

Among the 99

“Can’t We All Just Get Along?”

I. SCRIPTURE

I John 3:18 – **“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”**.

II. CAN’T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

If you were alive and old enough, and paying attention in the spring of 1992, you would probably remember this quote: “can’t we all just get along?”. You see, we remember these words as those that came from the mouth of someone named Rodney King. And to be fair, “Can’t we all just get along?” were not his actual words; these were his actual words: “People, I just want to say, you know, can we all get along? Can we, can we get along?” This quote was captured on film by a George Holliday, when he filmed an incident from his nearby balcony on March 3, 1991. You see, Rodney King, an African American citizen, was being violently beaten by LAPD police officers during his arrest for fleeing and resisting arrest on California State Route 210. And after George Holliday had sent his film footage to local news station KTLA, and particularly somewhere in the period of time between the end of April and early May 1992, after it was learned that the police officers involved were acquitted of charges of violence toward him, riots had broken out in Los Angeles, California, lasting six (6) days. As a result of this incident, there were 63 deaths, 2,383 injuries, more than 7,000 fires, damage to 3,100 businesses, and nearly \$1 billion in financial losses. On May 1, 1992, on television, Rodney King makes this statement: “I just want to say – you know – can we all get along? Can we, can we get along? Can we stop making it horrible for the older people and the kids? And ... I mean we've got enough smog in Los Angeles let alone to deal with setting these fires and things ... It's just not right. It's not right and it's not going to change anything. We'll get our justice. They've won the battle, but they haven't won the war. We'll get our day in court and that's all we want. And, just, uh, I love – I'm neutral. I love every [one] – I love people of color. I'm not like they're making me out to be. We've got to quit. We've got to quit; I mean after all, I could understand the first – upset for the first two hours after the

verdict, but to go on, to keep going on like this and to see the security guard shot on the ground – it's just not right. It's just not right, because those people will never go home to their families again. And uh, I mean please, we can, we can get along here. We all can get along. We just gotta. We gotta. I mean, we're all stuck here for a while. Let's, you know, let's try to work it out. Let's try to beat it, you know. Let's try to work it out.” (Pause)

And now, let's change stories... have you hear of the story of the lost sheep?

III. THE STORY OF THE LOST SHEEP

I doubt that there is a single person here today, whether you are in this congregation or watching remotely, who doesn't know about the story of the lost sheep. This story was told by YAHUSHA [Jesus]; it appears both in the books of Matthew and Luke. This is Luke's account:

“When all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes [the church leaders] complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them’. So He spoke this parable to them, saying: ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.” (Luke 15:1-7)

IV. NO LONGER THE ONE LOST SHEEP

The problem with many of us as we remember this story, is that we mostly relate to that one (1) lost sheep. For many of us, we remember how that YAHUSHA [Jesus] pursued us when we were lost... how He came after us... how He rescued us from our rebellion and sin. Many of us have a hard time transitioning ourselves from being the one (1) who has been rescued by YAHUSHA [Jesus]... the one that He loved so much... that He left 99 others sheep behind to come out to us... where as a result of our repentance that there was great joy... a party in heaven... when there was more joy in heaven over us than there was joy over the other 99 sheep who need no repentance.

For us to want to be special, to be the one (1) whom YAHUSHA [Jesus] loved so much, rather than being just one (1) of the 99, is probably not really our fault. If we feel that way, it's probably a result of our culture, how we have been taught, how we have been conditioned when growing up to excel at all that we do... to strive to be #1, usually at *all* cost... to achieve no less than *first* place. Yet, I am here today to inform of a truth that is different: if you have been truly "saved" in MESSIAH [Christ], then you are no longer that one lost sheep! But praise YAHUAH [God] instead! that you are now among the 99 who have already been rescued... who have already been saved, and who that He considers no longer need repentance! And for that truth, first and foremost, praise your Shepard YAHUSHA [Jesus]! Then after that praise, then praise YAHUAH [God] and praise the RUACH HA'QODESH [Holy Spirit] for the work that they have started in you! Yes! Continually praise YAHUSHA [Jesus], Who once before had left behind the 99 for you! But Who now needs to pursue other lost sheep, and Who expects you to remain *inside* the fold... not to wander off again, but to remain among the other 98 sheep who no longer need His rescue! Yes, that's right! He now expects you not to wander off again, but to remain with and behave properly *with all 98* of the others of His flock, with no exceptions. Yes, you are not to behave improperly *with even one (1)* other of His body, but behave yourself!

V. INTRODUCTION TO THE 99

If you look today at the photograph on today's bulletin, you will see a partial photograph of the 99 sheep, who for the most part seem to be facing forward and heading in the same direction. There is one of a different color, but he or she are inside the flock, also facing forward and appearing to head in the same direction as the others. When you see or imagine this picture, remember that YAHUSHA [Jesus] is defending this flock of sheep against the church leaders. Remember that they are referred to as the "**tax collectors and the sinners**" that He has received and with Whom he now eats (Matthew 15:1-2). These sheep, then, are the worst of sinners, but... they have heard His voice and have opened up their door to Him, and He is now dining together with him (Revelation 3:20). Yes, these are those whom the world considers *despicable*! And those whom even the bible refers to as "**wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked**"! (Revelation 3:17) Yet, and what makes them especially special to YAHUSHA [Jesus], is that they are those who either have OR are in the process of purchasing from Him, His "fire-refined gold" and His "white garments" (Revelation 3:18) so that they might be transformed, becoming more and more

like Him each day. They are those who are covered with His righteousness, who have repented of and are each day leaving their sinful nature and behavior behind.

