

6. Call Four – Come and Shepherd

In our last three topics, we have been looking at the first three calls Christ gave to the twelve. Today, we will be looking at the fourth call Christ gave those men. This call came after the death and resurrection of Christ. By this time, the disciples had known and traveled with Christ for nearly three-and-a-half years. Although they did not know it yet, Christ was soon going to return to heaven and leave them on the earth to carry on His work.

After Christ rose from the dead, Peter, and six of the other disciples, went back to fishing. (Since Christ was crucified in Jerusalem, they had to travel clear back up to Galilee for this to happen, which meant a three or four-day trip.) It was on this fishing trip that the Lord gave these men a fourth call. The disciples had fished all night and caught nothing. Christ performed a miracle and filled their boat with one hundred fifty-three fish. Then, Christ fed them breakfast.

After they had finished eating, Christ spoke to Peter, in John 21:15-17, and said, “‘Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs.’ He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep...’” In these verses, we see several key lessons in Christ’s invitation to come and shepherd:

- ◆ The key for effective shepherding is loving Christ more than anything else
- ◆ Effective shepherding includes realizing that the sheep belong to Christ, not us
- ◆ Effective shepherding includes feeding the lambs (new Christians)
- ◆ Effective shepherding includes shepherding the sheep
- ◆ Effective shepherding includes feeding the sheep

Peter was probably thinking of this very event as he wrote to other shepherds (elders), in 1 Peter 5:1-3. “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock...” In these verses, we see that the call of Christ to “Come and Shepherd” includes:

- A call to shepherd the flock of God
- A call to take the oversight (look after and care for) of the flock of God
- A call to take that oversight with a willing heart
- A call to avoid any dishonest self-gain
- A call to serve others with eagerness
- A call to avoid bringing people under your power (the flock is God’s flock, not ours)
- A call to lead by example

Then, in 1 Peter 5:5-9, we see how spiritual leaders are to do that shepherding. “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another,

and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” Spiritual leaders are to shepherd:

- With a spirit of humility (The word that is translated “be clothed with” speaks of the overalls which a slave wore to keep clean while working, an exceedingly humble garment)
- With the grace of the Lord, because of that humility, rather than with the resistance of God because of pride
- With a humble spirit toward God, as well as toward those we lead
- With an attitude that realizes God cares for us - by throwing all of our cares and anxieties to the Lord, instead of carrying them ourselves
- With a calm and collected spirit (be sober)
- With an attitude of strict attention to the tricks of the enemy to deceive and destroy the flock (Satan is the slanderer)
- With an attitude that recognizes that Satan is the enemy, not the people
- With an attitude that resists Satan, by faith in the Word of God and constant prayer, as seen in Ephesians 6:17-18

Paul gave similar instructions to the leaders of the church at Ephesus. In Acts 20:28-31, we read, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” In these verses, we see how Paul told the leaders to shepherd the church at Ephesus. They were to:

- ◆ Pay attention to their own spiritual growth
- ◆ Pay attention to the needs of the flock
- ◆ Recognize that they were accountable to the Holy Spirit
- ◆ Shepherd the church of God, realizing Christ bought it with His own blood
- ◆ Watch out for false teachers from the outside who try to destroy the flock
- ◆ Watch out for proud leaders from within who try to draw people after themselves
- ◆ Watch and pay strict attention because leaders will give account to God for the way they lead – Hebrews 13:17

As we see in these various passages, spiritual leadership is a great privilege, but it is also a great responsibility. When Christ called the disciples to “Come and Shepherd”, He first asked Peter, “Do you love me more than these?” Peter and the other disciples had to determine whether they loved the Lord more than they loved the fish. The reason why love for the Lord is the first essential is due to the fact that our relationship with Christ will determine our effectiveness in leading Christ’s sheep. To be an effective leader, we must:

Take root in Christ – Colossians 2:6-7 - “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord,

so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.”

Take root in the love of Christ – Ephesians 3:16-19 - “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Only as we take root in Christ, and His love, will we lead others in love. 1 John 4:10-11 says, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” Then, 1 John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” If we are driven by fear, we will drive others. If we are led by love, we will lead others in love.

The plan of Christ was to help His disciples grow and mature until they were able to shepherd His sheep in love. That is still the plan of Christ today. The Lord has called us to help people grow and mature until they are able to shepherd some of the Lord’s sheep in love. May the Lord richly bless you as you help Christians grow to spiritual maturity and learn to lead others in love.