

Christian Study

Lesson 267

Be Light

Focusing on Church beyond Sunday

I Lay My Life Down and I Take It Up Again

I solemnly declare that the evidence I shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God. Many churches teach that our sins have been taken away by the death of Christ and that is the gospel. In as much as that is true, it is not the whole truth of the gospel. The whole gospel (good news) is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus is how we are saved.

Christians regard the resurrection of Jesus as the central doctrine in Christianity. According to the Apostles the entire Christian faith hinges upon the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus and the hope for a life after death. Resurrection is moving from death to life. For the apostles to make such bold statement in their writings, they must have believed in what Jesus Himself said about the resurrection. Let us take a closer look at what He said:

Matthew 22:31-33 "But about the resurrection of the dead--have you not read what God said to you, **32**'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' ? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."**33** When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching."

John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full."

John 10:11-18 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.**12**The 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.**13**The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.**14** "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—**15** just as

the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the sheep.**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.**17**The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again.**18** No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father"

The Good Shepherd

The reason Jesus mentions these hired hands is to show that he is not like that. He's not a hired hand. He is the good shepherd and the owner of the sheep. Verse **14**: "I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep, and my sheep know me."

The difference is that the hired hand loves his life more than the sheep, but Jesus loves his sheep more than his life. Four times in this passage Jesus says he lays down his life for the sheep. Verse **11**: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Verse **15b**: "I lay down my life for the sheep." Verse **17**: "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life." Verse **18**: "No one has taken [my life] away from me, but I lay it down on my own initiative."

So Jesus is not a hired hand, because the sheep belong to him and because he loves the sheep more than he loves his own life. When he sees the wolves coming, he does not leave the sheep to be destroyed. He fights the wolves and saves the sheep. And in doing it, he lays down his life for the sheep.

What's This Really About?

So what is this really talking about? What does it have to do with us? If we are the sheep that he loves, what are the wolves? What is it that threatens to destroy us? There are at least three things—three destroying wolves—mentioned in the gospel of John. There are three wolves that Jesus laid down his life to save us from.

First there is the wolf of sin: **John 1:29** says of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Sin is a wolf that destroys the world and cuts us off from God. And Jesus came into the world to draw the wolf of sin off the world onto himself, and to die in the place of his sheep. When the good shepherd sacrifices himself for the flock, he becomes like a Lamb and bears the sin of many (**Isaiah 53:6-12**). "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. **7** He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is

silent, so he did not open his mouth. **8** By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.**9** He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.**10** Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. **11** After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.**12** Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

The second and third wolves are death and divine judgment. Death is a great destroyer. It attacks and destroys everyone, great and small, rich and poor, men and women, every race, every creed. And after death comes judgment: "It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment" (**Hebrews 9:27**). Death destroys by ending what we had planned in this life and leading us into the courtroom of God Almighty whose law we have broken and whose glory we have despised (Romans 3:23).

Jesus Lays Down His Life to Destroy Them

Jesus is not a weak shepherd. When those three wolves threaten his sheep, he lays down his life to destroy them and to save us from them. He says in **John 5:24**, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." When Jesus laid down his life for the sheep, he saved us from three destroying wolves, sin and death and judgment. He saw them coming; he went out to meet them; he drew them away from the flock and gave his life to kill them and take away their power so that they could not destroy the flock.

Now, if the story ended here, there would be a great problem. If a flock of sheep lose their shepherd because he laid down his life to save them from a pack of wolves, they are now without a shepherd. And even if no more wolves come, they will sooner or later run out of green pasture and wander away into the desert valleys of death and perish. In the end they will not be saved, and the death of the shepherd will have been in vain. The story doesn't end with a mangled shepherd lying dead among three dead wolves, and sheep scattered thirsting and starving in the desert. Verse 18 tells us why: No one has taken [my life] away from me, but I lay it down on my own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from my Father.

Jesus' Authority and Jesus' Triumph

When Jesus came into the world to save his sheep from sin death and judgment, He came with a commandment from his Father in heaven. The commandment was that he should die for sinners and rise again. And with the commandment came the authority to do it. "I have authority to lay down my life, and I have authority to take it up again." He decided by his own authority when he would give himself into the jaws of sin and death and judgment. And after he had lain among the slain for three days, he alone had the authority to take back his life again.

