



The Perfect Lamb

Devotion

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

I collect sheep. Not the living, bleating, shearable kind. I collect stuffed sheep. I have herded together a few quite large ones and literally a couple of hundred li'l ones. I like to consider myself a sheep-herder (it sort of fits my occupation as a pastor) but my wife, Shari, says I am a “sheep-hoarder” (not a description which I cherish, by the way). They lie down in the pastures of my study and various rooms at church and my “man space” (and other spaces) at home. Some are white, some ivory, some lemon yellow, lime green, hot pink, LWML Lavender, and some even have wool colors that are odd (for sheep, that is).

One of our school chapels that is a favorite for our students is based on the text of Jesus seeking and finding the lost sheep. It makes quite an impression to see the ninety-nine stuffed sheep He left behind to go for the one lost stuffed one. Our Christmas worshipers also pay interested attention to see all the lambs our Bethlehem-bound shepherds carry with them to the Savior’s manger.

I like sheep. Of all the bleaters I have gathered over the years, there are two varieties I cherish most. First there are those black-wooled sheep which remind me, well ... of me and you and of our condition because of sin. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way* (Isaiah 53:6). Because of our sin Jesus says we are *“harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”* (Matthew 9:36b). Yet, though we have sinned and are outcasts (black sheep), we have a shepherd, the Good Shepherd, who *leaves the ninety-nine on the mountains and goes in search of the one that went astray*, and when He finds us, *he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray* (Matthew 18:10-13).

My most favorite are the ones which direct my heart and mind to the Shepherd who became the Lamb for us and for our salvation, the Lamb who was slain: Jesus, our Savior! This Lamb was silent on His way to slaughter. He was sheared on the Cross for us so that we are, in faith, clothed in His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was the perfect offering for us so that we by His sacrifice are freshly shorn of sin and guilt and shame, and may go springing and bounding forth freed of that dirty, heavy load, to live new lives for Him.

Because of this Lamb’s loving work in His life, His slaughter on Calvary for us, and His resurrection from the dead, we are His lambs: *we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture* (Psalm 100:3). Now He leads us, not to slaughter, but to the green pastures and still waters of His Word and Sacraments, where He feeds us. On our last day, He will shepherd us to the glorious sheepfold of the heavenlies, where, with all the flock of saints, we will sing *“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing”* (Revelations 5:12).

I love my sheep! In my office I have a mini-hoard (I mean herd) of some of my favorites. Occasionally a new lamb wanders in and joins our little flock. One day, however, in the midst of the lambs, a lion appeared from nowhere (believe it or not). I was upset. What would having a lion in the midst of the sheep mean for my flock? Then someone reminded me of Revelation 5:5b: “*behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered.*” The lion was the Lamb of God who is worthy! Standing with the Lamb and all the sainted sheep is exactly where the Lion of Judah belongs and how it will be in heaven. Now the lion in my study at church is one of the flock!

Some great day, by God’s grace, I will leave my woolies behind to join the flock of saints in heaven, and the Lion, who is the Lamb. We will sing the song of the Lamb who was slain. It will indeed be a great day! I’ll look for you there, too. In the meantime, let’s live as the people of the flock of the Good Shepherd and the sheep of His hand, rejoicing that He has sought us, and found us, and sacrificed Himself, the worthy Lamb, for us, to make us His own!

Closing Prayer: (may be sung or spoken): “Lamb of God” *LSB* 550

To discuss and/or ponder: How are we all like sheep? What has the Good Shepherd done to change our natural condition? How may we now, as the people of His flock and the sheep of His hand, live and serve so that other sheep, who are not yet of His flock, be brought in by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit? What, to you, will be a special blessing of singing the “Worthy is the Lamb” hymn in the glories of God’s heavenly flock?

Scripture references are from the ESV.

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