

THE SHEEP OF CHRIST'S FOLD

BIBLE TEXT : Psalm 95:1-11; Ecclesiastes 3:1-17; 8:11-13; Isaiah 49:7-9; II Corinthians 6:2.

LESSON 377 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Psalm 95:1-11

- ¹ O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.
- ² Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.
- ³ For the LORD *is* a great God, and a great King above all gods.
- ⁴ In his hand *are* the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills *is* his also.
- ⁵ The sea *is* his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry *land*.
- ⁶ O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.
- ⁷ For he *is* our God; and we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice,
- ⁸ Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, *and as in* the day of temptation in the wilderness:
- ⁹ When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.
- ¹⁰ Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation, and said, *It is* a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:
- ¹¹ Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-17

- ¹ To every *thing there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
- ² A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is* planted;
- ³ A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Worship

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker." These words of the Psalmist show us what God wants all of us to do. He wants us to worship Him. The Lord created all things and all people. We were created by Him and for Him. We were created for His pleasure (**Colossians 1:16** 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: **Revelation 4:11** 11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.). Another reason we were created is to worship God.

Many people do not worship, praise, or serve God. It has been said that all God's creation but man obeys the Lord, and each thing, in its own way, gives glory to God. The birds' songs are praises to God. The order, colour, and beauty of God's creation speak of His glory. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Psalm 19:1).

Praise

In many places in the Psalms we are reminded to praise God. "Sing unto the LORD, bless his name" (Psalm 96:2). "Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise" (Psalm 98:4). "Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God" (Psalm 147:1). "Praise ye the LORD" (Psalm 148:1; 149:1; 150:1). One cannot praise the Lord as he should unless he is saved.

We should praise God because He is "our maker." Every man, woman, and child should make the Lord his God. The Lord invites each and all to be "the people of his pastures, and the sheep of his hand." He invites each one to be saved and to follow Him.

The Shepherd

Jesus has been likened to the shepherd, and His followers likened to the sheep. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). The Lord knows His sheep, and calls each one by name (John 10:3). When Jesus is our Shepherd, He leads the way for His sheep. "He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice" (John 10:4). God's people are willing to follow and to be led where the Shepherd leads.

In the Twenty-third Psalm we are told where the Shepherd leads: "In green pastures," where the soul can feed on the best of food! "Beside the still waters," where the thirsty can be satisfied! The Good Shepherd leads His people to a place of rest and contentment. A sheep will not "Lie down" unless he has eaten, and is satisfied. A sheep will not drink unless the stream is smooth and quiet. Read all the Twenty-third Psalm to see how many blessings are in store for those who are saved, for those who can say, "The LORD is my shepherd."

The Lost Sheep

Jesus spoke a parable about the lost sheep. There were ninety-nine sheep safe at home but one sheep was lost. There

4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?

10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

11 He hath made every *thing* beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

12 I know that *there is* no good in them, but for *a man* to rejoice, and to do good in his life.

13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it *is* the gift of God.

14 I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth *it*, that *men* should fear before him.

15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

16 And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, *that* wickedness *was* there; and the place of righteousness, *that* iniquity *was* there.

17 I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for *there is* a time there for every purpose and for every

should have been one more. The shepherd "goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray" (Matthew 18:12). "And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing" (Luke 15:5).

If you are not a Christian, you are the lost one whom the Shepherd is seeking. He is looking for you. He is seeking in "the mountains" where there is danger and cold. Do you hear Him calling your name?

The lost may not realise the danger they are in. They may not see Satan "as a roaring lion . . . seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Those who are not with God's flock keep going farther and farther away from the Lord. Like sheep who have gone astray, they are lured to other pastures where there may be poison weeds that they will eat. They may be enticed into places of danger where briars will hold them fast. But the Good Shepherd is seeking for them. He is listening for one little bleat, one little prayer! He will pick up the lost in His arms and carry them to the home sheepfold. There will be rejoicing because the lost have been found and are saved.

By Failing to Answer

When God calls, it is best to answer at once. He may not call again. He may not be passing your way again. The Prophet Isaiah said: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6), as though there might be a time when the Lord is not near.

