

Sermon 22nd April West Epping UC- John 10:11-18

Ms Wolf lost both parent 7 years ago she was the youngest of six children. She migrated to Australia to study medicine at the University of Sydney. Her husband of four years also left her for another woman. He had provided for the two of them. She didn't have a job or any money having to sell some of her belongings to survive. Her family were all back in her home country, many times she thought about moving back. Her friend helped with accommodation and to find work. In less than four months she found employment and moved into her first rented flat.

She took the bus to work every day. One day she met a male on the bus he mentioned to her, he had seen her in his building. They started to chat every day, She even ran into him in the elevators and in the joint laundry rooms of their building. He asked about the number of rooms she had in her place? And How big it was? All seem to be very general question. One night while watching a current affairs to her shock the reporter introduced the story Headline of the North Sydney rapist. It was a the familiar of Mr K. Who lived one floor above from her. He had two years early release to his time. Ms Wolf was so frightened that she rang a friend to spend the night at her place.

For the rest of that week she couldn't come home because she thought about her vulnerability in what she's shared with Mr. H and the suspicious questions he raised with her. She requests to her real estate for early release of her bond. They refused, other women in the same building spoke out. They too, had been in contact with him in the laundry room and he has ask them the same questions as he had asked Ms Wolf.

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Ms Wolf friends help find a counsellor and some legal advice, the professionals, said “a current affair” should have offered some help because they’ve raised fear in the community. Ms Wolfs friends continued to help her find a new place, they also contacted, a current affair for some assistance but they did not respond to their concerns.

In the next month many of the residence contacted A current affair noting his location. The media tracked Mr. K and humiliated him on camera. After doing this A current affairs received high rates but the residence of those units including Mr K were left with fear and damage. This story happened 2years ago I was updated the other day that A current affair has just contacted Ms Wolf and the rest of the women who was seeking immediate help. To their surprise Mr K was still living in the same units but he had been in court in the last few days because he attacked a teenager at the local supermarket. This was the only reason a current affairs had got into contact with them.

When we think about a current affairs they’re clearly not in terms with the good shepherd but more like the hired hand. One with self-interest! The hired hand in John’s gospel is described as the opposite of the good shepherd.

The hired hand doesn’t look after their sheep,

They don’t own the sheep

They’re disconnected from the sheep and when danger arises the hired hand flees. They serve their own interest!

Why does the hired hand leave the sheep? What makes them flee?

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How does the good shepherd know his own?

Some questions to ponder while coming into the text!

The hired hand and the good shepherd are both contrasting images of leadership the biggest issue here is the hired hand does not Care for his sheep.

Context

This part in the book of John was written after the resurrection, around 90 CE, a time when the Johannine community was facing harassment from the leaders of the Synagogue, the Pharisees who had abandoned their people during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE and had gone to the village of Jamnia where they started the process of reconstructing Judaism.

During this time, Jesus is listening to the need of the community to be cared for and so he makes the firm statement “I am the good shepherd”. For Jesus knew the leaders of the synagogue such as the Pharisees style of leadership was felt as exclusive and self-serving. Jesus refers to the old Hebrew culture of the shepherds’ tradition. That is to be a shepherd means to sacrifice yourself for the welfare of the community, to give one’s life so that others may live. That is why he calls himself “the good shepherd.” Jesus addresses the needs of these communities with his own wholeness of being God. Being this good shepherd is not something he changed into being, he was already good as he is One with the father.

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The hired hand like any other character who contrasts with Jesus gets a bad name, it's so easy to say we do not lead like the hired hand. But in most cases when we reflect upon our own lives there are moments we tend to have more in common with the hired hand.

In our current context many of our leaders, in politics, at work, and church are more fitted as the hired hand. I feel it is more helpful that we give more attention to how we can shift the character of the hired hand into the ways of the good shepherd.

To shift the hired hand we should stop contrasting the two and look into finding common grounds in how they can relate to the good shepherd. Verse 14 gives us a tip of that, Jesus says "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me" Jesus suggests a type of intimate relationship of knowing the people and their concerns this is what moves one from being a hired hand to being a good shepherd.

The story of Ms. Wolf and a current affair relates to Jesus' reference of "knowing the sheep" knowing is not just about the name and stories of the community and the individual.

Vena notes:

Knowledge here has to do with the knowledge that friends and family have of each other, the emotional tie between husband and wife, father and children. That is why the analogy with God the Father is being made: just as God knows Jesus and Jesus knows God, so also Jesus knows the community and they know him. This intimate relationship between God and Jesus is so similar to that of

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Jesus and the community that one could say that through Jesus God is intimately related to the community also.

The concern in the Johannine community was noted some 1000 years ago and here we are still asking the same questions: how can our weakness of being the hired hand leads to be more like, Jesus, the Good shepherd. Jesus is noting we must connect to our own community as a type of family relation. What sort of leader are we becoming can we stop contrasting and do as Jesus had done? Listen to the needs and be the caring leader, not the one who look for their own interest in the sheep and just flee.

Jurgen Moltmann takes the view on Aristotle's old principle for human community:

“Birds of a feather flock together” to be sure, this kind of sociality combines human beings with one another, but only human beings who are alike: white with whites, Christians with Christians, healthy with healthy, students with students, professors with their colleagues. To those who are “in”, this seems to be the most natural thing in the world. But those on the “outside” feel excluded, degraded and wounded. We get in a stew about showing special care for those people who are included in our circle.

The issue with this type of community in Jesus view is when their thoughts, feelings and desires are different from ours, can make the hired hand feel insecure and flee. Therefore, they must build relationships with their community. Therefore, the good shepherd is

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aware there are other folds that are different because Jesus is not only limited to the ones he cares for, He is always extending the love that's already in him for those folds because, Jesus is saying knowing others and those who are under our care makes us more accepting of them. Only a change in relationship can give the hired hand a new orientation and break through their limitations so that care and love can spring over the hired hands narrow shadows. It is within the new orientation and breakthrough that will transform the hired hands to open up to others as they are. It will help hired hands to let go of their self interest and focus more on becoming the good shepherd.

As Easter people, we must continue to ask how we can invest ourselves in the lives of our community to build strong relationships that matters? It is in those conversation that the hired hand will focus on the sheep and other folds expanding the heart and be transformed into the good shepherd. Amen

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