



Wonderful

Things

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Sp Adobe Spark

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FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN

Beloved,

For the past few months, we have been living through an experience akin to exile. Like the Israelites during various points of their history, we have been separated. We have been separated from each other and the joys of worship and fellowship in one another's midst. We have been separated from friends, neighbors, and family and we have had to go through meaningful moments without the aid of their presence and comfort. This time akin to exile has been and continues to be difficult. Each day seems to bring along with it more trials that tempt us and, seemingly, tilt us towards despair. Each of us wrestle with a collection of worries that day by day feel more urgent and more pressing. God has given us His word to comfort, encourage, and inform us. I want to take this space to encourage you.

I. God is still God

No circumstance that we will encounter catches God by surprise. God is eternal. Nothing can happen in time that He does not already know everything about. God often uses difficult circumstances to remind us that he is Sovereign. In the 38th Chapter of the Book of Job, God responds to Job by telling him that he is Sovereign. God knows what Job doesn't know. Our response to a Sovereign God must be a response of knowledge and faith. We must know that God is in control and have faith that His will is not to destroy us or abandon us, but to develop us and strengthen us that our lives might reflect Him. In all circumstances, God is in control.

II. God will preserve His Church

During my time serving as your Pastor, I have developed a deep appreciation for the love and affection that so many of you have for our church. I am consistently encouraged by your commitment to and engagement with our church. Your love for the church is one of the many things that make serving as your Pastor such a joy. While I trust that your commitment, engagement, support and love for the church will continue to abound. I understand how our current circumstance could produce some anxiety about the future. The answer to those anxieties can be found in Matthew 16:18 Jesus states, "Upon this rock, I will build MY Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". We must be faithful in our obligations as members of His Church and trust that the church belongs to the Lord. He will sustain the church. He promises to preserve the church. He is able to preserve the church.

The history of our church is a testimony to God's keeping power. God still has keeping power. As I close, I reflect on Paul's sentiment in 1 Thessalonians 5, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you".

Yours in love and service,



Pastor Woodall

Matthew 18:12-14

What Do You Think About the Shepherd

“What do you think?” It is an interesting question coming from Christ who is fully human and fully divine. Upon asking this question, he knows every thought and every intimation of our hearts. Yet, Jesus asked the disciples, “What do you think”? Not because he doesn’t know the answer, but highlight the reality that the disciples should have some pre-existing point of view about the shepherd. Jesus puts forward a parable to them with their own experiences and cultural context functioning as a narrative backdrop. Shepherding was not uncommon at the time of our text. Many, if not most of the disciples, had come from communities characterized by their agrarian subsistence. Many of the disciples were likely personally familiar with shepherds.

Regardless whether or not you and I have grown up in an agrarian context like the disciples, there is one shepherd we should all know something about. We should know about the Good Shepherd. He is a man called Jesus. We should know about this shepherd because whether we know it or not, we are all his people and the sheep of his pasture. We should know about this shepherd because life is a tedious journey and we need him to walk with us. Here in this text, Jesus informs our understanding by taking us through the shepherd’s daily occupation.

I. The Shepherd Counts the Sheep v. 12a

“...If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray”

Now this shepherd has what historians and scholars would consider a flock of considerable size. It is important that we absorb a meaningful detail here about the flock; not every sheep in the flock looked alike. There were likely some spotted sheep in the flock alongside striped sheep. There were likely black sheep alongside white sheep in the flock, but they were all in the flock. There is something here for the church and for the Christian. **The goal of our Father’s business is not to make each other more like one another, but for all of us to become more like the Lord.** We must accept that there is going to be some sheep in the flock who aren’t exactly like you. They may worship differently; they may pray differently, but what is centrally important is that we are faithful following the same shepherd. We know that because **the shepherd counts the sheep and every sheep counts.**

Jesus puts this case study to the disciples that is common in the life of the shepherd. There are a few items we must observe here. One is that Jesus does not say which sheep is missing. He simply indicates that one of them is missing. All sheep have the tendency to get lost. Secondly, we should observe that Jesus says this one sheep has “gone astray”. This phrase and his use of the verb “gone” signifies the sheep’s complicity in its lost state. We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Going astray doesn’t just happen by accident. Going astray is a choice that we make. Jesus (here) shapes our theology and our understanding of God’s view of sin. We ought not give innocent names to hideous sins. Jesus does not say the sheep has

- committed a misdeed.
- made a moral misstep.
- had a lapse in judgment.

