

Rev. Derek Fairman

4th Sunday of Easter

Today is known as Good Shepherd Sunday. The Lord Jesus paints this picture of Himself using words and images familiar to the people of His time. We too can understand what the Lord is trying to teach us. We can appreciate the way that the Lord Jesus looks after us, and recognize that the Lord is kind and full of compassion. He is the true Shepherd who is concerned ^{2 For} us.

In the Gospel, the Lord Jesus teaches about false shepherds, whom the Lord calls strangers. Now, an interesting note is that the Pharisees did not understand what the Lord Jesus was trying to tell them. More than likely He was speaking in part about them. No doubt they understood the basic point that the Lord Jesus was making, but did they understand that His message could be addressed to them? Perhaps they felt that the strangers that the Lord Jesus was referring to could have been false messiahs or maybe some other figure from the Old Testament. Did it occur to them that maybe they were the strangers?

Again, it is unlikely that they lacked the intellectual ability to understand the figure of speech. However, because of the hardness of their hearts, their spiritual ears were not perceptive to the point that the Lord Jesus was making. They could hear with their physical ears but their spiritual ears did not hear. His message did not reach their hearts. We too can misunderstand, not because we miss the point with our minds, but because we think that the point is about someone else. The message that the Gospel gives to us might not reach our hearts. We might take the invitation to turn back to God very lightly or not at all.

Another interesting part of this figure of speech the Lord Jesus uses of the Good Shepherd is this idea that the sheep recognize the voice of the shepherd and will not follow the voice of a stranger. In His own time, the Lord Jesus was likely explaining why so many people were coming to Him to learn, and not to the false teachings and political movements prevalent at that time. However, we have something to learn as well.

Heresies have plagued the Church throughout the centuries. These false teachings persist not because they conform to the voice of the Lord Jesus, but because they teach people what they want to hear, instead of the truth. While the Lord's teaching can be challenging and difficult to live, heresies are false teachings but they also have a practical component, which makes them easier to live. This idea should not be entirely foreign to us: the truth can be difficult; what we want to hear, though false, is nevertheless more convenient. Yet even though there can be a

