

5/11/11

THE SCRIPTURE READINGS

THE EPISTLE LESSON 1 Peter 2:19-25

(God continues to bring us back to our Shepherd and the Overseer of our souls.)

19 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. 20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. **21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."** 23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. **24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.** 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

THE GOSPEL LESSON John 10:1-11

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(Jesus shares the truth about Himself, "I am the Good Shepherd.")

1 "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. 3 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

6 Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them. 7 Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. 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.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

THE SERMON

"Returning to the Shepherd"

1 Peter 2

INTRO - There are times when life changes so that people sometimes forget what was common or even important in a previous time. How many of you remember phones before there were dials? As a child I picked up the phone and the operator would ask, "Number please." The operators were almost always women. I would tell them the number I wanted to call and they would put me through. That whole experience is gone now for the most part. We can even forget it, even though it was part of every

day life.

I. It seems to me that as our culture has changed, as America and Europe have turned away from the Christian faith, from the Scriptures, from the God they once followed, we have forgotten some of the truths of life.

A. One of those truths, very simply, is that God calls us to live a Holy life. (Write that down)

1. Our reading from Peter says in verse 24, **24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.** God calls us to die to sin and live for righteousness. That is a call to live a holy life.

2. Perhaps verses 11 and 12 of this chapter say it even better. **11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.** We are to abstain from sinful desires and live good lives.

B. Such a life, a holy life, a 'set apart life (and that is what 'Holy' means) has a purpose.

1. It becomes a witness to others of God.

a. You see what verse 12 says, that **the pagans . . . may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.**

b. Our lives are to be a witness because they are different, they are holy, they are lives of faith and love.

2. And, simply this helps us to live as children of our father. You'll learn more about that next week as you look at verses 2-10 of this chapter.

II. Have you ever had a habit you knew was unhealthy and you tried to break it? Perhaps you smoked, over ate, drank, flew off the handle in anger. Maybe you still do that. God may call us to living a holy life, but it is difficult. (Write that down)

A. For one thing, living different from others means we are targets because we are different. 1. That is why Peter talks in today's lesson about suffering for doing good. Living a holy life has a cost.

2. That is why Peter says in verse 12 that the pagans, the unbelievers, will accuse us of doing wrong.

B. But, there is another reason that living a holy life is difficult.

1. Verse 25 says, **25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

2. There is a natural inclination to live unholy lives, lives that pursue sinful desires. 3. If you want to know what these are, look at Galatians 5:19-21. It tells us the desires of the sinful nature, or flesh. **19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that**

those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. Not just sex. Rage, hatred, idolatry, drunkenness. Our sinful nature leads us away from holy lives, and to die to sin and live for righteousness is a constant struggle.

III. In Alaska I have helped more people as a pastor with alcohol struggles than any other place. I have learned that very few people can fight this on their own. For many the best help is an AA group, people who will help a person through the struggle.

A. Peter not only says that God's people are returning to God, thus seeking to live a holy life, he tells us where we get the help to live that way.

1. **25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

2. Remember, the Lord is my shepherd. Think about what a shepherd does. He leads, protects, and feeds.

3. Our Gospel lesson for tonight tells us that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He does even more than a regular shepherd. He is not just a hired hand, he owns the sheep. He loves the sheep. He laid down His life for the sheep. Jesus is the Shepherd who saves us.

B. But, go back to verse 25. **25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

1. Do you know what another name for a shepherd is in many verses in Scripture? That is a title we translate as 'Pastor.'

2. Do you know what another name for an Overseer is in many Scripture verses? An overseer is also translated as a 'bishop' or 'pastor.'

C. Jesus is our real help in dying to sin, and living for righteousness, or our real help in turning from straying, and returning to the Shepherd and overseer of our souls. (Write this down)

1. Jesus calls from experience. According to verses 21-22, **21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."** Jesus has been through the trials of this life, and where we failed, he succeeded, and we have him to help.

2. When we fail, Jesus is our help through forgiveness according to verse **24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.**

3. When I need help, I can go to the Shepherd who is always with me to feed me with his word and sacraments, and guide me, and listen to me and call me.

CONCLUSION - Last night the Palmer baseball team lost to Wasilla with a lot of errors. The Palmer coach told my son Josh he needed to coach Little League so the players would come to high school able to play. Our coach, or help, our guide, our Shepherd and Overseer, is Jesus. How will you continue returning to Him?