



DATE: February 6, 2010

TEXT: John 10: 1-21

TITLE: “John XXVII: The Nature of God”

I love putting Jesus in an historical framework. It reminds me that we are not just looking at make believe stories.... we are looking at real historical events. John is taking us through a festival cycle. He begins with the Passover.... most likely in April in the year 29 A.D. *John 6: 4* tells us that Jesus was at the Passover in Jerusalem. In *John 7:2* we are told that Jesus was at the Festival of Booths. This is more than likely in October of 29 A.D. We are now beginning a new chapter... chapter 10 and a new Festival. Jesus is now at the Festival of Hanukkah. Hanukkah always takes place in our December.... still in the year 29 A.D. Chapter 11 begins a new Festival... once again Jesus is on his way to the Passover.. This is in the year 30 A.D. and is when he is crucified.

We now turn our attention to the text itself. Let me begin with a question....Who is God? What is the nature of our God? Is God powerful of weak? The Roman and Greek gods were weak and constantly fighting among themselves. Does God care for his creation? The god of

the Muslims has little compassion for his people. He is harsh and demanding and judgmental.

Buddhism and Hinduism, truthfully, barely have a god... there is just a supreme power. Who is

God? What is His nature? Does God care for his creation or is he aloof and uninterested.

Truthfully, He could be. Truthfully, He could just give up on his creation and start elsewhere... it

is a big universe. He could be vengeful and angry. We deserve it. Look at our world and we

could see why God would be nothing but angry and judgmental. What is the nature of God?

Who is he? I have good news... our Lord Jesus reveals to us the nature of God. Our text this

morning tell us who God is. Allow me to share 5 characteristics of God as revealed by Jesus.

Characteristic # 1 God is personal and loving. *John 10: 3-5 states..*

3The watchman opens the gate for (the shepherd), and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

Gerald Borchert is the author of the primary Commentary I use in my sermon preparation.

He tells the story in his commentary of a trip to Israel he took a few years ago. He went out to

the fields to watch the Bedouins. There was a sheepfold that held four flocks of sheep. He stood

and watched as the Shepherds went to the gate of the sheepfold... and one at a time began singing. The sheep of his flock separated themselves from the rest of the sheep and followed the shepherd out for their daily grazing. This happened 4 times as he watched. The sheep recognized the voice of their shepherd and followed him out.

This is the picture Jesus is painting for us. I love this sentence.. He **“calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”** We have a God who is our shepherd. We have a God who knows us by name. We have a God who call us out to follow him. Our God is not aloof. Our God is not impersonal... our God is loving and caring. He know you name. He is calling each and every one of us to follow Him..... calling by name.

Characteristic # 2 We have a God who brings salvation to His children. *John 10:9a*

“I am the gate: whoever enters through me will be saved.”

In *Matthew 18* Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep.. He says...

12"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? 13And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. 14In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

Philip Keller has written a book entitled *A shepherd looks at the 23rd Psalm* It is a

excellent book. He was a shepherd in Australia for many years. He writes about a “cast sheep”

he states...

A “cast’ sheep is a very pathetic sight. Lying on its back, its feet up in the air, it flays away frantically struggling to stand up, without success. Sometimes it will bleat a little for help, but generally it lies there lashing about in frightened frustration. If the owner does not arrive on the scene in a reasonably short time, the sheep will die. This is why a good shepherd is constantly counting his sheep.

The Good Shepherd saves His sheep. This is a promise. Salvation has arrived. Later on

Jesus is going to say these words recorded in *John 14 Jesus says...*

I am the way the truth and the life. No ones comes to the Father except through me

there is one Shepherd.. There is one gate.. There is one way... salvation is assured to those

who follow Him

Characteristic # 3 God is a God who loves to bless his children. *John 10: 9b-10*

9I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

The sheep of the Lord will “find pasture.” The sheep of the Lord will live “abundantly.”

Our text this morning is, as is so often the case in john, a contrast. We are seeing a

contrast between the Good shepherd and the thief or robber.

I heard this story this week. A tourist was driving down a rural road in Israel. A flock of sheep is blocking the road and a man is behind the sheep, beating and kicking and abusing the sheep as he tries to make the sheep move. The woman gets out of the car and says... "I thought a shepherd was suppose to lead the sheep from the front and the sheep would follow." The man stopped looked at the woman and said... "lady I am not a shepherd... I am a butcher."

Scripture is clear.... every person has a shepherd.... every person has a master... there is no such thing as an independent person. The only question is this.... are you following a shepherd or are you following a butcher?

Jesus desires to give us an abundant life. This is not saying he will give us a live without struggles and pain, but he will give us his presence... his peace... and his love.... Abundant life.

Characteristic # 4 God gives us sacrificial love. *John 10: 11-13*

11"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

Notice again the contrast between the Good shepherd and the hired hand. As many of you know I own a house down in Mt Nebo... my previous church. It is a beautiful home. A four bedroom all brick house with hardwood floors. A nice home. I rent out the house... trying to cover the mortgage.... and the upkeep. I have noticed a truth all landlords discover... people who rent usually do not care for a house the same way as an owner. I am the one who has to replace the hot water heater... work on the furnace....repair the plumbing in the bathroom...put on the new roof... trim the bushes... repair the driveway.... repaint the exterior columns... and this was all last year. (Actually I hired the roof out). I do not have bad tenants... they are O.K., they just do not own and therefore do not love the house.

I have good news.... we are the Lord's. He has taken ownership of us... and he loves us and cares for us... and he has even dies for us. The Good shepherd has given his life for his sheep. Praise be to God!

Finally, characteristic # 5 Our God accepts all who surrender to Him and judges all who do not. Our text says this *John 10: 1,16*

1 "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.... 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

First notice this..... all who receive Jesus as Lord and Savior will be saved. ALL. The Jews thought they had exclusive rights to God. Only they were "God's chosen People." Jesus is clear here.... all who claim the name of Jesus will be His children. Whether Jew or Gentile. Whether rich or poor... whether American or Mexican or Haitian or African or European or Asian.... All are invited.

But also hear this..... thieves are not welcome. Those who try to get in by a back door... or by climbing over the wall... or by their own goodness or by their own intelligence... will not be welcomed. Yes, our God is loving and caring and sacrificial... but he is also the judge and he demands surrender and returned love.

During this sermon I have concentrated our look at the Shepherd. I close by a brief glance at the sheep. *John 10:3 of our text says this....*

The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice....they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a strangers voice.

As we come to the table of the Lord this morning I invite you to, once again, listen to the voice of the Lord. He is saying “come...hear my voice and come.... follow me... I am the Good Shepherd and I love you.... come.”

The Lord knows our name.

AMEN