

I MYSELF WILL BE THE SHEPHERD OF MY SHEEP



In Ezekiel 34 we observe a strange transfer of power from the official shepherds of Israel back to the Lord himself.

The Problem

The word of the Lord came to me: “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?

You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep.

***The weak you have not strengthened,
the sick you have not healed,
the injured you have not bound up,
the strayed you have not brought back,
the lost you have not sought,
and with force and harshness you have ruled them.***

So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.

Ezekiel 34:1-6

The "official" shepherds have messed up, big time

....and the sheep have suffered.



Judgment

“Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live, declares the Lord God, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

Ezekiel 34:7-10

They are firedthe sheep are rescued from their greedy mouths.



The Kingdom

For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

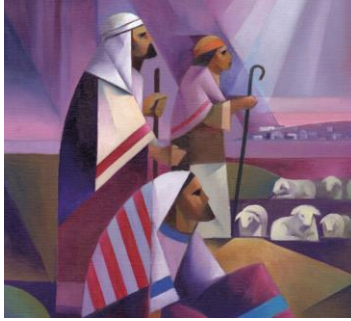
Ezekiel 34:11-16

The Lord himself becomes the Shepherd.

But how does he do it all?

With under-shepherds

Through the Messiah, Jesus, who has now called us to be "unofficial" shepherds under his direction. Jesus is the Shepherd, embodying his Father's will, and working through those who receive his mind.



His mind

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Mark 10: 42-45

No one can be effective as an under-shepherd of the Lord Jesus until this lesson is learned. James and John still hadn't "got it" after all their time with Jesus. Many of us still don't "get it."

1. The "lust for position" mentality.
2. The "executive board" mentality.
3. The "celebrity" mentality.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5-11

**The heart of Jesus is love.
The mind of Jesus is servanthood.
We need both.**

We think of ourselves as servants,

But is it Servants (capital "S")?

Or servants (small "s")?

Pleasing Him

As Jesus' first priority was to please his Father, our first priority is to please him.

"Simon, son of John, do you love me?.....Feed my sheep."



In obedience to him,

Under his direction,

Using his methods, not our own,

We feed the sheep with such a clear word from him,

---that they become his disciples.

---that they are constantly built up and strengthened as his disciples.

(as opposed to groupies gathered around our own "dynamic personalities")

Daily cultivating the mind of Christ

1. Prayer as the foundation of our ministry.

Daily giving thanks and praise to God.

Daily listening through immersion in scripture as a source of communion.

Daily intercession ... Starting with our own family and extending to the entire "flock" and beyond.



2. Faithful under God in dealing with our own households.

Our spouse. Our kids. Our aging parents etc.

3. Staying in personal touch with the "sheep."

Visits.

Phone calls.

Emails.

Texts.

Special emphasis on the "invisible" ones whom nobody sees.

If our prayer life is healthy we will never be at a loss as to who to reach out to.

4. Striving for Peace and Holiness.

By the Spirit's power, making Hebrews 12:14 a daily reality:

"Strive for peace with all men and for holiness without which no one will see the Lord."

Including sexual purity as expressed by our Lord in Matthew 5:29:

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell."

5. Faithful to God in the unrighteous mammon.

"If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches." (Luke 16:11)

No under-shepherd is safe with the Spirit's authority who is....

Undisciplined
Careless
Anxious
Stingy.....with money.

"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

How can we expect the ones we serve to "live and breathe" Jesus, unless they see in us at least a hint of what that means?



Prayer: Oh Lord, Loving, Perfect Shepherd...how thankful we are that you, yourself have sought us, that you, yourself feed us and bring us to good pasture...That you, yourself bind up our wounds and strengthen us. How wonderful you are. Lord, help us to honor you by being kind, loving, attentive under-shepherds. Help us to feed your sheep...out of our love for you, out of a need to please you. Oh Lord, may we never take advantage of them, or rule them harshly, or forget them, or even try to feed ourselves off of them. And convict and stop those who do. Instead, we come to you for help in being good shepherds.... daily. Daily we need your help in shepherding our families, our friends, the lonely, the scattered, the overlooked. Daily we need your help to conquer our greed. Daily we need your help to be conscientious workers. Daily we need your help to conquer divisive spirits within us. Daily we need your help to strive for peace and holiness and purity. And yes, Lord help us to live and breathe you... so we may be the good shepherds you call us to be. Amen.

Maranatha Mirror

Message: Richard E. Bieber 2006

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Maranatha Mirror Messages

mmirror.net

maranathamirror18@gmail.com



THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN