

LOOK at the LAMB!



We were at Disney's California Adventure theme park last December and there is an attraction at that park where you sit down at a computer-like book. The book asks you questions about your personality and character traits. At the end of the questions – the book tells you which Disney character you have the greatest similarity to.

Our third grader, Taylor went through the exercise. Yes she is outgoing. Fun-loving. Can you guess which Disney character she turned out to be? Ariel – from Little Mermaid. How about our energetic Hudson? Bold. Strong. Which character? Gaston – from Beauty and the Beast. And of course Tammy and I came out to be Cinderella and Prince Charming. Actually Perhaps more accurate would be Beauty and the Beast!

Now imagine that you had a book in front of you that would tell you – not which Disney character you are most like, but which Bible animal you are like. Wouldn't that be exciting? Maybe you would be the mighty lion like we looked at last week? Or, perhaps you might be like the mysterious Leviathan from the book of Job. or the victorious horse. Or the beautiful dove?

Well we do have such a book don't we. A supernatural book called the Bible. In this book you may find that you share some characteristics with those animals. But there is one animal that reflects the characteristics of men and women, boys and girls, more than any other. The Lamb. The Sheep.

LOOK at the Sheep – MIRROR

Someone said that parables are both a mirror in which we can see ourselves and a window through which we can see God. The same can often be said of Bible animals. So, let's seeing our animal as a giant mirror. What do you see? Is it coming into view? *The sheep*. Think

about it - When God considered all the animals – one stood out above all others as a symbol for humanity. Not the Lion. Not the Leviathan, Not the horse, not the dove. The Sheep. LOOK at the sheep – I’m not saying you *are* a sheep – I’m not saying you *look* like a sheep! But you are *like* a sheep in many ways - “I looked at the Sheep and the sheep was me.” LOOK at the sheep. As I share with you the biblical resemblance.

Seven areas: (1) **Sheep get lost.** **Sheep** are always getting lost in the Bible! In the parable of the lost sheep the shepherd said, “rejoice with me for I have found my sheep which was lost.” Sheep get lost – because (2) **sheep wander.** Isaiah 53:6 says, “All we like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way, so the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Sheep wander. (3) **Sheep obviously need care.** Jesus said to Peter in John 21:17 – If you love me – tend my sheep. This brings up the fact that (4) **sheep need shepherds,** because they can’t care for themselves. Do you know what the Greek word for pastor means? Shepherd – Sheep herder! We have earthly shepherds and a heavenly shepherd. Psalm 23:1-2 says “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters.” Shepherds are needed not only to lead sheep to water and food, but because (5) **sheep have enemies.** Jesus told those he was sending to do ministry, “Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.” Luke 10:3. Sheep are defenseless and therefore (6) **sheep need protection.** Jesus said in John 10:11-13 John 10:11 “The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. John 10:12 “He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them. And finally (7) **sheep die easily.** In the Bible sheep and death are never far apart. For example, Jer. 11:19 But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter.

My friends – LOOK at the Lamb – this is you and this is me. We get lost. We wander. Prone to wander – Lord I feel it! Prone to leave the God I Love! And we need care. We need shepherds to

lead us to food and water. We have enemies all around us. We need protection – someone who fight on our behalf. And we die easily. Our life is short – Like a flower of the field we flourish, and the wind blows over it and it is gone and its place remembers it no more (Psalm 103:15-16).

LOOK at the sheep – LEARN from the sheep – That is you my friend – that is me. You may not like it – Someone said that when the Bible compares to a sheep – it is not a complement. I don't necessarily agree. I don't think it is good or bad – it is what it is. People used to ask Bill Parcells how the Cowboy's football team was doing. He would respond, "We are what we are." My friends – we are what we are. We are like sheep. We are weak. We are not terribly smart. We need care. We need each other. We need God. May we learn a lesson from the sheep today.

LOOK at the Lamb: In Bible times.

Now we want to look at the sheep not only as a mirror to see ourselves, but as a window to see God – and to help us do that – we need to take a few minutes and see the importance and uses of sheep in Bible times, in three important areas.

Let me start by noting that sheep occupy the most space in the Bible of any animal. In Bible times, sheep were as common and plentiful as cars are in our own day. Sheep played a huge role in the economy and culture of ancient times.

- 1) **First thing that we need to know is that sheep were a sign of wealth.** Nabal is described in 1 Samuel 25:2 as being "very rich, and he had three thousand sheep." There is a proverb in the Talmud that says, "Land sell. Sheep buy." Sheep In other words – if you had both land and sheep – sell the land and buy more sheep – That is how valuable they were. were vital, because they were not only a symbol of wealth, but were actually part of the currency of the day. When Jacob negotiated payment for his work from Laban he said He said, "Every speckled and spotted sheep, and every black one...shall

be my wages.” (Genesis 30:32). Why? Because sheep were a sign of wealth. The more sheep the better.

2) Why were sheep so valuable. It was because they were a **major source of provision** to the people. I like to think about sheep as Walking Wal-Marts. Today if you need to pick up something for everyday life – you might go to Wal-Mart. In ancient times, if a person needed something for everyday life – they went to the sheep. For example, Sheep provided **meat** for food Solomon’s court ate 100 sheep a day. Very **rich milk** comes from sheep, that was used for drink and also to make butter and cheese. Sheep provided **wool** for cloth and trading. **Skin** to cover tents and make clothes. Dyed Ram’s skin covered the walls of the Tabernacle. **Music** instrument strings were made from their various parts of their guts or intestines. **Shofars** from their horns and **flutes** from their leg bones. **Various tools** were also carved from bones. Nearly every part of the sheep could be used to provide for the daily needs of the ancient Israelite.

