The Good Shepherd

A THEOLOGICAL JOURNEY OF 1,000 YEARS

Study Sheets & Discussion Questions

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1. The Good shepherd and his identity
2. The Source of Danger
3. A lost sheep / A lost flock
4. The good shepherd & the good host(ess?)
5. The incarnation of the shepherd
6. The shepherd restores the lost—at great cost
7. Repentance/Return (and the use of the verb shub)
8. The bad sheep
9. A celebratory meal
10. The location of the ending of the Story (in the house or in the land.)
The Good Shepherd and Psalm 23

1. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
   LORD - SHEPHERD
   No Wants

2. He settles me down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.
   FOOD & Drink
   FOOD & Drink

3. He brings me back/ he causes me to repent. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.
   RESCUE Security

4. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
   DEATH/EVIL No Fear SECURITY Comfort

5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
   FOOD & Drink

6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for the length of the days.
   GOODNESS AND MERCY LORD - House all the Days

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1 The small raised numbers at the beginning of the lines refer to the traditional verse numbers.

2 W. Holladay translated ירביצני (Hiphil) as “he lets me down” rather than the traditional “he makes me lie down.” See: William L. Holladay, Lexicon, p. 332. The Arabic text in the London Polyglot (1657) reads: ahallani which means “he settles me down.” The 1993 Arabic Bible translates “He lets me rests ....” Jer. 33:12 (RSV) translates the same verb as, “resting their flocks.”

3 The Hebrew reads: nefshi yashubib which literally translated allows for the two options I have listed in the text. The Arabic and Syriac versions read ”He brings me back.” The Syriac mirrors the Hebrew and can also mean, ”He causes me to repent.”

4 The Hebrew allows for both the “shadow of death” and the “shadow of deep darkness.”

5 The Hebrew here is זרא which can also be translated “adversaries” as in Ps. 31:10. The root meaning has to do with tying something down or restricting someone.

Pointing to the Good Shepherd | Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah
Session 3

**Jeremiah and the Good Shepherd (Jer. 23:1-8)**

1. “Woe to the shepherds who destroy And scatter the sheep of my pasture!”
   [An oracle of Yahweh]
   
   BAD SHEPHERDS
   Condemned

2. Therefore thus says the Lord, The God of Israel, Concerning the shepherds who care for my people; “You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you For your evil deeds,
   [An oracle of Yahweh]
   
   BAD SHEPHERDS
   Criticized
   & Threatened

3. Then I will gather the remnant of my flock Out of all the countries where I have driven them, And I will bring them back (שוב) to their fold, And they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them Who will shepherd them, And they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, Neither shall any be missing, [An oracle of Yahweh]
   
   GOD: GOOD SHEPHERD
   Bring Them Back (שוב)
   & Give Good Shepherds
   None Afraid or Lost

4. Behold, the days are coming, [An oracle of Yahweh] When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, And he shall reign as king and deal wisely, And shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’
   DAVIDIC KING PROMISED
   Judah Saved
   Israel Made Secure
   In the Land

5. Therefore, behold, the days are coming, [An oracle of Yahweh], When they shall no longer say, ‘As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘As the Lord lives Who brought up and gathered the offspring Of the house of Israel Out of the north country And out of all the countries where he had driven them.’
   THE LORD
   Brought Israel Back From Egypt
   THE LORD
   Brings Israel Back From the North
   DWELL IN THEIR LAND

Pointing to the Good Shepherd (Session 3) | 4
By way of summary, what can be said regarding Jeremiah’s vision of the shepherd and the flock?

1. Jeremiah makes clear that failures on the part of the leadership of the community of faith are very serious and those failures will not be overlooked.

2. The entire flock can be lost, scattered and destroyed. That is, “lostness” can devastate not only an individual, but also a community.

3. The sheep belong to God, not the shepherds. God cares for the flock even when the shepherds fail.

4. Jeremiah affirmed unshakable confidence in a hopeful future at the very time the world around him was descending into the abyss of destruction, death, slavery and exile.

5. One day God himself will appear, gather, and bring back the flock that still belongs to him even though the sheep are scattered and driven away.

6. For the flock, God will provide other shepherds and will raise up a Davidic king who will rule with wisdom, justice, and righteousness, offering salvation and security. This language participates with 31:31-35 in projecting a new and hopeful future.