He says the sheep has gone astray. It is important for us to understand that the sheep is complicit for its lostness. The sheep is lost simply because it did not follow the shepherd. If only the sheep had listened to the voice of the shepherd, it would not be lost. We must be honest with ourselves. We've been lost and it's not the shepherd's fault. The sheep has gone astray. We have to reckon with this matter of lostness. It is easy to get lost and the text before us will demonstrate the dangers of getting lost. Yet, even though the sheep is responsible for its lost condition, there is still something redemptive at work in the life of the sheep. Even though it is lost, it is still property of the shepherd. Though the sheep is lost, it has not lost its value to the shepherd. Again, we see this principle, **the shepherd counts the sheep and every shepherd counts.**

II. **The Shepherd Keeps the Sheep**

"...Does he not leave the ninety-nine on the Mountain

We see that the shepherd counts the sheep because he notices when one is missing. As our text unfolds, we see that the shepherd has a dual responsibility. The shepherd is responsible for the sheep that are present in the fold and to the one that is lost. Hear the words of Jesus say: "Does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountain"? We must pause for a moment and consider this question. How do we reconcile Jesus' words that the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine with the immovable promise God makes in scripture that, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"?

Though this question must be asked, this question has already been answered. Our great shepherd is omnipresent. Our shepherd is able to be with the sheep that are in the fold on the mountain and seeking the sheep that has gone astray. He provides for the sheep that are on the mountain. Look at their placement; they are in the place where only the shepherd can reach them. The Christian is able to find great comfort when we realize that we are where God has placed us. When David who wrote about the Lord as a shepherd in Psalms 23 said, "I will fear no evil because thou art with me". The Christian doesn't take comfort in the place, but the Christian takes comfort in the God that does the placing. The Christian finds comfort in knowing that He is with us.

In this parable, these sheep are on the mountain where the shepherd has placed them. They are with a shepherd that has placed them and who understands their nature. Sheep are skittish by nature. They are easily unnerved, so sometimes the shepherd would take extra precautions to ease the mind of the sheep. Fred H. Wight writes in his thesis, "Manners and Customs of Bible Lands" that shepherds in Palestine, after gathering the sheep together in the evening, would sometimes build temporary fences of bushes and bowers in the evening to keep the fold together". This is what the old church was talking about when they said, "Jesus be a fence all around me every day". The shepherd makes provision for the sheep that are in the fold. **He keeps the sheep.**

III. **The Shepherd Cares about the Sheep v. 12c**

"...and go in search of the mountains in search of the one that went astray"

This shepherd leaves where he is and goes to find the lost sheep. The parable gets Christological now. Here the shepherd, in this parable, is doing what Jesus did in reality. We can see Jesus wrapping himself in the garment of humanity getting on the highway of time and coming down through 42 generations searching for lost sheep. As we look even closer, we find out about the tools that the shepherd uses as he goes seeking lost sheep.

The shepherd has his voice. Jesus says my sheep know my voice and a stranger, they will not follow. There is more here because not only does the shepherd call, but he listens. Not only does the sheep know the voice of the shepherd, the shepherd can distinguish the cry of the sheep. That's why we ought not ever be too proud to tell God all about our challenges and troubles when we are struggling. He can distinguish your voice from my voice and he knows what each of the sheep stand in the need of. The shepherd has the benefit of His voice and his ear to distinguish the voice of the sheep, but the shepherd does not go sheep seeking empty handed.

When the shepherds of the ancient world went seeking lost sheep, they went on the journey with the same implements that they used around the sheep in the fold. David tells us that the shepherd had a rod and a staff. The rod was a short, blunt piece of wood used to protect the sheep from predators, but the staff was a long piece of wood often curved at the end. It was used for reaching down into dry river beds and ravines to rescue straying sheep. These two implements were always in the hand of the mindful shepherd. Sheep that were in the fold needed the rod and the staff just as badly as the sheep who were lost. The rod, this short piece of wood and the staff, this long piece of wood (when properly arranged) allow us to see the Cross. When we see the Cross, we see how badly both those who are lost and those who are in the fold need to be saved.

