

INI Hymns:

Sermon 26-11

3rd Sun. After Epiphany **Ezekiel 34:11-24**

1/25/26

11 "For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out.

12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. 13 And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. 16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

17 "As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats. 18 Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet? 19 And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

20 "Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. 21 Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, 22 I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. 23 And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In our Sunday Bible Study, we began looking at specific prophecies about our Saviour. This is one of them. Especially the last two verses God says, "I will set up over them one Shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their Shepherd. 24 And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken." The LORD God has spoken it! It will surely happen. 600 years later Jesus came as that Shepherd. "My Servant David" is talking about Jesus, the Son of David. When we think of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, we usually think about the perfect care and guidance that He gives us. But this prophecy looks at how

Jesus, The Good Shepherd first of all

-I- Seeks and Finds the Lost Sheep. Then

-II- He Feeds His Sheep and cares for them.

What an amazing description of God's Great love. Look at the opening verses of our text. God says, "I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. ... and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered... And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land." God emphasizes that He will do that Himself. Aren't you glad that you are so precious to God that He has personally searched for you and found you?

Ezekiel was a prophet of the captivity. He was sitting by the rivers of Babylon weeping with the rest of the captives. God gave His promise that He would personally seek and find them in all the countries where they have been scattered and bring them back to the land of Israel. But this was about so much more than where they lived. First and foremost He had to seek them and rescue them from their unbelief. That was the whole reason they were in the mess they were in, because they had

turned away from God and were worshipping the idols of the heathen nations. That shows us God's loving heart. They rejected many repeated attempts to call them to repentance. They even killed the prophets that God sent to them. God doesn't give up on the lost and straying, but searches for them and rescues them.

We see Jesus doing that throughout His ministry. He says that He "came to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10. In our Gospel lesson Jesus was doing just that as He was preaching to tax collectors and prostitutes and other sinners. When the Pharisees and Scribes complained about that, Jesus told three parables relating the joy in heaven when one of these lost sinners is found and comes to repentance.

Still today God is seeking out His lost sheep. In fact you and I are here today because He sought and found you. And He continues to seek the lost wherever His word is proclaimed. Notice in our Gospel reading that the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to HEAR Jesus. He proclaimed a message of forgiveness and reconciliation with God. They were the ones who were anxious to hear that message because they knew they were sinners. The message of forgiveness and hope was very inviting to them. That is why we need to find ways to proclaim His word in wider circles, especially among the lost. That is how God seeks out and rescues His lost sheep today. Just like Jesus, our primary goal is to reach the lost, those that are lost in sin and unbelief.

After Jesus seeks and rescues His sheep He says, "And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel." Jesus continues to **feed and care for His sheep**. Did you notice how often He says that He will feed them "On the mountains of Israel." "I will feed them with good pasture." "they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel." That is what sheep need to truly flourish. The good grazing land and rich pastures of God's word is what we need to flourish in life. Notice when they feed on the rich pastures then they are able to lie down. When God feeds us with His Word and assures us of His love and forgiveness, then we can lie down. We can be at peace without fear or worry. The gospel gives us peace and contentment in life. Instead of the fearful worry of wondering, "Have I done enough?" God sets our hearts at peace by assuring us that Christ has done it all. We have His forgiveness and His love and salvation.

That is why the people of Israel were lost in the first place. The Priests and teachers of the law were not feeding the people with God's word. God said, "Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats." The priests and scribes were also a part of God's flock, but listen to what God says to them. "18 Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet? 19 And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet?" God entrusted the Priests and Scribes with His pure word. That was the "good pasture" and the "clear water." The priests and teachers of the law had God's pure word, but they trampled down the green grass and muddied up the clear water. In other words they didn't let the sheep drink and feed on the pure word of God, but they corrupted God's word with their own thoughts and beliefs and desires.

God also said, "Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, 22 I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep." Verses 21-22. That's what the Priests, Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day were doing. They were not feeding the people with the pure word of God. They weren't comforting them with the promise of God's forgiveness. Instead they were bullying

the weak. Instead of seeking to save lost sinners they were pushing them out and condemning them. They are "the fat and the strong" that God says, "I will destroy. I will feed them in justice."

Oh that the many false teachers today would listen and tremble at His word. They too muddy the waters of God's word and trample the green pastures so that there is nothing good to eat. Some lead the people to believe that they can go ahead and live as they please. The things that God says are sinful and an abomination to the Lord, they say, "Don't worry, God loves you and supports you." Others proclaim a Jesus that shows us how we can make ourselves more pleasing and acceptable to God by improving our life, following God's commands. Some even suggest, "It doesn't matter what you believe in as long as you are sincere in your faith." Talk about muddy waters full of parasites. People today are lost and confused and don't even know what to believe any more.

God says in verse 16, "I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak." There are many injured souls in the world. Injured mentally, emotionally and spiritually. God comes to bind up the injured. He does that with His love. People are injured by the thoughtless and unloving words and actions of others. Sadly, in this world many parents cause a lot of mental and emotional injuries. Worse yet are all those who are injured spiritually by their spiritual leaders teaching them to place their hope in the wrong places. Many people have injured consciences, feeling the burden of guilt. But their shepherds don't provide the healing salve of God's forgiveness. But God sees and knows our injuries and He is able to bind up those wounds. Jesus heals those injuries with His love when He poured out His lifeblood on the cross. He reveals that love to us in His word. We can be a part of God's plan to seek and find the lost and to bind up the injured. Get to know what type of injuries people by getting to know them personally. Then you can point them to Jesus who heals all wounds.

God has set up one shepherd over us, Jesus Christ. He sought and found us when we were lost. He continues to feed us with the lush green pastures and the crystal clear waters of His Word. He truly is our Good Shepherd. With Jesus as our Shepherd, God promises, "I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken." What joy and peace we can have. With Jesus as our Shepherd and the LORD as our God, we also receive strength to proclaim His refreshing word of grace so that our Saviour may seek out His lost Sheep and feed the hungry through us. Our Bible Study series at Orchard Valley "Back to the Bible" will be a good place to start. We look for more opportunities to help people get back to the Bible. We pray that our Saviour may work through us to seek and find the Lost and to feed them with the rich pastures of God's word.

Amen.