7. In this text, the return anticipated is to the land, not to God (David’s emphasis is changed.) Once this return takes place

8. There is no celebration, no house and no female component added to the nature of God.

9. The salvation to come is projected to be so great as to overshadow the salvation of the community under Moses at the sea of reeds. That recollection of salvation focuses on the goodness of God, not on the brutalities of humans.
## Comparisons between Psalm 23 and Jeremiah 23:1-8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ps. 23:1-6</th>
<th>Jer. 23:1-8</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A personal story)</td>
<td>(A community exile and return)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ps. 23:1-6</th>
<th>Jer. 23:1-8</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Good shepherd is:</td>
<td>God</td>
<td>Good shepherd is: God + and later, one of David’s descendants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Good shepherd is:</td>
<td>God + and later, one of David’s descendants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Danger from:</td>
<td>Valley of Death</td>
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<td>Enemies</td>
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<td>2. Danger from:</td>
<td>Shepherds who Destroy, Scatter</td>
<td>Valley of Death</td>
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<td>3. Lost sheep</td>
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<td>Lost flock</td>
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<td>4. Good Host(ess?)</td>
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<td>5. Incarnation:</td>
<td>implied in the present</td>
<td>Incarnatıon: promised for the future</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Return is:</td>
<td>to God (shub)</td>
<td>Return is: to the land (shub)</td>
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<td>8. -----</td>
<td>----- (good/bad sheep not discussed)</td>
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<td>9. A celebration</td>
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<td>10. Story ends in:</td>
<td>the house</td>
<td>Story ends in: the land</td>
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*Pointing to the Good Shepherd (Session 3) | 6*
Ezekiel 34:1-31

Follows a very simple outline which is:

A. **The Bad Shepherds are**: accused, found guilty and condemned
   (Cameos 1 – 6; Ez. 34:1-10)

   B. **God, the Good Shepherd**: I, I myself will Come, Search,
      Find, Gather, Rescue, Feed, Bring back, Bind up, Strengthen,
      and Give Justice (Cameos 7-9; Ez. 34:11-15)

C. **The Bad Sheep are**: Accused and Judged
   (Cameos 10-11; Ez. 34:17-22)

   D. **God, the Good Shepherd**: I myself will appoint, Shepherd,
      Provide Food, Security, Peace, Blessing, and Freedom
      (Cameos 12-17; Ez. 34:23-30)

E. **You are my sheep**
   I am your God. (Cameo 17; Ez. 34:31)
The major themes in Ezekiel 34 that are picked up from the tradition, and new themes that are added to it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ps. 23:1-6</th>
<th>Jer. 23:1-8</th>
<th>Ez. 34:1-32</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(exile and return)</td>
<td>(exile and return)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Good shep. is God</td>
<td>Good shep. is God + David</td>
<td>Good shep. is God + David</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. ------</td>
<td>Bad shepherds destroy/scatter the flock</td>
<td>Bad shepherds scatter/eat the flock</td>
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<td>3. Lost sheep (no flock)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Good Host(ess?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Incarnation: implied</td>
<td>Incarnation: promised</td>
<td>Incarnation promised</td>
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<td>6. Price paid: deliver from fear bring back</td>
<td>Price paid: gather save, deliver, bring back</td>
<td>Price paid: gather save bring back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Repentance is: return to God (shub)</td>
<td>Repentance is: return to land (shub)</td>
<td>Repentance is: return to land (shub)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. ------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>good/bad sheep</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. A celebration</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Story ends in: house</td>
<td>Story ends in: the land</td>
<td>Story ends in: the land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Three chapters later (37:21-23) Ezekiel adds the following to the subject:]
“So you shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel. You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who reside among you and have begotten children among you. They shall be to you as native born sons of Israel with you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe the alien resides, there you shall assign him his inheritance, says the Lord God.”
Ezekiel and the Good/Bad Shepherd (Ez. 34:1-31)

A. Bad Shepherds Judged (Ez. 34:1-10)

1. The word of the Lord came to me:
   "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel;
   Prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds,
   Thus says the Lord God:

2. Ah, shepherds of Israel
   Who have been shepherding/tending themselves!
   Should not shepherds shepherd/tend the sheep?
   You eat the fat,
   You clothe yourselves with the wool,
   You slaughter the fat ones,
   But you do not shepherd/tend the sheep.