Lastly, here the shepherd knew the landscape. There was nowhere the sheep could get to that the shepherd couldn't reach. You ought to know that the Lord knows the landscapes of our lives. He knows about our ups and our downs. He knows about the potholes and the unexpected curves along our journey. He knows the landscape. There is nothing we can go through that Christ has not already gone through. He knows the landscape. There is nothing we can feel that Christ has not already felt. He knows the landscape.

We know something now about the sheep's complicity in its lostness. We also know something about the shepherd's ability to find lost sheep and all of the resources he has at his disposal. It strikes us as strange, however, when Jesus utters to us this phrase, "And if he finds it". Imbedded in the words of our Lord and Savior come to the fact that it is possible that the lost sheep may not get found. How can this be?

The "if" that Christ uses here does not demonstrate the inability of the shepherd to save lost sheep, but it underscores the dangers of being lost. There is a chance that the sinner may perish before coming to know the Lord, not because God is unable to save all who are lost, but because the wages of sin is Death. Jesus is simply illustrating that being lost cost. That's why you ought to try to make it to church on Sunday morning because being lost cost. That's why we pray forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors because being lost cost. There is a chance that the shepherd might not find the sheep in time, but we know he cares about the sheep. We see his

love for the sheep not only in his willingness to go searching, but his response when he finds the lost sheep.

IV. The Shepherd Carries the Sheep

v13 “Truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray”.

As the shepherd searches for the lost sheep, he knows what is at stake. He knows that each moment that the sheep is alone in the wilderness, it’s in danger. He knows that when he goes out looking for a sheep, he might find a dead sheep or no sheep at all; however, it signifies the possibility of a radical shift in the life of the sheep. In finding the sheep, the possibility of ifs give way to the certainty of when. Brothers and sisters, if we don’t have a dime in our pocket and we have been saved, we ought to be grateful that our “ifs” became a “when”.

In closing here, Jesus says that the shepherd begins to rejoice. The shepherd rejoices because he knows what was at stake. Every now and then, we ought to look back and think about what the songwriter said if it had not been for the Lord on my side, where would I be. The shepherd rejoices about finding the sheep, but then we know that the shepherd repairs the injuries. I’m closing when I tell you that he returns with the sheep on his shoulders.

What Do You Think About the Shepherd?	
I’m glad that the shepherd counts the sheep	That means that I am never counted out.
I’m glad that the shepherd keeps the sheep	I hear the songwriter saying Oh to be kept/to be kept by Jesus / Kept by the power of God.
I’m glad that the shepherd cares about the sheep	When the world seems cold and your friends are few, there is someone who cares for you.
I’m glad the shepherd carries the sheep	He will carry you home to glory. That’s good for me.

Wonderful Fun
Last Issue's Resolution

*The following is the answer key to the word puzzle from the last edition of our newsletter.

This is a **most remarkable** puzzle. It was found by a gentleman in an airplane seat pocket on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, **keeping** him occupied for hours. He enjoyed it so much, he passed it on to some friends...One friend from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his **John** boat. Another friend studied it while playing his **banjo**. **Elaine** Taylor, a columnist friend, was so intrigued by it she mentioned it in her weekly newspaper column. Another friend **judges** the **job** of solving this puzzle so involving, **she brews** a cup of tea to help her nerves. **There** will be some names that are really easy to spot. That's a **fact**. **Some** people, however, will soon find themselves in a **jam**, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. **Truthfully**, **from answers** we get, we are forced to admit **it usually** takes a minister or a scholar **to see** some of **them at the worst**. Research has shown that something in our **genes is** responsible for the difficulty we have in seeing the books in this paragraph. During a recent fund raising event, which featured this puzzle, the Alpha Delta **Phi lemonade** booth set a new record. The local paper, The **Chronicle**, surveyed over 200 patrons who reported that this puzzle was one of the most difficult they had ever seen. As **Daniel** Humana **humbly** puts it, "The books are all right here in plain view hidden from sight." **Those able** to find all of them will hear great **lamentations** from those who have to be shown. One **revelation** that may help is that books like **Timothy** and **Samuel** may occur without their **numbers**. Also, keep in mind, that punctuation and spaces in the middle are **normal**. **A chipper** attitude will help you **compete** really well against those who claim to know the answers. Remember, there is no need for a mad **exodus**. There really are 30 books of the Bible **lurking** somewhere in this paragraph waiting to be found. God Bless.

