

HOME GROUP & DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

“Listening to God” – Similo Sangela – 14.11.2021

Sermon link:



AUDIO SERMON

Scripture

John 10:1-11

Open your mind and heart as you read the passage of Scripture aloud and then again quietly to yourself. Listen for God’s word to you.

Observation

The central plateau of Israel was a stony, rough area which was more suited to sheep than to crops. At the edge of the plateau the ground dropped sharply into the desert. As it was an open space with little grass, the sheep were prone to wander and they had to be watched all the time. The work of the shepherd was



Spend some time in worship.

dangerous with the ever-present risk of wolves, thieves and robbers threatening the sheep. The true shepherd would often put his life on the line for his sheep and some did die in their efforts to protect the flock. The shepherd knew his own sheep by name and they, in turn, recognised his special call for them, responding to no other person. There was a bond between man and animal. Small towns of that time would have a central sheepfold which was used in winter and which was overseen by an appointed doorkeeper. This man would know the shepherds who were entitled to have access to the fold. But in the summer, when the flocks were in the pastures, the sheep would be gathered at night in communal temporary sheepfolds where the shepherd lay down across the doorway to protect his flock. The shepherd was a familiar figure in Jesus’ day.

In the Old Testament God is often referred to as a shepherd (Psalm 23:1; Psalm 79:13; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 23:1-4 etc). So it was natural for Jesus to carry this image of God (and Himself) over into the New Testament and later writers picked it up and carried it forward. (Matthew 18:12; Luke 15:4; Mark 14:27; Hebrews 13:20)

Jesus' dealings with the Pharisees and others prompted Him to contrast His love and care for people with that of those who were religious leaders. Such leaders were often called shepherds but Jesus made it clear that not every shepherd has the good of the flock at heart. Many were thieves and robbers (thieves – *kleptes* – gaining by cunning and stealth; robbers – *lestes* – gaining openly, often using violence). Many had gained the title by corruption and manipulation and their social and political connections for the prestige it gave them. Such people who enter the spiritual fold Jesus is describing for their own personal gain are no better than thieves and robbers, says Jesus.

There is only one way to gain entry to the place where the Good Shepherd cares for His sheep and that is through Jesus Himself as He describes Himself as 'the door'. Jesus' listeners would understand that a person who could 'go in and out' would be secure, at peace and safe. This is Jesus' way and it leads people increasingly closer to God.

Once inside the fold, having entered through the door, the Shepherd will care, protect, feed, guide and tend to them. It is only when people live with Christ in their lives that they experience vibrant life in all its fullness, Such a life is not necessarily long or easy, but it is full of vitality, joy, peace, love, laughter, contentment etc. The Greek word used for abundance indicates a surplus.

The image of the shepherd perfectly depicts the image of God and His care for those who follow Him.

Icebreaker:

When did you last see a flock of sheep? Where were you and how did they make you feel?

Application

- Do you consciously listen for God's voice? Why/why not?
- How do you know God is speaking to you? What struggles do you have in recognising His voice?
- How does God speak – through Scripture, nature, others' voices, internally in your mind/heart or any other way?
- What does it mean to you that God speaks to you personally
- How do you differentiate between the truth and lies, especially in regard to your faith? What about your social media life? What lies are you being confronted with at the moment?
- How do you tell the difference between a hired shepherd and a good shepherd in today's world? What dealings have you had with both?

- What does it mean to you to know that the Good Shepherd knows you – *you* – and calls you by name? How does that help you through the tough days?
- How can the group help you with the struggles you have mentioned during this session?

Prayer

Pray for one another in regard to the issues that have been raised during your discussion time, and in regard to other needs of the group.

Service

This week, question what you hear – is it true or is it false? Ask God for clarity, listen for His reply to you, and discuss these things with those around you, with special awareness of those who are being led astray by the hired hands.

Bibliography

Barclay, William. The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of John, volume 2: Chapters 8-10. The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1981 <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/john-10/>