3. The weak you have not strengthened,
   The sick you have not healed,
   The injured you have not bound up,
   The strayed you have not brought back (בֵּיתאת),
   The lost you have not sought,
   And with force and harshness you have ruled them.

4. So they were scattered,
   Because there was no shepherd,
   And they became food for all the wild beasts.
   My sheep were scattered;
   They wandered over all the mountains
   And on every high hill.
   My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth,
   With none to search or seek for them.

5. “Therefore, you shepherds,
   Hear the word of the Lord:
   As I live, [An oracle of the Lord God],
   surely because my sheep have become a prey,
   And my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts,
   Since there was no shepherd,
   And because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep,
   But the shepherds have shepherded/tended themselves,
   And not fed my sheep.

6. Therefore, you shepherds,
   Hear the word of the Lord:
   Thus says the Lord God,
   Behold, I am against the shepherds,
   I DISMISS SHEPHERDS

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7 In Hebrew the root r’h produces the words, flock, shepherds and tending/shepherding. We have tried to preserve as much as possible of this play on words between “the shepherds” and what they do, which is shepherding/tending. It is much more than “feeding” as the texts themselves demonstrate.
And I will require my sheep at their hand  
And put a stop to their tending of the sheep.  
No longer shall the shepherds shepherd/tend themselves.  
I will rescue my sheep from their mouths,  
That they may not be food for them.

-----------------------------

B. Good Shepherd (God) Comes, searches, finds, gathers, rescues, feeds, brings back (בוש), 
Binds up, strengthens, gives justice (Ez. 34:11-16)

7. “For thus says the Lord God:  
Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep  
And will seek them out.  
As a shepherd seeks out his flock  
When he is among his sheep that have been scattered,  
So will I seek out my sheep,  
And I will rescue them  
From all the places where they have been scattered 
On a day of clouds and thick darkness.  
And I will bring them out from the peoples  
And gather them from the countries, 

8. And will bring them into their own land.  
And I will shepherd them on the mountains of Israel,  
By the ravines,  
And in all the inhabited places of the country.  
I will shepherd them in good pasture,  
And upon the mountain heights of Israel  
shall be their grazing land.  
There they shall lie down in good grazing land,  
And on rich pasture they shall feed  
On the mountains of Israel. 

9. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep,  
And I myself will let them lie down, declares the Lord God.  
I will seek the lost,  
And I will bring back (ברח) the strayed,  
And I will bind up the injured,  
And I will strengthen the weak,  
And the fat and the strong I will destroy.  
I will feed them in justice.

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8 The same verb ירביצה (rabatz) is used in Ps. 23:2 which we chose to translate “he lets me lie down.” The noun form of this verb means “a resting place”. Koeh-Baum, Lexicon, p. 871.
C. Bad Sheep Judged (Ez. 34:17-22)

10. “As for you, my flock, says the Lord God:
    Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep,
    Rams and male goats.
    Is it not enough for you to feed on good pasture,
    that you must tread down with your feet
    the rest of your pasture;
    and to drink of clear water,
    that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet?
    And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet,
    and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

11. “Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them:
    Behold, I, myself will judge between the fat sheep
    And the lean sheep.
    Because you push with side and shoulder,
    And thrust at all the weak with your horns,
    Till you have scattered them abroad,
    I will rescue my flock;
    they shall no longer be a pray.
    And I will judge between sheep and sheep.

-----------------------
D. Good Shepherd Will Come, Appoint, Shepherd, Provide Food, Security, Peace, Blessing.

Freedom (Ez. 34:23-30)

12. And I will set up over them one shepherd, My servant David, And he shall shepherd them: He shall tend them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, And my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken.

13. “I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

14. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing, And I will send down the showers in their season; They shall be showers of blessing. And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, And the earth shall yield its increase, And they shall be secure in their land.

15. And they shall know that I am the Lord, When I break the bars of their yoke, And deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They shall no more be a prey to the nations, Nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, And none shall make them afraid. And I will provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed With hunger in the land, And no longer suffer the reproach of the nations.

16. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, Says the Lord God.

