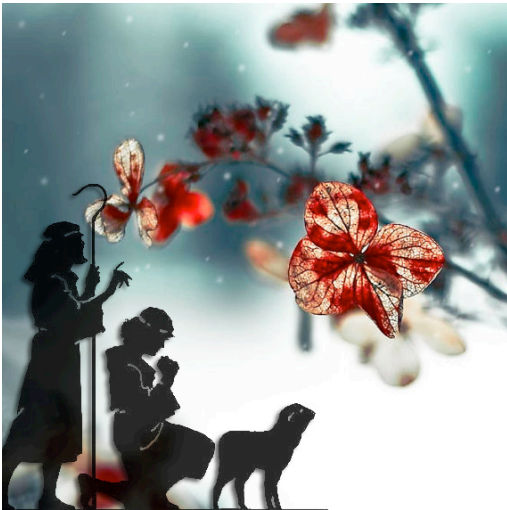




Devotional – Shepherds and Sheep November 28, 2011



Last week our devotional was centred around the Wise Men, and we recognized their presence at Jesus' birth as a natural expression of God's invitations to the Gentile nations throughout the Old and New Testaments. This week we are going to spend some time thinking about the Shepherds.

When God began building a covenant relationship with his people, they were nomadic shepherds. Abraham travelled from place to place with his flocks and his descendants carried on the tradition. When Pharaoh met Joseph's brothers for the first time, "*Pharaoh asked the brothers, "What is your occupation?" "Your servants are shepherds," they replied to Pharaoh, "just as our fathers were."*" Genesis 47:3-4

Because they worked with animals, they began to understand the way God related with them as a sheep and shepherd relationship. Jacob expresses this for the first time when he blesses Joseph's sons saying, "*May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, **the God who has been my shepherd** all my life to this day, the Angel who has delivered me from all harm —may he bless these boys.*" Genesis 48: 15-16

As the Israelites left Egypt and transitioned from being nomadic people to a nation, the task of shepherding was placed on its leaders. Preparing the people for his departure, Moses states "*May the LORD, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, **so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.** So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and lay your hand on him."*" Numbers 27:16-18

Time goes by and God "*chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be **the shepherd of his people Jacob**, of Israel his inheritance. And **David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skilful hands he led them.**"*" Psalms 78:70-72

Kings came and went, and very few of them followed David's example. Explaining the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, Ezekiel states, "*The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, **prophecy against the shepherds of Israel; ... Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? ... You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So **they were scattered because there was no shepherd...**"***" Ezekiel 34:1-5

God told Ezekiel that He will take things into his own hands again: *“I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep...I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down ... I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak ... I will shepherd the flock with justice.”* Ezekiel 34:11-16

I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd.” Ezekiel 34:22-23. THIS shepherd is Jesus.

As God **sent His son to be the good shepherd**, is there any wonder He wanted to share the news with another group of shepherds: The ones on the hills of Bethlehem?

Some thoughts for application:

Are you allowing Jesus to shepherd you? Are you listening to Him speak through His word?

Are you being a “good shepherd” to those in your care? Spend some time meditating on Ezekiel 34 today.

Jesus says, *“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep.”* John 10:14-15

Blessings to you today,

Kristal Toews
Director of Women’s Ministries