Again, if you look at today's photograph, you will notice that these sheep are NOT social distancing themselves from each other. Oh my! Instead they are joined closely together in one (1) flock. Although they appear to be crowded, they do not appear to be worried about their own personal space, nor bothered about the other sheep who are so closely packed together around them. They are not claustrophobic, but comfortable with each other in their confined space.

And now, as I reflect on our (own) body... on those who are but just a small a portion of the 99, I see a different group of sheep that in this picture. I see sheep heading in many different directions, not all facing toward and following in the same direction. Instead, our sheep are all heading in direct directions, as if each has a different shepherd, who is telling them to head in a different direction, down a different path. In our flock, I see individual persons who have a hard time getting along with each other... who dislike each other... who have no patience with each other, and who even criticize each other: about what the other sheep they say, and how the other sheep behave. Especially how they are being treated by them!

So, what should I say to each of you for having such an attitude toward each other. What I should say is what our Shepard said, that you should **“take heed that you do not despise one of these [others] ..., for [He] say[s] to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of [His] Father who is in heaven (Matthew 18:10).** In other words, I ask you today: who made you judge and juror over your brother and sisters whose Shepard is the same as yours, and who at their core are no different than you are: a **“sinner”**, who is **“wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked”**... but, thank YAHUAH [God], who has been covered by His Mercy and His Righteousness, because He is faithful toward you!

VI. LEARNING FROM SHEEP BEHAVIOUR

As Christians, we would do well to learn from sheep behavior... to learn to:

1. BE GREGARIOUS: SOCIABLE AND FOND OF EACH OTHER

Sheep are gregarious; they are sociable, fond of company. They band together and pretty much stay together. This isn't because they particularly

like each other, although they are social animals, but rather they stay close to each other for protection.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

2. MOVE TOGETHER AS A GROUP

We’ve heard the expression about sheep, “get one to go and they will all go”. So, because of their gregarious instinct, sheep desire to stay together for their protection. So we, too, should be in unison with our brothers and sister in the Body, unified in Him... as He Himself prayed, “**I pray for ... those who will believe in Me..., that all of them may be one, Father, as You are in Me and I am in You, may they also be in Us...**” (John 17:19b-21a)

3. MOVE TOWARDS OUR FRIEND, OUR PROVIDER

Because of their instinct to stay close together, sheep will move toward another sheep or a perceived friend, often a person who feeds them. So, sheep will follow other sheep that are moving to see a friend, such as a shepherd who feeds them.

4. RECOGNIZE OUR FRIEND: OUR SHEPARD

Our Shepard tells us that “**I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. [But] the hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So, when [the hired shepherd] sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. [But] I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me — just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep.**” (John 10:11-15) And,

“**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**” (John 13:34-35)

VII. THE POWER & AUTHORITY OF THE BODY OF YAHUSHA [Jesus]

Before YAHUSHA [Jesus] left behind the 99 to search for the one (1) lost sheep, He asked a question, **“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?”** (Luke 15:4) At first, when I considered YAHUSHA [Jesus] assumption that anyone, like Him, would leave behind the 99 sheep by themselves “in the wilderness” (Luke 15:4), where there are wolves seeking to devour them (John 10:12), to go after just the one (1) sheep, I thought it was odd. It does not make good economic sense if one would lose their entire investment in the 99 sheep, by themselves with the predators, to go after just one (1)? But then I thought more about it. And as always and as usual, YAHUSHA [Jesus] is brilliant in His ways! For as He pursues the one (1), He realizes that indeed His 99 are not alone. For He has given them a Helper, the RUACH [Spirit] of Truth, Who abides with them forever (John 14:15-18).

So, as He pursues the one (1), He has a certain expectation of the 99... a certain confidence in His flock of 99 that they will behave in such a way as we have been taught by Him... that we will:

1. RECOGNIZE HIM AS OUR FRIEND, OUR PROVIDER, OUR SHEPARD
2. MOVE CLOSER TOWARD HIM DAY-BY-DAY, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS A GROUP
3. LOVE ONE OTHER AS HE HAS LOVED US (John 15:12)
4. SPUR ONE ANOTHER ON TOWARD LOVE & GOOD DEEDS (Hebrews 10:25)
5. NOT GIVE UP MEETING TOGETHER (as some are doing) BUT ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER.

So today dear brothers and sister in MESSIAH [Christ], who I believe each considers YAHUHA [Jesus] as his and her personal Friend, Provider, and Shepard... today I encourage you to commit to and move closer and closer to Him each day. And then, as you move closer to Him, you will find that your actions show that you truly do love each other. And because you truly do love each and every sheep in His body, for whom He has died and whose angels continually see the face of His Father YAHUAH [God] in heaven, you will then surely spur everyone on toward love and good deeds... not giving up on your meeting together with them (as some are doing), but that you will continue to meet and encourage one another along the path where we will one day see Him face-to-face.

And now, as we close, let's repeat together the well-known Shepard psalm:
Psalm 23:

VIII. BENEDICTION – PSALM 23

“YAHUAH [The LORD] is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of YAHUAH [the LORD] forever.”

Today's Bulletin Photo:



Credits:

1 "Can't We All Just Get Along", Jenna Brownson; 5/26/2016, Updated May 27, 2017, Huffington Post;

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/cant-we-all-just-get-alon_b_10150704

2 "Rodney King", Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rodney_King

3 "An Introduction to Sheep Behavior", Richard Cobb, January 22, 1999, Sheep & Goats, Illinois Livestock Trail;

<http://livestocktrail.illinois.edu/sheepnet/paperDisplay.cfm?ContentID=1>