

God, The True Shepherd

Ezekiel 34:11-31

MEMORY VERSE

EZEKIEL 34:31

“You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are men, and I am your God,' says the Lord GOD.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A mixture of beads, M & M's (or other small candy), or noodles. Whatever you choose it needs to be a variety of shapes and colors. You will need enough to fill a small cup for each child. You will also need paper towels.

A “Sheep Mask” template for each child (copied on heavy paper), scissors and string or yarn.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Sorting the Sheep

In our lesson today we are going to learn that God will one day separate His true sheep from the goats. He is the true shepherd and knows those who are His own. This game will help to introduce today's lesson. You will need to have a mixture of beads, M & Ms (or other small candy), or noodles. Whatever you choose it needs to be a variety of shapes and colors. You will need enough to fill a small cup for each child.

Before class, have a small cup filled up for each child. Have the children sit in a circle and place a paper towel in front of them. Have them pour out their cup and sort out the contents inside. See who can do it the quickest. Play the game two or three times until the children tire of the game.

LESSON TIME!

What does a true shepherd do with his sheep? If he is a good shepherd he will take very good care of his sheep. He will take them to the best watering places, and the best places to eat where the grass is rich and green. He will make sure they do not wander away, and that no wolves get to his sheep. If there is a sheep that is lost, he will leave the others to go and find the lost one. If there is a sheep that is rebellious he will discipline that sheep with his rod and his staff. In this passage we will see that our God is a true shepherd. We will see that He takes care of His own sheep, gathering them and feeding them on good pasture in the land of Israel. He separates the bad sheep and graciously loves and cares for His sheep. **God is our true shepherd.**

EZEKIEL 34:11-16

'For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.

"As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.

"And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country.

"I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

"I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord GOD.

"I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment."

In verse 11, God Himself says that He will search and seek for His sheep. He will not leave the task to another, but He will seek them Himself. This shows us what a good and true shepherd He really is. This passage actually looks forward to the future restoration of Israel, the deliverance of the sheep out of the places to which they have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day.

Israel was in a place of being judged by God. They were being oppressed and in darkness. God's sheep, Israel, have been driven into strange pastures; they were in bondage to a nation and a king who didn't care about them. But now God is talking about gathering together Israel out of the nations and their restoration to their own land and their feeding upon the mountains and all the dwelling places of the land. **God is our true shepherd.**

This is a beautiful picture of a shepherd searching for his lost sheep, for those who have gone into other pastures, as we see in Matthew 18:11-14. In the reading of this passage we think of the 23rd Psalm where we again see the good and true shepherd. In the Psalm the shepherd makes his flock to lie down in green pastures, as in the passage in Ezekiel 34:14.

It might sound silly to think that a shepherd has to make his sheep lie down, but as Charles Spurgeon said, "One would think even a poor silly sheep would have sense enough to lie down when weary, but alas, with the sheep of Christ's flock it is often otherwise." God will seek after those that were lost, and He will bring back those who were driven away.

It is a sad thing to realize that those who feed upon the flock of God, can be the instruments that drive them away from God. Yet God is aware of all that happens to His sheep, and He does deal with it. As the true shepherd He will heal those that have been maimed, and will strengthen those that were sick; but the self-sufficient and the strong will face a different judgment as He shepherds His flock in righteousness. **God is our true shepherd.**

EZEKIEL 34:17-22

'And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats.

"Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture; and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet?

"And as for My flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they drink what you have fouled with your feet."

'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD to them: "Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep.

"Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad,

"therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

God now directly addresses the sheep assuring them that He will judge between the sheep and the sheep, and the rams and goats. The sheep will be separated from sheep; the fat sheep being placed on one side with the rams and goats, and kept apart from the lean and the sickly sheep. In verses 18 and 19 He is speaking to the separated sheep, rams, and goats.