Note: **Osee** appears in the King James Version translation (often listed as KJV) of Romans 9:25 as a variant spelling of Hosea

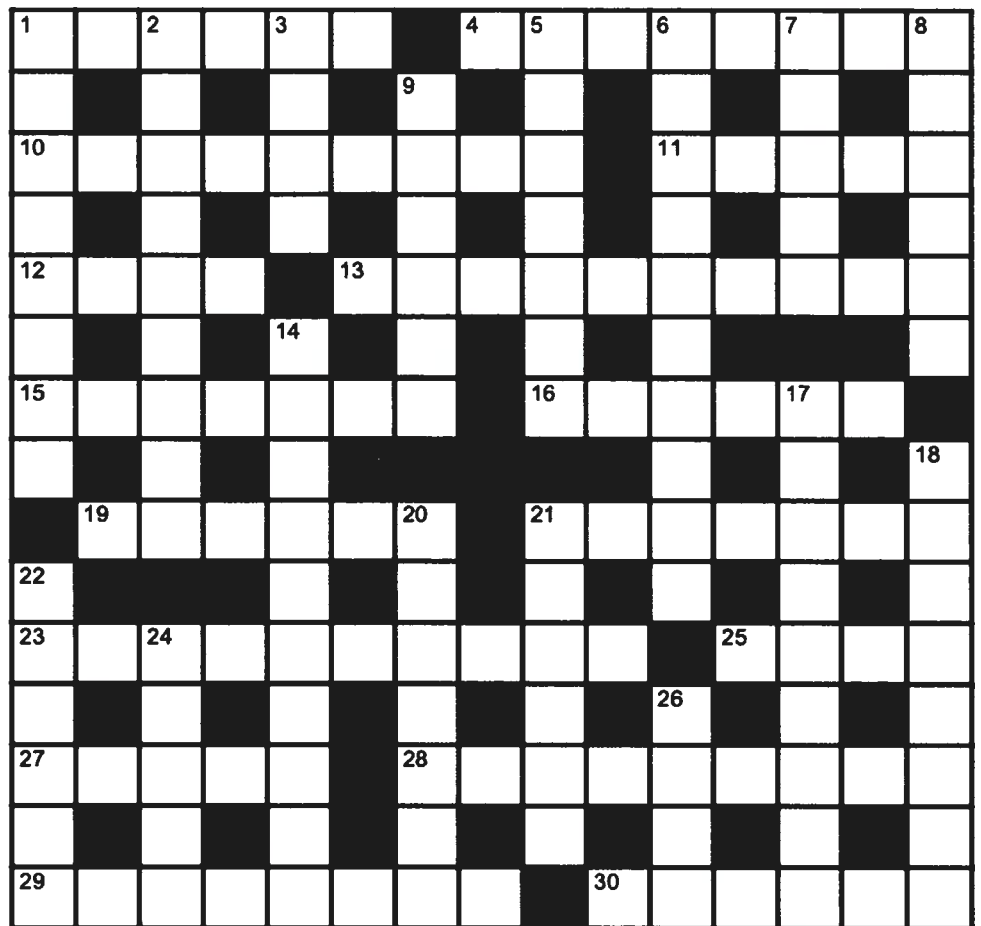
BIBLE CROSSWORD I

Across

- 1 An ancient weight (6)
 4 Seemed (8)
 10 New Testament book (9)
 11 Unit of length (5)
 12 '...it is a ____ thing the king requireth' (Dan 2:11) (4)
 13 Contemplation (10)
 15 Abigail supplied David with one hundred clusters of these (7)
 16 A son of King David (6)
 19 Concurred (6)
 21 Light sources (7)
 23 Propitiations (10)
 25 A false god (4)
 27 Gather (5)
 28 Abimelech was hit by this (9)
 29 Instructors (8)
 30 Hastily (6)

Down

- 1 Skilled animal workers (8)
 2 Inspiring (9)
 3 Compass point (4)
 5 Intense emotion (7)



by Philologus

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- 6 The words of Jeremiah said not to listen to these (10)
 7 Jewish leader (5)
 8 'He is proud, knowing nothing, but _____ about questions and strifes of words...' (1 Tim 6:4) (6)
 9 Bread makers (6)
 14 In this year of King Nebuchadrezzar's reign, Nebuzaradan arrived in Jerusalem (10)
 17 Ancient city of Og, King of Bashan (9)
 18 Stringed instrument (8)
 20 Joseph, perhaps? (7)
 21 Tiny amount (6)
 22 Jesus did this with authority (6)
 24 Last letter of the Greek alphabet (5)
 26 Province of the Roman Empire (4)

Old Testament Bible Trivia



1. What did God create on the first day of Creation?
2. What sign did God give to Noah to assure him that there would never again be a flood that will destroy all life?
3. What was the name of Abraham and Sarah's son?
4. Which son of Jacob's was sold into slavery?

