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## *The Good Shepherd*

· MY SHEEP KNOW MY VOICE ·

**W**ho am I? We are accustomed to people asking us who we are. We tell them who our parents are, who are spouse is or what we do for a living. But none of those tells anyone who you are. We think of ourselves only as earthly beings and we have a hard time seeing ourselves as God sees us. When God looks at us He doesn't see someone's spouse, someone's son or daughter nor does He see you as someone with any specific employment. What does God see when He looks at a believer and what makes a person a child of God?

As believers God sees Jesus when He looks at us. We are sons and daughters of God and Jesus is our brother. God loves us and desires very much to have a relationship with us. A relationship cannot happen without communication. A married couple has to have communication to have a relationship. Friends have to have communication to have a friendship. The same is true of you and God; you cannot have a relationship or friendship without communication. God talks to everyone but not everyone hears Him, they do not have their ears tuned to hear Him, they are not receptive.

Salvation comes when we choose to accept what God has done for us. He sent His son to come to earth and show us the way. It is up to us to believe in the mission of the Son and to believe that He is the true son of God, that He lived on earth as a man born of a virgin. We choose to believe that He was crucified, buried and resurrected. We choose to believe that He is seated at the right hand of the Father because His work is completed. He did what was asked of the Father and now we worship and adore Him for what He has done for us. We believe all of this in our hearts and we confess it with our mouth. We are not ashamed of the Good News that He delivered to us. The day will come when He returns to the earth again to gather all those who have chosen to believe and take them to a home He has prepared for those who believe, in heaven.

We are all born into a fallen world with a fallen nature. God's son Jesus came to earth to redeem anyone who would choose to follow Him, as a human we all have the right and the ability to make that choice. Some of us will choose to follow, others won't. Jesus came to earth leaving a home far beyond our imagination. He is the very Son of God who lived in heaven with the Father before coming to earth. I imagine Jesus in heaven where He was praised and loved by a Father who absolutely adored His Son. God also loved and adored the human beings He had created on earth and decided to send His Son to redeem us so that we could have fellowship with the Father who created us. Meanwhile on earth there was Satan who had control of the earth after he had been thrown out of heaven and he was and is determined to keep as many as he can from accepting the redemption that is being offered. He works overtime to keep us roaming around without

knowing we have a Father who loves us and wants us to have an abundant life. Satan on the other hand is out to destroy our lives.

John 10:10 (NIV) *<sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

The Father wants to have communication with the humans He created. When He created man He told him to take dominion over the earth and all that was in it. God wants to talk to us and He wants us to talk to Him. He is there at all times to help us make decisions and right choices. Satan on the other hand doesn't want us to know what God is offering to us and he doesn't want us to know that we can have a very real relationship with God through Jesus.

In the Old Testament God gave us a long list of laws to abide by, laws that were impossible to keep. The law was given to help us see that we on our own can never live as holy as we should. We all have missed the target holiness. The New Testament was the new way, a better way through the Son of God.

Ephesians 3:23-25 *<sup>23</sup>Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. <sup>24</sup>So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup>Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.*

Galatians 2:20-21 *<sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. <sup>21</sup>I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"*

Christ came to earth for us, for our salvation and He wants a relationship with us. Think about what it would be like if you went to some faraway place to help people in need, you left your

home where you had every convenience and family who loved you. In this far away place people would not want to talk to you, to give you a chance to help them. You would give anything to help them have a better life and you knew what needed to be done to help them but they refused to communicate with you. We are in no way Jesus but this might help us to understand that for us to receive what Jesus has made available we need communication. He wants to talk to us and tell us things.

John 10:27 (NIV) *27My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*

Sheep are interesting animals. Throughout the Bible believers are referred to as sheep and the Lord is referred to as the shepherd. Sheep follow a shepherd and trust that the shepherd will lead them to safety, water and shade as needed. They do not question where they are being led but happily follow the shepherd. It is a sheep's natural tendency to follow; they will follow another sheep even when it leads to their death. As believers we should be following Jesus as easily as a sheep follows its leader with complete trust. We should trust that God knows what He is doing, He wants only the best for us and we can safely follow Him wherever He leads us.

Many times God will only lead us to the next step but until we take that step we will not know what is next. God wants our complete trust. We have an enemy that wants to destroy us likewise sheep have many natural enemies like coyotes, mountain lions, wolves and domestic dogs. Sheep are a timid and defenseless animal and they totally rely on the shepherd for their safety. We are to be like sheep and we are to follow the Good Shepherd totally relying on Him to meet our needs.

A shepherd's calm reassuring voice calms the sheep when they became restless or afraid. Jesus does the same for us. A

good shepherd cares greatly for his sheep and at the end of a day of roaming and grazing he will count all of his sheep making sure he hasn't lost any. If any are missing he will go in search of them. Each morning the shepherd will lead his sheep out for grazing in a good pasture and as the day gets hot he will lead them to cool areas where they will have access to water. A good shepherd is dependable, diligent and brave. He will even risk his life for his sheep. Our God is the same and gave His life for us. All we now have to do is to follow His voice, a voice we need to become familiar with. We need to build that relationship and that takes communication. Spend time with God reading His Word; praise Him with songs of praise or your own words. Talk to Him like you would a friend because that is what He wants to be, your friend.

If we know the voice of the Father and have a relationship with Him we will know when the voice we are hearing is not Him just like sheep know the voice of their shepherd. Two or three flocks of sheep can be herded together and will easily separate themselves from each other when they hear the voice of their shepherd. I love this picture! We should be just like this. We should have complete trust in our Father, our Shepherd and easily follow His voice when we hear it. If you are in doubt as to whether you are hearing from God or not, there are several things you can do to verify that you are hearing from Him. God's direction to you will never go against His Word, does what you hear line up with the Bible? Does the answer bring you peace, complete peace? If not, do not depend on the word you received being from God. God's word brings peace not turmoil.

Now that we know a bit about hearing from God we also need to understand how God loves us and all He did for us. I

am sure none of us completely understands this and I doubt that we will ever get it clearly before we get to heaven but it is my desire to understand this as clearly as I am able to in this life. I think if we really understood the love of the Father for us our lives would be completely different, we would think differently and act differently. I believe that God wants to walk and talk to us, to have clear lines of communication with us so that we can understand His love but we have trouble comprehending it all.

If we have accepted Jesus as Lord of our lives then God does not see the filthiness of our human existence. When He looks at us He sees what Jesus has done for us and He sees us as His dearly loved children. This realization alone should bring about a new way of thinking. If we are believers then we should see ourselves the way God sees us, not condemned but redeemed! We are redeemed and are in right standing with God because of Jesus. We do not need to be afraid of God. God's wrath will not be against His followers. God is love, the very essence of love. When we get our minds renewed to this truth the rest of the journey to renewing our minds becomes easier. We will think differently because we see ourselves differently.

I love the song that states, "I am forgiven at the foot of the cross, I've been accepted by the blood of the lamb, my every stain is washed away I've been for forgiven." To be forgiven, what a load that takes off of us. We do not have to carry guilt with us. Jesus has taken it all upon Himself and we walk in newness of life because of His sacrifice.

Let's start the process of renewing our minds by renewing how we see God and taking in all the love He has for us. Let us see that we are valued by God and He only wants what is best

for us. He will never lead us to the wrong place and never leave our side. He is with us at all times and He hears every prayer you pray whether you feel that your prayer reached Him or not. He is talking to us but we can miss His voice by not knowing it is Him speaking.

If we can get these things clear in our heads and let them sink into our hearts our minds will follow and be renewed, but first we have to believe.