

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
August 26, 2012

God Promised to Be With Us

Read Ezekiel 34:23-31.

Key verse: “I will set over them one shepherd,... [and] he shall feed them and be their shepherd” (Ezekiel 34:23).

In his book titled *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, Philip Keller draws from his experience as a shepherd to offer some powerful spiritual insights. Keller remembers that the land adjoining his had been leased to another shepherd. This shepherd evidently did not take very good care of his sheep. Keller describes the land of this shepherd as being overgrazed and neglected. The sheep on that land were underfed, skinny, diseased, and often attacked by predators.

Keller wrote that this neighbor’s sheep would gather at the fence-line and stare at Keller’s grassy pasture and his healthy sheep. Keller felt it was as if the neighbor’s sheep longed to be in Keller’s pasture and a part of Keller’s flock.

Ezekiel prophesied to the Jewish exiles that a day will come when the Messiah Shepherd-King will shepherd His people. He will be a ruler like King David and from his line of descendants: “I will set over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them and be their shepherd” (v. 23).

Ezekiel was among those Jews exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. He was there in exile when he received news, in 586 B.C., that Jerusalem had fallen, the city had been plundered, and the temple burned. It was at this point that Ezekiel began to prophesy not only the restoration of Israel but also the coming reign of God’s promised Shepherd-King. This last part of Ezekiel’s prophecy, Christians believe, will find its ultimate fulfillment in the promised return and coming reign of Jesus Christ.

Verses 25-31 describe life under this new “covenant of peace” (v. 25): Under the reign of the Shepherd-King, God’s people will receive “showers of blessing” (v. 26). They will experience fruitfulness, “increase,” security and freedom (v. 27). Under Messiah’s reign, his flock will “live in safety” (v. 28) and be well fed (v. 29). Best of all, God will be with them and be their Good Shepherd: “They shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord God. You are my

sheep, the sheep of my pasture and I am your God, says the Lord God” (vv. 30-31).

Maybe you saw the video of an unusual musical performance that took place on October 30, 2010. In a Macy’s store in downtown Philadelphia, some 600 secret singers blended inconspicuously with the other shoppers. Precisely at noon, the shopping was interrupted by the opening bars of “the Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s Messiah. The music was coming from the world’s largest pipe organ, which is located in that mall.

At that moment, all 600 choir members, scattered throughout the store, began to sing. Amazed but mostly grateful onlookers joined the choir as they sang praise to the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”

This unusual event, called a Random Act of Culture, was presented by the City Opera of Philadelphia. It is amazing to watch, and it speaks to me of our calling as follower of Jesus Christ. We who know Him as our Good Shepherd are called to witness to the difference Christ can make in our lives now. We also are called to point others to the one who will come again to establish God’s eternal kingdom and reign in righteousness and peace.

Christ has come. Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again!
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