A man by the name of Felix, who was a governor, is an example of one who failed to answer God's call. When Paul was a prisoner because of his preaching, he stood before Felix to tell of his "faith in Christ." Paul reasoned with Felix of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." Felix began to tremble, for he must have been convicted of his sins. God was talking to him and calling for him, but Felix sent Paul away. He did not want to hear any more about salvation. He did not answer God's call. Felix said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). But there is no account in the Bible of a time when Felix had another opportunity to be saved. There was no other "convenient season" for him. He did not call when the Lord was near. We are warned: "Harden not your heart" lest God be offended and not call again.

Judgment

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." God does not always send trouble and judgment immediately against those who sin. But that does not mean that God approves of the life they are living. Even though God lets a sinner go on until he does evil "an hundred times" it will not be well with him unless he turns from his evil ways and serves God. Even though the judgment of God has not yet come, there will be a time when it will come. "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work." There is a time for everything. But God's great plan for us is to be saved before the time of judgment, so that the penalty of sin will be paid with Jesus Blood. One does not know when the day of judgment will come. It may be before this day is over.

The Bible tells us that there is a "a time to be born, and a time to die." Each one of us has had his time to be born. However, it is not all of life to live nor all of death to die, "but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Preparation

While one is living is the time to prepare for that judgment. In Ecclesiastes we read, "In the place where the tree falleth, there is shall be," meaning, if one is wicked when he dies, he will remain

work.

Ecclesiastes 8:11-13

¹¹ Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

¹² Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his *days* be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:

¹³ But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong *his days, which are* as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.

Isaiah 49:7-9

⁷ Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, *and* his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, *and* the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

⁸ Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

⁹ That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that *are* in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures *shall be* in all high places.

2 Corinthians 6:2

² (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

wicked. If one is saved when he dies, he will remain in that state. There will be no chance for a change. The wicked will be wicked when they stand before God to be judged. All their sins will be brought up and they will be judged according to the things they have done.

One does not need to dread the day of judgment or to fear to stand before God; his sins can be blotted out here and now (**Acts 3:19** 19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;). When one repents and asks forgiveness of God, his sins are removed and remembered "no more" (**Psalm 103:12** 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. **Hebrews 8:12** 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.). Most people intend to be saved sometime but they postpone the day of their salvation. We read: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Their Opportunity

God talks to people and calls them to serve Him. He gives them all a chance to have their sins forgiven. Before the Lord sent judgment in the form of a flood upon the people of the earth, they had a chance to repent. God had dealt with men and women about their sins but they did not repent. Finally God said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Genesis 6:3). But Noah "found grace" in the sight of God. The Lord told Noah what was to happen and how he could escape. Noah believed God and built the ark. Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (II Peter 2:5) and must have told the people what God had said. Only Noah's family was spared. The others did not repent.

In the days of Abraham, God sent judgment upon the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham prayed for the deliverance of his nephew, Lot. He was spared because he believed and obeyed. Lot went to his sons-in-law and warned them that God was going to destroy the city. "But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law" (Genesis 19:14). They were destroyed because they did not believe and obey.

Salvation

When one's sins have been forgiven, the fear of God's judgment is gone; but that is not the only blessing. One who is saved is prepared to live, too. He can enjoy life with a clear conscience and an assurance that God is with him. He has peace in his heart, for he is right with God and makes things right with his fellow men, too. God gives strength, courage, and help to His people.

If you are not saved, pray and ask God to save you. This will be a happy day for you. This is the "accepted time" and can be the day of salvation for you. Do not wait any longer.

QUESTIONS

1. Why should one be saved?
2. Who can be saved?
3. Why should one not neglect to be saved?
4. When God calls, what should a person do?
5. How does God call a person to be saved?
6. What is the name of the man who thought he would have a more "convenient season"?
7. What does it mean that "now is the accepted time"?
8. It is appointed unto men once to die; and what comes after this?
9. Why should a person be saved while he is young?
10. What happens to a person who has neglected to be saved?