learn how He stepped into their royal lines like stepping into oncoming traffic. He became great David’s greater Son, a return to the greatest King the Hebrews knew.

To the bruised, troubled, and perplexed, the Great King Himself says that He shall gently lead them. The bruised the Great King Himself heals. He will make them whole. The Great King restores their souls. The troubled the Great King Himself quiets. He invites them to come to Him and find rest. To the perplexed, He Himself shows the way.

How will the Great King do this? This King saw His own way into space and time. True God came in the flesh as true man. He taught with royal authority, He healed with healthcare the world never saw, He showed the power to break death and bring to heaven. He did this for the scattered Hebrews. He does this for us, as well. He Himself defends us against all danger. He Himself guards and protects us daily. He Himself watches over us in the day of sickness. He Himself gently leads us who are in trouble.

See that it is He who does this. The Shepherd who is also King repeats the word "I" over and over again. *"I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice. I will shepherd the flock with justice. I the Lord will do it. I the LORD will be their God. I the LORD have spoken."* "I the LORD" makes these promises with authority, because "I the LORD" is the King of kings.

This means so much to you and to me. Every fear is removed from the heart. Every doubt is taken away. This was true wherever the Hebrews were: for the Great King knows how to lead through hills, mountains, plains, ravines, dark valleys under the shadow of death, cruel dungeons of Babylon ... wherever. It is still true wherever you and I are: for the Great King knows how to lead through hospital beds, quarantined rooms at home, the loneliest places, the most fearsome places ... wherever.

Truly the Shepherd cares, or He would only be another king. Truly the good King leads, or He would only be another hired hand. I know that there is a Great Shepherd King who Himself leads me. I know that there is a Rock that is higher than I, a Haven where I can safely sail, a Refuge where I can go for shelter, an Answer when I go to Him in prayer. This blessed assurance makes me hopeful in the day of sickness and in the day of trouble. He is the Shepherd King, who leads day by day and all the way. In the name of the King Himself, Jesus Christ, Amen.