E. Conclusion: You are my sheep (Ez. 34:31)

17. And you are my sheep, Human sheep of my pasture, And I am your God declares the Lord God.”

YOU ARE MY SHEEP

I Am Your God
The Good Shepherd and Zechariah 10:2-6

1. Indeed the household gods utter nonsense,
   And the diviners see lies;
   The they tell false dreams
   And give empty consolation.
   Therefore the people wander like sheep;
   They are afflicted for want of a shepherd.
   My anger is hot against the shepherds,
   And I will punish the leaders;

   FALSE LEADERS
   Fail
   LOST FLOCK
   No Shepherds
   LORD ANGRY
   Bad Shepherds Punished

2. For the Lord of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah,
   And will make them like the steed of his majesty in battle.
   From him shall come the cornerstone,
   from him the tent peg,
   from him the battle bow,
   from him every ruler – all of them together.
   They shall be like mighty men in battle,
   Trampling the foe in the mud of the streets;
   they shall fight because the Lord is with them,
   And they shall put to shame the riders on horses.

   GOD: SHEPHERD
   War Horse for God
   Cornerstone
   Tent Peg
   Battle Bow
   Ruler
   Mighty in Battle
   Trampling Foe in Mud
   GOD WITH THEM
   Confound Cavalry

3. “I will strengthen the house of Judah,
   and I will save the house of Joseph.
   I will bring them back (שח"ב)
   because I have compassion on them,
   and they shall be as though I had not rejected them,
   for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them.

   GOD: GOOD SHEPHERD
   Joseph Saved
   Brought back (shub)
   Shown Compassion
   Not rejected
   Answered

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9 My translation. The text is describing the majesty of the Lord, not the greatness of the horse. Granted, the horse must be a powerful magnificent animal to showcase the majesty of the Lord, but it is the Lord who is on display not the horse. Queen Elizabeth’s formal attire displays the majesty of her person and presence, not the other way around. Here we follow the Syriac Peshitta and the Arabic versions.
## A Thematic Comparison between Psalm 23 and Zechariah 10:2-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ps. 23:1-6</th>
<th>Zech. 10:2-12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(exile &amp; return)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. **Good shep.**  
   Is God  
   Good shep.  
   Is God

2. **Danger from:**  
   Valley of Death  
   Enemies  
   Danger from:  
   Bad shepherds  
   abandon  
   flock

3. **Lost sheep**  
   (no flock)  
   ------  
   Lost flock

4. **Good Host(ess?)**  
   is God  
   ------

5. **Incarnation:**  
   Promised  
   Incarnation:  
   Promised

6. **G. shep. will:**  
   deliver from  
   fear,  
   bring back  
   (shub)  
   G. shep. will:  
   strengthen  
   save,  
   have compassion,  
   bring back  
   (shub)

7. **Return is:**  
   to God  
   (shub)  
   Return is:  
   to the land  
   (shub)

8. ------  
   ------  
   ------ (Good and bad sheep?)

9. **A celebration**  
   ------

10. **Story ends in:**  
    the house  
    Story ends in:  
    the land

11. **Flock is transformed into:**  
    God’s war horse,  
    a battle bow,  
    victorious, arrogant military,  
    tent peg/corner stone,  
    rulers
# The Great Story of the Good Shepherd  
(as seen in Psalm 23, Jeremiah 23, Ezekiel 34, Zechariah 10 and Luke 15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ps. 23:1-6</th>
<th>Jer. 23:1-8</th>
<th>Ez. 34:1-32</th>
<th>Zech. 10:2-12</th>
<th>Lu. 15:4-7</th>
<th>Lu. 15:8-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Good shep. is God</td>
<td>Good shep. is God + David</td>
<td>Good shep. is God + David</td>
<td>Good shep. is God</td>
<td>Good shep. is Jesus</td>
<td>Good shep. is Jesus</td>
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<td>2. Danger from:</td>
<td>Danger from:</td>
<td>Danger from:</td>
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<td>Danger from:</td>
<td>Danger from:</td>
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<td>Valley of Death, Enemies</td>
<td>Valley of Death, Enemies</td>
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<td>Valley of Death, Enemies</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Lost sheep</td>
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<td>One Lost sheep + lost flock</td>
<td>One Lost coin (out of 10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(no flock)</td>
<td>lost flock</td>
<td>lost flock</td>
<td>lost flock</td>
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<td>4. Good Host(ess?)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Good Housekeeper</td>
<td>is Jesus</td>
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<td>implied</td>
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<td>6. G. shep. will:</td>
<td>G. shep. will:</td>
<td>G. shep. will:</td>
<td>G. shep. will:</td>
<td>G. shep. will:</td>
<td>G. woman will:</td>
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<tr>
<td>deliver from fear, bring back</td>
<td>deliver, from fear, bring back</td>
<td>deliver, from fear, rescue, answer, bring back</td>
<td>deliver, from fear, save, deliver</td>
<td>search for, find, bring back</td>
<td>light lamp, sweep, search find</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Return is:</td>
<td>Return is:</td>
<td>Return is:</td>
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<td>to God (shub)</td>
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<td>to the land (shub)</td>
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<td>to God (metanoeo)</td>
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<td>10. Story ends in:</td>
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<td>11. ------</td>
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<td>Flock is transformed into:</td>
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<td>God’s war horse, a battle bow, victorious military, tent peg/corner stone, rulers</td>
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<td>They fight: because the Lord is with them</td>
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Repentance Redefined | Luke 15 | Session 4 & 5