Not everyone who says they are of the Lord's flock actually is. God knows those who truly trust in Him and those who do not trust Him. The rams and goats not only kept all the good pasture to themselves, they ate the good food and drank the good water, but they would not let the poor of the flock have any part of them. The poor had to eat that which the fat had trodden into dirt, and drink that which the fat had muddied. The fat did not care that they not only robbed the poor to make them poorer, but they were troublesome to the sick and weak sheep. They only cared about themselves.

It breaks God's heart when people only care about themselves. He cares for the poor and weak, and desires for His people to also care for them. Verse 22 brings to a close the description of the manner in which God will deliver His flock, and feed it with righteousness. God's flock will not be preyed upon by their own shepherds or by the rams and goats among themselves anymore. It is the setting up of the messianic kingdom that brings to us this glorious promise **God is our true shepherd.**

EZEKIEL 34:23-31

"I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them; My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd.

"And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

"I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

"I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing.

"Then the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase. They shall be safe in their land; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them.

"And they shall no longer be a prey for the nations, nor shall beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and no one shall make them afraid.

"I will raise up for them a garden of renown, and they shall no longer be consumed with hunger in the land, nor bear the shame of the Gentiles anymore.

"Thus they shall know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and they, the house of Israel, are My people," says the Lord GOD."

"You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are men, and I am your God," says the Lord GOD.

God will cause to stand up or rise up, one single shepherd over His flock. One shepherd in contrast with the many bad shepherds and with the former division of the people into two kingdoms, each with its own king. He will rise up His servant David to feed Israel

and Judah. What a glorious legacy King David has to be called God's servant. David was not a perfect man, but he had a heart that loved God completely.

He is speaking not of raising King David from the dead but the offspring of King David, Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus is the one true shepherd of Israel. Then the people will know that Jehovah is their God, and that David's descendant Jesus is the promised Messiah. God will become their protector, so that no harm will come to them in the future. God will destroy everything that could injure Israel, including all of the wild beasts. This is so that they would be able to sleep securely in the deserts and the forest.

He will also pour out an abundant rain, so that the field and land can yield rich produce. He will make both the people and the land a blessing. The rain brings the blessing in its season, which fertilizes the earth. This will take place when the Lord breaks the yokes laid upon His people. He will bring renown to the Israelites, especially among the heathen who will see from this that Israel is a people blessed by God. They will no longer be distressed by the oppression of the enemy. From this blessing, God's sheep will learn that their God is with them, and Israel is His people.

We see through this passage that the Lord will free His people from the hand of the bad shepherds and He Himself will feed His flock. He will gather them together from their dispersion and bring them back to the land of Israel and feed them there. He will take charge of the sheep in need of help and destroy the fat and strong sheep by which the weak ones are oppressed. God will rise up the Messiah for a shepherd, and under His care He will bestow upon His people the promised covenant blessings in richest measure. **God is our true shepherd.**

When we look at God, the true shepherd, we cannot again help but to think about Psalm 23 and John 10. As Ezekiel 34:31 says so plainly to us, "You are my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men,

and I am your God, says the Lord God.” This makes it perfectly clear about God’s relationship to man as the shepherd of His sheep. In John 10:14 Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of them.”

As the sheep trust the shepherd to care for them so we can trust our Lord to care for us. Jesus said in John 10:14 that He is known of them and we must know our shepherd. How can we trust one we do not know? We learn all about our shepherd in His Word, the Bible. We must read it for it is our spiritual food. He loves us and desires to care for each of us, if we will let Him. **God is our true shepherd.**

Sheep Mask

Have the children make their own sheep mask to remind them that as a Christian we are one of God’s sheep. You will need a sheep mask template for each child (copied on heavy paper), scissors and string. Have the children cut out the sheep mask from the template (optional – copy the sheep onto light gray or light beige card stock). Next, cut out the eyes for holes in the mask for the children to see out of. Poke small holes in each ear (holes are marked on the template and tie a piece of string or yarn onto each side of the mask. Have the children make the strings short enough so the mask can fit their heads snugly. Write the children’s names on the back of the mask.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving that God is such a wonderful shepherd. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.