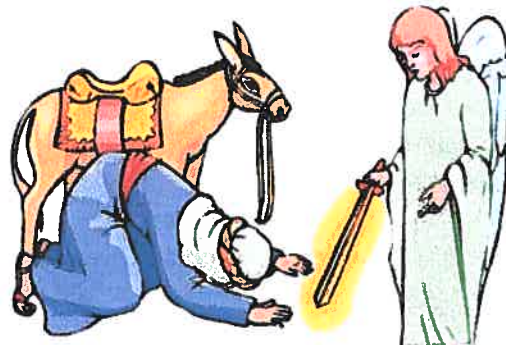
5. Who dreamed about of angels going up and down a ladder that reached from earth to heaven?

6. What kind of birds did God provide for the Israelites to eat every evening while they were in the wilderness?

7. What is the first of the Ten Commandments?

8. When the 12 scouts explored Canaan, who were the only two that believed the Israelites could conquer the land?

9. Whose donkey talked to him?



10. What city was captured when Joshua and the Israelites marched, played horns and shouted?

11. What man asked God to show him a sign with wet and dry fleece?

12. After the death of her husband, what woman chose to live with her mother-in-law in a foreign land?

13. While David was still a young shepherd, who anointed David as king?

14. What prophet was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind?
15. What king began ruling in Judah when he was just eight years old?
16. What woman saved her people by exposing the man who was trying to kill them?

17. Name the king's cup bearer who returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the Temple.

18. Tell what chapter begins this way:
"The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul..." (NIV)



19. Who correctly read and interpreted some mysterious handwriting on the wall at a king's feast?

20. This verse from Isaiah is a prophecy about whom?
"...the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5b, NIV)

OUR WONDERFUL COMMUNITY

This year, we were able to be a blessing to the students and families in our community by partnering with Kings Memorial Methodist Church, Westside Missionary Baptist Church, and New Eden Church to host the second year of the Back to School Bible Conference. The conference was hosted virtually this year and each of the aforementioned churches partnered to donate school supplies to four schools in our city. The following is the letter that accompanied the school supply donations:



Hello,

We realize that this school year is going to be challenging and that each day will bring unique circumstances and challenges for your school and its entire community. We want you to know that we are here for you and with you. The Decatur fellowship of Historic Black Churches is a collection of predominately African American Churches across multiple denominations who collaborate to accomplish outreach and evangelistic efforts designed to rebuild the fabric between our churches, rebuild our communities, and lead people to Salvation in Jesus Christ.

Considering that rebuilding our communities is a central goal that each of our churches share the education of our children, safety of their learning environment and resourcing of their teacher's faculty and staff is important to us. This year, our churches partnered with Pastor Joel McCarty and New Eden Church in Decatur that produced and presented a virtual Back to School Bible Conference designed to instruct, equip, and encourage students and parents as the school semester began. In conjunction with our virtual Back to School Bible Conference, several churches contributed monetarily towards the school supplies and protective equipment that we are donating to your school.

Enclosed you will find packages of notebook paper, pencils, face masks, a non-touch thermometer, hand sanitizer, composition notebooks, index cards, and other items that can be useful to your students, faculty, and staff. We hope that the donation of these items will equip your response to some of the challenges that you will be facing this year. We are standing with you and praying for you.

THE DECATUR FELLOWSHIP OF HISTORIC BLACK CHURCHES	
Kings Memorial United Methodist	Rev. Roderick Stallworth, Senior Pastor
Westside Missionary Baptist	Rev. Dr. Sylvester Truss, Senior Pastor
Wayman Chapel AME	Rev. Vicki Mayberry, Senior Pastor
Garner Memorial CME	Rev. Christy Gill, Senior Pastor
Macedonia CPA	Rev. Dr. Lynn Herring, Senior Pastor
Shiloh Missionary Baptist	Rev. Dr. Edward Owens, Senior Pastor
First Missionary Baptist	Rev. Daylan Woodall, Senior Pastor



