

Who is Your Shepherd? (#4)

Joe Slater

I remember seeing a huge flock of sheep being driven from one pasture to another. My dad had to stop the car because the sheep were all over the highway! The shepherds sent well-trained sheep dogs to keep the herd moving in the right direction.

King David grew up taking care of his father Jesse’s sheep. Like other shepherds of his day, David didn’t use sheep dogs. He didn’t drive his sheep but led them. As he wrote of the Lord, his shepherd, he said, *“He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake”* (Psalm 23:3b).

Sheep need a leader! Otherwise, they may stray into dangerous territory. The wise shepherd knows where the danger is and avoids it, leading his sheep in safety.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. *“Oh Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps”* (Jeremiah 10:23). The Lord led David *“in the paths of righteousness.”* God’s very nature is righteous, so it stands to reason that He would lead His people to behave righteously.

The Lord does this *“for His name’s sake.”* God’s “name” refers to every aspect of His character. He leads in the paths of righteousness because that’s who and what He is. We would be foolish to expect anything else!

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, *“calls His own sheep by name and leads them out”* (John 10:3). Because He is righteous, those who follow Him are walking in paths of righteousness. In view of the salvation Jesus graciously gave us, we are to *“live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age”* (Titus 2:12).

(More next week!)

The Lord Jesus Christ

When we remember what this word Lord means and what we ought to mean when we take it upon our lips, we must feel something very like horror at the glib unthinking way in which it is so often used, and we must hesitate and shrink to take it on our lips, lest the speaking of it is for us nothing less than a lie. When we remember the meaning of this word Lord, and when we remember how irreverently and unthinkingly it is bandied about in the Church, then there comes a new meaning into the saying of Jesus which Matthew hands down: *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven”* (Matt. 7:21).

The word Lord is a one-word creed, a one-word expression of complete devotion, a one-word expression of reverence and adoration. There is little wonder that it was the word in which the Church summed up its belief in Jesus Christ, and one of the church’s most clamant needs today is the rediscovery of its meaning, and the cessation of the empty use of the greatest name of Jesus Christ.

--William Barclay (*The Mind of Jesus*, p. 327)

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SCIENTISM

Scientism is the claim that science is the only reliable form of knowledge. Scientism makes no rational sense because science, by definition, cannot tell us whether scientism is correct. Thus, scientism’s own fundamental principles tell us that it is an arbitrary assumption. Even so, our rulers like scientism because it justifies a wholly materialistic worldview.

--Augusto Del Noce

Morbidities but not Morbid!

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body” (Philippians 1:21-24).

The pandemic a few years ago gave a term that’s far too common: “co-morbidities.” Our co-morbidities increase our risk for serious consequences, including death, from COVID 19. Being 73, post-polio, with type 2 diabetes provides me with my co-morbidities. If you are a fellow Boomer, you likely have your own co-morbidities.

All this talk of morbidities encourages folks to be fearful, sometimes panicked, and yes, morbid. Add to this, the self-reflection that so often comes with a new year. We think about our lives so far (including those we’ve lost), and our own life’s certain ending. Does this make us morbid?

Well, first, we don’t choose our morbidities, but being morbid is a choice, and one we don’t have to make. And for those of us in Christ, why would we ever make that choice? *“To live is Christ, and to die is gain!”*

Death is all around us, but we are not a death cult. Our Lord is risen and living. At our death we will, as with Paul, *“depart and be with Christ.”* Morbid? Are you kidding? Being with Christ will be more than enough, and yet there will be even more. In departing we will have come, *“... to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You [will] have come to God, the Judge of all, [and] to the spirits of the righteous made perfect...”* (Hebrews 12:22-23).

Yes, I have my list of comorbidities, but be morbid? NEVER!

--Tim Kelly (Littleton, CO) adapted