

# **Remember to Feed My Sheep**

**Feast of Tabernacles 2022**

## **Fishers of Men**

When I was a kid, most everyone my age had regular household chores to do.

Simple things like take out the trash, mow the lawn or feed the dog. Nothing on the level of an oriental sweat shop but none the less, the requests would always cause procrastination by me and my brother. Dragging of the feet, or saying it “was my brother’s turn” or “I did it last yesterday” would inevitably be a losing argument.

My dad would usually remind us possibly a second time of something my mom wanted done and don’t make him ask you a third time. Another and even more popular excuse used was “I forgot.” However, lame as this excuse is, it worked once or twice and sometimes even worked on a teacher at school regarding homework.

We’ve discussed feeding God’s sheep before and as this week has been both a reminder and a look forward, it’s fitting for another review. What led up to Jesus telling Peter to “Feed and shepherd my lambs/sheep” three times? Let’s start in John 21.

**John 21:1-8-** “After these things, Jesus again revealed Himself to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. And this is how He revealed Himself: Simon Peter, and Thomas (called Didymus), and Nathanael from Cana of Galilee were there together, and the sons of Zebedee and two of His other disciples. Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We also will come with you.” They left immediately and got into the ship, but during that night they took nothing. And when morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore. However, none of the disciples realized that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any food?” They answered Him, “No.” And He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the ship, and you shall find some.” Then they cast the net, but they did not have the strength to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. Then that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” And after hearing that it was the Lord, Peter put on his outer garment, because he was naked, and threw himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in a small ship, dragging the net full of fish; for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits away.”

Jesus telling them to drop their nets in this manner was displayed at their calling.

**Matthew 4:18-20-** “And as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a large net

into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Then they immediately left their nets *and* followed Him.” **Mark 1:16-18**- “And *as* He was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a large net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” And they immediately left their nets *and* followed Him.”

A couple of questions to ponder on these scriptures, what did He mean, “I will make you fishers of men” and why did they drop what they were doing and immediately follow Him? If we read only these two scriptures, we can miss the information that fills in the blanks. This is why it is so important to read ***all*** of God’s Word. In the Book of Luke, he gives a little more detail. We find that Jesus had given them the same lesson on the water before His resurrection.

**Luke 5:1-11**- “Now it came to pass that while the multitude was pressing on Him to hear the Word of God, He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret; And He saw two ships standing by the shore of the lake, but the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. And after going into one of the ships, which was Simon’s, He asked him to put out from the shore a little; and He sat down and taught the multitudes from the ship. Now when He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into the deep, and let your nets down for a haul.” Then Simon answered and said, “Master, we have labored through the entire night, and we have taken

nothing; but at Your word, I will let the net down.” And when they did this, they enclosed a great school of fish; and their net was breaking. Then they signaled to their partners, those in the other ship, that they should come and help them; and they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. And when he saw this, Simon Peter fell at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord.” For great astonishment came upon him and all those with him, on account of the miraculous haul of fish that they had taken; And in like manner also upon James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Fear not; from this time forth you shall be catching men.” And after bringing the ships to land, they forsook everything and followed Him.” From a Biblical perspective, fishing symbolizes preaching or spreading the Gospel or evangelizing, which is to lead others to respond with a personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

**John 8:28-** “Then Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you yourselves shall know that I AM, and that I do nothing of Myself. But as the Father taught Me, these things I speak.”

The disciples saw the miracle, they understood and they, like us, made the choice to follow Jesus Christ. When Jesus called His disciples, He began with evidence of Who He was. They made the choice to follow Him as we did.

After all the disciples had been through and with all they had witnessed being in the presence of Jesus for His three- and half-year ministry, they went back to fishing! **Jeremiah 17:9**- “The heart *is* deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Our human nature is truly evil, well at least incredibly dumb. Imagine seeing all of the miracles they witnessed and some they even did themselves! Raising the dead, healing the blind, making the lame to walk, and Peter himself walking on water, and so many more miracles that John says in **John 21:25**- “But there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I do not suppose that even the world itself could contain the books that would be written. Amen.”

I don't even think “I forgot” would come close in this instance. But it seems as though a “memory” loss is quite common with humans, even God's called. The nation of Israel fleeing from Egypt, witnessed the plagues (**Exodus 9:14**), the pillar of fire (**Exodus 14:19**), the parting of the Red Sea (**Exodus 14:21**), the Manna from Heaven (**Exodus 16:15**) and yet “they forgot.” Their memory loss was punished by their wandering for forty years (**Joshua 14:10**) until that entire generation had died off.

**Matthew 28:19-20**- “Therefore, go and make disciples in all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; Teaching

them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even until the completion of the age.” Amen.” This is the mission Jesus charged the disciples with, the Great Commission. This is motivational marching orders for all who choose to follow Jesus Christ and God’s Way of life. We cannot sit around and wait for Him to fill us with His Spirit (He gave it to us at Baptism but wants to give us more) but if we want to yield fruit (spiritual fruit) then we must grow in His word and know there is work to be done. Despite what the Protestant churches say and preach in terms of grace, “once saved always saved” or “Jesus has done it all for us”, there is nothing in God’s word that permits us to coast along for the ride. Following Jesus Christ is no way anything easy. We must maintain constant vigilance, keeping our focus on our walk with Him and a checklist that runs from Genesis to Revelation. He will not pour out His Spirit in a vessel with leaks. You won’t be riding a white horse being a couch potato.