1. “What man of you, having a hundred sheep,

2. and having lost one (hadh) of them,

3. does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness,

A. and go after the lost one LOST
B. until he finds it? And having found it, FIND
C. he places it upon his shoulders, rejoicing. REJOICE (hedhwa)
D. And coming to the home, RESTORE he calls to the friends and neighbors,
C’. saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, REJOICE (hedhwa)
B’. because I have found my sheep FIND
A’. which was lost’ LOST

4. Even so, I say to you, that thus there will be more joy (hedhwa) in heaven

5. over one (hadh) sinner who repents ONE

6. than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. NINETY-NINE
The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)

7. “Or what woman,
having ten silver coins,

8. if she loses one coin,

9. does not light a lamp and sweep the house
and seek diligently until she finds it?

10. And finding it, she calls together
her friends and neighbors, saying,
'Rejoice with me,

11. for I have found the coin

12. which I had lost.

13. Even so, I tell you,
there is joy before the angels of God
over one sinner who repents.”
### Intertextuality and Luke 15: 4-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ps. 23:1-6</th>
<th>Jer. 23:1-8 (exile &amp; return)</th>
<th>Ez. 34:1-32 (exile &amp; return)</th>
<th>Lu. 15:4-7</th>
<th>Lu. 15:8-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Good shep. is God</td>
<td>Good shep. is God + David</td>
<td>Good shep. is God + David</td>
<td>Good shep. is Jesus</td>
<td>Good shep. is Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Danger from: Valley of Death, Enemies</td>
<td>Danger from: Bad shepherds destroy/scatter the flock</td>
<td>Danger from: Bad shepherds scatter/eat the flock</td>
<td>Danger from: Bad shepherd loses a sheep</td>
<td>Danger from: woman loses coin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lost sheep (no flock)</td>
<td>------</td>
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<td>One Lost sheep + lost flock</td>
<td>One Lost coin (out of 10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Repentance is: return to God (shub)</td>
<td>Repentance is: return to the land (shub)</td>
<td>Repentance is: return to the land (shub)</td>
<td>Repentance is: return to God (metanoeo)</td>
<td>Repentance is: return to God (metanoeo)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. ------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>good/bad sheep</td>
<td>good/bad sheep</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. A celebration</td>
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<td>A celebration</td>
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**Conclusion**

The primary source for Jesus’ parable of the Lost Sheep (and the Lost Coin) is *Psalm 23*. This can be seen as follows:

A. **Four times** the parable sets Jeremiah and Ezekiel aside and **returns** to Psalm 23. 

B. **Three times** the dramatic idea **originates** with Psalm 23 and **develops** as it progresses through all five accounts. Cf. 3. Shepherd is God; 4. Incarnation; 5. price paid.

C. **Once** the parable **borrows** an idea that originates in *Jeremiah* (1. bad shepherd) and **once** it borrows from *Ezekiel* (8. good/bad sheep).
The Parable of the *Good Woman and the Lost Coin* reflects 8 out of the 9 dramatic elements found in the parallel parable of the *Good Shepherd and the Lost Sheep*.

