

THE RICH AND SATISFYING LIFE



Gary Wilkerson September 28, 2015

In illustrating for us the rich, satisfying life He has for us, Jesus uses the image of a sheep pen. “I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures” (John 10:9). In the pen, His sheep are safe from all enemies. They feed on the “good pastures” of God’s kingdom, enjoying health, peace and freedom.

It is this blessed life that our enemy, the devil, seeks to steal from us. Satan is bent on destroying our precious faith, and Jesus describes him as a thief who sneaks into the pen: “Anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber. . . . The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy” (10:1, 10).

If there is anything Satan wants to steal from us, it is the life God has designed for us. He does this by seeking to remove us from the “good pasture” (i.e., crucial spiritual food) that Jesus has given us. Immature Christians are most susceptible, as long as they remain on a diet of “milk,” never advancing to the meat of God’s Word. They are especially subject to Satan’s wiles in times of crisis. They spiral into a panic, filled with fear and worry, thinking, “I don’t know how to make a decision. Where are You, God?”

I saw this happen a lot when I was on the pastoral staff of Times Square Church in New York City. The teaching that people fed on there was deep and meaty, drawn from the dedicated study of God’s Word. Imagine my shock whenever parishioners told me they had skipped services to go hear a known charlatan whose only focus was money. How could they do that after a steady diet of solid, biblical food?

This brings up a second hindrance every Christian faces: the alluring gospel of a false teacher. Jesus teaches, “[My sheep] won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t know his voice” (10:5). Such “strangers” look, sound and dress like any good pastor. But the gospel they preach gradually leads people away from Christ’s rich, satisfying “good pasture” to the destruction of their souls.

It is absolute necessary that we learn the voice of our Good Shepherd and be able to distinguish it from the voices of false shepherds. How do we do this? By feeding on the meat our Shepherd has so generously provided: “So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ” (Romans 10:17). The only way to detect a counterfeit is to know the original intimately. Only by immersing ourselves in God’s pure Word will we become intimate with the look, sound, scent and taste of that which comes from heaven.

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