### **Feed My Sheep**

Seeing that His disciples had returned to fishing, maybe that’s why Jesus repeated His question three times to Peter, “do you love Me?”

**John 21:14-17-** “This was now the third time that Jesus revealed Himself to His disciples after being raised from the dead. Therefore, when they had finished

eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me more than these?” And 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 Jonas, do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Yes, Lord. You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonas, 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.*”

We can certainly understand why Peter became grieved in being asked the same question three times. But did Jesus have more in mind than just asking Peter relatedly “do you love Me?”

After His resurrection, Jesus taught His disciples the works which must be spiritually empowered. As He so taught during His ministry before His crucifixion that no one could do them on their own.

**John 5:30-** “I have no power to do anything of Myself; but as I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father, Who sent Me.”

We must make constant choices of our own free will to continue in God's way and live by every word in His Book. We choose to overcome sin, we choose to a life of righteousness.

Jesus was reminding Peter (and all of us), of the choice we made to follow Him and our duties and responsibilities per His instructions and example. When He asked Peter to "feed My Sheep", He was reminding Him of the job at hand. We are to nourish the flock of God among us. Not only Peter but anyone who hears God's calling and accepts the assignment. If we truly love Jesus Christ, we must feed His sheep.

**1 Peter 5:2** provides a scriptural answer identifying His sheep. "Feed *the flock of God* that is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;" We know that God refers to His followers as sheep throughout the Bible (**Psalm 78:52, Psa. 95:7, Isaiah 53:6, Ezek. 34:11, 12, Zech. 13:7, Matt. 10:6, 16, 12:11, 18:13, John 10:4, 14, 27, Heb. 13:20**).

We have been entrusted with the precious Truth of God and we are not to throw it on the ground. Jesus warns us in **Matthew 23:15** of such in how we share the truth, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel the sea and



the land to make one proselyte, and when he has become one, you make him twofold more a son of Gehenna than yourselves.” He makes it clear what happens when shepherds fail their flocks as well.

**Jeremiah 23:1-4-** “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture,” says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD, God of Israel, against the shepherds who feed My people, “You have scattered My flock, and have driven them away, and have not taken care of them. Behold, I will bring upon you the evil of your doings,” says the LORD. “But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and will bring them again to their fold. And they shall be fruitful and multiply. And I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them. And they shall fear no more, nor be afraid; nor shall they lack *anything*,” says the LORD.”

We are to readily share God’s truth with anyone He brings to us (**1 Peter 3:15**). Baptize those who repent and so wish to follow. Our conduct should reflect the light of God that He may draw them. Handing out tracks in a parking lot? Maybe not. He tells us in **Matthew 7:6-** “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you.”

The role of the shepherd is to care for, tend and feed the flock from the lambs to the full-grown ewes and rams. We too as shepherds are to care for those in God’s

flock in much the same way. The food we share is the Word of God (**Deut. 8:3, Matt. 4:4, Luke 4:4**). We must be cognizant of those we serve. Not all are ready for solid food.

**Isaiah 28:9**- “Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? *Those* who are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts,”

**Luke 12:42**- “And the Lord said, “Who then is the wise and faithful steward, whom the lord shall put in charge of his household, to give to each one the portion of food in season?”

**1 Corinthians 3:2**- “I gave you milk to drink, and not meat; for you were not yet able to *receive spiritual meat*; and neither are you able now,”

**1 Peter 2:2**- “As newborn babes, yearn after the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow,”

We are to tend, care for, and provide spiritual food for God’s people, from the youngest lambs (newest members) to the full-grown sheep (those who have been around awhile...). To remain in constant service to nurture and care for them, growing them into the fullness of their spiritual maturity. **Heb. 5:12-14**- “For truly, by this time you ought to be teachers, *but instead* you need to have *someone* teach you again what *are* the beginning principles of the oracles of God, and have become those in need of milk, and not of solid food. For everyone who is partaking

of milk *is* unskilled in *the* word of righteousness because he is an infant. But solid food is for those who are fully grown, who through repeated practice have had their senses trained to discern between good and evil.”

Jesus is our Good Shepherd. **John 10:11**- “I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” He is the Door of the sheepfold. **John 10:9**- “I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture.”

By describing His people as sheep, He is emphasizing their nature as a flock and followers. As a fellowship, it is our responsibility to each other to strive to grow in God’s Word grace, knowledge and wisdom.

We are in training for our future “positions” in God’s Kingdom. Providing the flock with the food and nourishment of God’s Word, is plainly our role as a shepherd, here and now. It will no doubt be included in our roles as Kings and Priests. We’ve reviewed several topics this week and this is a reminder like Peter was reminded that if we truly love God and His Son Jesus Christ we will remember to feed His Sheep. Amen.