

Visions and Revelations

Message 5 Review: The Shepherds in the Field

Three Characteristics of the Shepherds

The Lord unveiled Himself and gave visions to a group of people: the shepherds in the field. They are uneducated, have very little spiritual understanding, even very little desire to be developed in the Jewish religion. They are just common shepherds. However, these shepherds have a few things that mark them as quite special: “1) I have a flock, 2) I shepherd my flock at night, 3) I shepherd my flock in the wilderness.” It surely shows the virtue of faithfulness. This virtue becomes a virtue even for the children of God. God likes to unveil Christ to such ones, to those who can say, “I still want to serve, even though in the night. I still want to serve, even though in the wilderness. I do have a flock.”

Do you have a flock? Are you in the day or in the night? Are you in the wilderness or the city, a tower, a high-rise apartment? After the shepherds had told others concerning Jesus, nobody cared. Over the next thirty years, all the way until Jesus began to preach the gospel, who cared? All the things they had seen, all the things they had heard, all the things they knew...who cared? The problem is not whether you see something, my question is, “You see something, do you care?” If you care, things will happen, things will be real to you.

A Life of Roadside

According to this story, I’ll give you six points. The first point: “born on the side of the road.” Jesus was not born in the manger, he was born on the side of the road. They wrapped Him up and laid Him in the manger, because there was no room in the inn for Him (Luke 2:7). Foxes have holes, the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head (9:58). What is this? What is His life? Roadside. The Lord testified, “I don’t have a residence. I don’t have a place I can shelter and say, ‘That’s good enough.’ No, I was born on the roadside and My life is a roadside experience!”

“Roadside” means you cannot become settled. Nobody is settled on the roadside. Are you settled? If you are settled, you are not on the roadside. I live in a nice house beside the lake, I really enjoy it, but I’m very clear—I cannot be “settled” here, I belong to the roadside. This house

could be an “inn” some days for my particular needs, but still I am a person of the roadside.

Second, roadside means “I can go in all directions.” I can go this way or that way. I could go East or West, South or North. I could go because I’m in the road. The Lord’s commitment was clear from His birth. He is not for Jerusalem. He is not for Bethlehem. He is not for Galilee. He is not for Jews. He is for the whole globe! He is not for this generation. He’s for all the previous and all the coming generations!

Are you on the roadside? You have a house, are you happy? There is nothing wrong about this, but you can still have a decision: “I am on the roadside.” Houses in Cleveland are cheap, many full-timers come and buy a house. Are you from now on in Cleveland, for Cleveland? Or are you still for the Lord’s testimony? Are you still able to go eastward, westward, northward, or southward? Are you still able to say, “Lord, wherever You tell me to go, I will go! Because I am on the roadside!”

Bethlehem’s Manger

The second point: “Bethlehem and the manger.” In existence, He belongs to Bethlehem. In reality, He belongs to a manger. “Bethlehem” means house of food, it supplies all your need. How do you get the food? From a manger. Lord says, “When I was born, I was put in a manger, I am coming here for you to enjoy. Who are you? Terrible. Who are you? Degraded. Who are you? Apart from God. Who are you? Selfish. Who are you? Self-centered. Who are you? Struggling for the interest of yourself. Now, come! I am in the manger. I am the real food supply!” Lord Jesus, thank You when I come to You, I come to a rich store, a warehouse of food supply. But when I enjoy You, bite by bite, bit by bit, I find out You are just in the manger. As a fallen and degraded man, I am still able to come to enjoy You as all the riches for my satisfaction! What is my living? What is my existence? I am in Bethlehem, and I enjoy the manger.

In our church life, we are short of mangers. We have a lot of talk about what is right or wrong. Nobody wants to be a real manger. All you care is whether you can do something good for God. No, God does not want you to do something good for Him. God wants you to enjoy Christ as in the

manger. God wants you to become a life supply. You are not just a good man. You are a life-giving man. You are not just a zealous man, a do-gooder. You are one who says, "I want to enjoy Christ that much, and in turn, I can dispense Christ to others."

Shepherds' Faithfulness

The third point: who God appeared to? "The shepherds in the field during the night." These shepherds are faithful men. They are an uneducated group of people. I don't know how many of them can read, or even have a thought to read. I believe they are very very common people. But because they are so common, they can be very simple. Because they are so simple, they become very faithful. Many times we are not good shepherds. When night comes, we find our "ways." When we are in the wilderness, we go to another spot. We don't realize it is at night we shepherd the sheep. If the Lord has not come back, we are still in the night. We have to wait until the morning star appears.

It's too easy for us to forget that it is night. We fight for so many things that belong to the day. We don't say, "I fellowship with the sufferings of Christ. Christ went through death, I will go through death. Christ had a hard life, I will have a hard life too. Christ had no place to stay, if I have a house, it is not my eternal resting place or my life-long resting place. At any time, I'm ready to go with the Lord, even it's during the night. I'm ready to go to the Lord, even the place may be to me as the wilderness. I'd like to go to Africa. I'd like to go to South America. I'd like to go to a country where people don't know me. I'd like to go to some countries to preach the gospel. I know it's night. I know it's a wilderness. But there is a flock I want to shepherd. I want to tend the flock!" What a group of faithful men! This kind of faithfulness will cause the Lord to give you visions upon visions. You'll see Christ more and more!

Wrapped in Cloths

The fourth point: "wrapped in cloths". "No one sews new cloth onto an old garment, because you'll ruin the whole thing" (5:36). The new cloth typifies what the Lord was coming for: to produce something new. No longer the old garment, but the new cloth. With the new cloth, through His death and resurrection, it would become a new garment. What is this new garment? Christ becoming our

righteousness, Christ becoming our salvation, Christ having a reality within our being. We're covered with the new garment. The new garment dispenses a new element into us, causing our being to be a new person! The new garment would be the righteousness of all the believers! I'm sinful, terrible, but there is a new garment. Hallelujah!

Laid and Lying

The fifth point: "Laid and lying." Laid means what? I'm under someone's hand. He laid me there. Lying means what? I'm very comfortable with that hand. Wherever He laid me, I'm lying there comfortably and enjoying it. We Clevelanders are poor people. We're common people. But what makes us special? We can still live a life fully in the government of God. Wherever God lays us, we don't protest. Bothers, in your whole life, there will be instances upon instances, situations upon situations, leadings upon leadings. You can begin to say, "Lord, I'm constantly being laid and I'd like to be lying there. I don't fight with God. Whatever God has arranged in His government, I'd like to say 'Amen, amen!' In my life, could I take Your laying, and can I lie there? You do all the arrangements, I do all the trust and enjoyment, being peaceful in Your governmental hand and in Your governmental leading." What a blessing to your Christian life!

Christ as our Savior

The sixth point: "A Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (2:11). Christ means Messiah. Christ means "the Anointed One." Christ means He is the One who carries out God's economy according to God's desire, because He is one with God. How did He do it? He's a Savior. Savior saves you from sin, saves you from self, saves you from interests, saves you from your own living, saves you from everything that is not according to God's desire. He's the Savior, so He is Christ the Lord!

We can tell the Lord, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace and goodwill unto me" (2:14)! What an existence is this! What a life is this! Comes from what? Comes from roadside. Comes from Bethlehem's manger. Comes from shepherds' faithfulness. Comes from "wrapped in cloths." Comes from "laid and lying." May the Lord have grace to us. May Christ be our Savior on all our lives and on everything in our lives. The Lord bless us. The Lord be with you. Amen.