When he did, it became clear for all who would see that the battle had been won by Jesus: with sin and death and judgment in the grave. He alone had authority as the Son of God to take back his life. And therefore he alone was triumphant. Sin, death and judgment can never again destroy the sheep of Jesus. Not only that; the sheep now have a shepherd. Christianity is not merely being saved from sin and death and judgment; it also means having a living shepherd to guide you and feed you and heal you and protect you and help you love. The words of verse 14 are astonishing, if you've ever dreamed of a deep, deep, deep relationship: "I know my sheep, and my sheep know me, even as the Father knows me and I know the Father." Jesus took his life back again from death so that he might have that kind of personal relationship with all his sheep: "I know them and they know me; and the relationship that we enjoy is like the relationship between God the Son and God the Father." And there is no deeper, nor more satisfying, relationship in the world than the eternal relationship between God the Father and God the Son.

The Shepherd Has a Worldwide Mission to Fulfill

Wait, there is more. He took back his life from sin, death and judgment not only to prove that he, was triumphant, and not only to give himself to his sheep in the deepest personal relationship, but also because he now has a worldwide mission to fulfill with the very authority with which he rose from the dead. Verse 16: "And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd." Jesus did not come into the world to lay down his life only for a few Jewish disciples in Palestine. He has other sheep that are not of that fold. He has sheep in Antioch, and Athens, and Rome, and Cairo, and Sierra Leone, and Nigeria, and Liberia and Kenya, and London, and New York, and Mexico City, and Sao Paulo, and Tokyo, and Manila, and Sydney, and Singapore, and Jakarta, and Beijing, and Calcutta, and Kabul, and Tehran, and Moscow, and Minneapolis. He is not in the grave waiting to see if there might be enough recruits to bring him out. He is the living Shepherd, triumphant over death and with authority over the whole world, to gather his own sheep from all the peoples of the world. After his resurrection he said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-19).

The Shepherd Cannot Be Defeated

Today, the triumphant shepherd moves now through the world with the very authority that raised him from the dead, he cannot be defeated. His sheep will hear his voice and they will become one flock with one shepherd. The Christian movement began with a dozen men filled with the love and the Spirit of the risen Christ, and today 1.3 billion people from every country of the world give some kind of allegiance to Jesus Christ. We are perhaps only a few years away from seeing sheep gathered from every one of the 24,000 people groups in the world. The risen Christ cannot fail. He reigns by virtue of an indestructible life, with absolute authority over every created reality.

Are You One of Christ's Sheep?

Now the utterly crucial question for each of us is this: Are we his sheep? Are you one of Christ's sheep today? That is, do you hear his voice? Do you follow him? Do you trust in his saving work and promise of life? This is what it means to be his sheep. **John 10:27-28**, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of my hand."

I plead with every one of you today: Listen to the voice of Jesus, and follow him when he calls you to trust him. You will not come into judgment but will pass from death into life (John 5:24).

The Apostle Luke

"And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus."

The Apostle Peter

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you."

The Apostle Paul

"Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."

From the Master Jesus to Martha and to all of us today "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" I call this from "God to Man."

Many people have predicted their death. Doctors will know when some of their patients will die, prophets have predicted drought, rain, victory during battle. Jesus not only predicted when He was going to die, He told His disciples how He was going to die and most of all that He was going to rise physically from the grave the third day AND HE DID. Do U believe this?

HAPPY EASTER 2014

It is no secret, what God can do. What He's done for others, He'll do for you.

Our mission is to help people find strength and security on the foundation that can never be shaken, cracked or shattered. This foundation is the remarkable truth of God's unconditional love and His indisputable grace experienced in a relationship with Jesus Christ. The critics of Christianity have launched a full attack to discredit the person and works of Jesus Christ and the reliability of His word. We cannot be silent anymore. Let us as children of light, stand firm in the faith, because He who has taken us this far will never forsake us. You are called Christians, be careful of that name. Let not our Lord Jesus Christ be blasphemed on your account

Believe this, "Jesus did not come to make bad people good, He came to make dead people live."

Keep It Simple

Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

If you have any questions, comments or you know anybody else who will benefit from this study please feel free to give us their email address and they will be added to our mailing list to receive weekly lessons. The email address is santigiemando1@yahoo.com,

Remember: A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle (Ephesians 5:8)

Let's go light another candle!