3) **Sheep were important as a source of wealth and provision. The third thing we must know about sheep in the Bible is that they played a major role in the religious sacrifices.** Pinney said, “Sheep were the fundamental animal in the religious sacrifices of the Jews. It was a lamb which was offered at the greatest of the religious feasts -- The Passover.” (Pinney, *The Animals in the Bible*, 109)”. While the OT sacrificial system can be quite complicated and overwhelming, there is one basic premise, in Leviticus 1:4 – The sacrifice was to make atonement for the person, “And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf.” The Hebrew word “atonement” has the sense of covering an offense – taking care of a wrong. Wiping away the dirt, making something clean. The death of the lamb was a symbolic punishment for the wrongdoing of owner of the lamb. Now, when the

lamb was brought for sacrifice, there was one important qualification repeated over and over in the OT – Do you know what it was? They must bring a lamb, without defect. Not a crippled or diseased lamb, but one that was perfect.

LOOK at the LAMB – Window to Christ

Now this background – the importance of sheep – let’s look at the sheep as a window through which we can see God – We now turn to look at the Lamb of God – Jesus Christ.

Last week we ended with Revelation 5:5 – “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.” The Lion – the strong one, the mighty Jesus Christ in His glory. Now – look at verse 6

“And I saw between the throne (with the four living creature) and the elders a lamb standing, as if slain... (and he talks about the lamb – drop down to verse 8) “...the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the book and to break its seals, for you were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”

The Lion of Judah followed by the Lamb of God. Here is our first couplet of animals – the Lion and the Lamb – together symbols of Christ – yet strikingly different images. One of power and glory and the other of weakness and death.

In a sense the lion had to become a lamb. Through His incarnation, Jesus emptied himself and identified with humanity and fully taking on the symbol of the lamb – He embraced our flesh – condescended to become a servant – obedience to death, even death on a cross. Jesus had to become a sheep to save His sheep. Jesus took on flesh – yet without sin – so he became the perfect lamb. Able to offer himself, as a perfect sacrifice – so that our sins might be forever covered – atoned for.

The thousands of lambs led to THE one perfect lamb. The thousands of sacrifices led to THE one perfect sacrifice. And in the related metaphor – the thousands of shepherd lead us to THE one good shepherd, Jesus Christ. LOOK at the lamb – Stare at the sheep – He points us to God.

Application – LOOK at the Lamb.

As we think about Jesus as both the lamb of God, and as the good shepherd, let's pause for some specific areas of application.

1) First, we learned that sheep often wander and get lost. **If you are wandering from Christ today – dear friend – come back** into the fold. I don't know how far you have wandered, but God does – Don't take another step down that path. It may be that no one even knows you have wandered away– but God knows. Come back. The good shepherd is looking for you – come back to him. If you are wandering from Christ – listen to this anonymous poem:

Tw'as A Sheep, Not A Lamb

*"Tw'as a sheep, not a lamb, that strayed away in the parable Jesus told.
A grown-up sheep that had gone astray from the ninety and nine in the fold.
Out on the hillside, out in the cold, 'twas a sheep the Good Shepherd sought;
And back to the flock, safe into the fold, 'twas a sheep the Good Shepherd brought.
And why for the sheep should we earnestly long and as earnestly hope and pray?
Because there is danger, if they go wrong, they will lead the lambs astray.
For the lambs will follow the sheep, you know,
wherever the sheep may stray;
When the sheep go wrong, it will not be long
till the lambs are as wrong as they.
And so with the sheep we earnestly plead, for the sake of the lambs today;
If the sheep are lost, what terrible cost some of the lambs will have to pay! –*

A wandering sheep hurts not only herself or himself, but also the entire flock.

2) Trust in the Shepherd's care:

Second – our study of the Scriptures this morning urge us to trust in the Shepherd's care. You can't make it on your own. You can't carry the burden by yourself. Some of you are anxious.

Some of you are stressed out. Let me remind you – trust in God. Trust in the good shepherd, Jesus Christ. Cast all your anxiety on Him for He cares for you. It is his job to provide for you, to lead you, to bring you to water and pasture. “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” John Hull, a pastor, said in 1617 – “lecture on Lamentations”

Let them say that will, “My land shall keep me, I shall have no want, my merchandise shall be my help, I shall have no want; let the soldier trust unto his weapons, and the farmer unto his labor; let the artisan say unto his art and the tradesman unto his trade, and the scholar unto his books, “These shall maintain me, I shall not want.” But let us say with the church as we both say and sing, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” He that can truly say so condemns the rest, and he that desires more than God cannot truly say the Lord is his, the Lord is this shepherd, governor and commander and therefore I shall not want!

Conclusion:

Remember that book at Disneyland – it was a lot of fun – seeing ourselves and our kids in some Disney characters. Good memories. This morning we have LOOKed into a supernatural book and we have seen there the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world – Stay close to Him and His flock – Trust Him to provide for your needs. LOOK at the Lamb and be saved. LOOK at the lamb and be satisfied.