**A. The Theological Cluster of the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7)**

1. **Failed Leadership.** The parable contains criticism of leaders who lose their sheep and do nothing but complain about others who go after them.

2. **Freely Offered Grace.** The lost sheep does not earn the right to rescue. It is a gift.

3. **Incarnation and Atonement.** The shepherd goes out to the sheep (incarnation) and pays a high price to **find** and **restore** it to his home (atonement).

4. **Sin.** Humankind is depicted as unable to find its own way home. This applies both to the one and to the 99 who are last seen while yet “in the wilderness.” They are not safely in the village, but rather are also in need of guidance in order to arrive home.

5. **Joy.** With his friends, the shepherd rejoices at the success of his saving act.

6. **Repentance.** Repentance is defined as acceptance of being found. The sheep is lost and helpless and yet is a symbol of repentance. Repentance becomes a combination of the shepherd’s act of rescue and the sheep’s acceptance of that act. The 99 “(think they) need no repentance” (like the older son in 15:25-32), but such a need is unmistakable.

7. **The Individual and the Community.** David tells of a single (lost) sheep. Jeremiah and Ezekiel turn Psalm 23 into a tale of a lost flock (Israel) which God restores to **his land.** Jesus de-Zionizes the story and in the process he brings together a concern for the individual (the one) **and** the community (the 99). David’s emphasis on the individual and Jeremiah/Ezekiel’s concern for the community, are united by Jesus in a single story. In the process restoration/return to God is what matters, not return to the land.

8. **Christology.** Jesus is the good shepherd, a unique agent of God who restores the lost sinner to God. (The joy in **the home** of the shepherd is connected in the parable to joy in **heaven**.) This shepherd must personally make the costly demonstration of love/holiness in order to restore the helpless sheep. Three Old Testament texts stand behind the parable; Psalm 23, Jeremiah 23:1-4 and Ezekiel 34. This Old Testament background makes clear that the shepherd is more than merely an agent. He is the one who fulfills the promises of David, Jeremiah and Ezekiel that God himself will come to his people and seek out his lost sheep.

**B. Themes Unique to the Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)**

9. **The Unchanged Value of the Coin.** When found, the sheep may be sick or injured. But the coin is of undiminished worth while lost and when found has lost nothing of its previous value.

10. **The Worth of Women.** In this parable Jesus affirms, “I am like this woman! I search for the lost. You should do likewise.” Jesus elevates the worth of all women by his choice of imagery.

11. **The Hope of Success in Finding the Lost.** The outcome of the shepherd’s search, in spite of his determination, is somewhat uncertain. The woman’s diligence is assured success. The coin is **in** the house. It **can** be found.
The Good Shepherd and His Banquet of Life | Mark 6
Session 6

The Sending of the Twelve and the Two Banquets
(Mark 6:1-52)

I. Hostility and lack of faith in Nazareth (6:1-6)

II. Herod’s banquet and the mission of the twelve (6:7-33)
   a. The twelve are sent out (6:7-13)
   b. Herod & John [and the ministry of Jesus] (6:14-20)
   c. Herod & John [a banquet of death] (6:21-29)
   d. The twelve return (6:30-33)

III. The new Moses: A shepherd spreads a banquet of life (6:34-45)

IV. The new Moses: Brings his disciples through the sea (6:46-52)
I. Hostility and lack of faith in Nazareth (Mk. 6:1-6)

1. He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him.
   Setting
   And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue,

2. and many who heard him were astounded.
   Hometown
   They said, “Where did this man get all this?
   Offended
   What is this wisdom that has been given to him?
   Offended
   What deeds of power are being done by his hands?
   Offended
   Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary
   Offended
   and brother of James and Joses and Judas
   Offended
   and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?”
   Offended
   And they took offense at him.

3. Then Jesus said to them,
   Without
   “A prophet is not without honor
   Honor
   except in his hometown
   Honor
   and among his own kin
   Honor
   and in his own house.”

4. And he could do no deed of power there,
   Limited
   except that he laid his hands
   Power
   on a few sick people and cured them.

5. And he was amazed
   Hometown
   at their unbelief.
   Unbelief
II. Herod’s Banquet and the Mission of the Twelve (Mk. 6:7-33)

a. The Twelve are sent out (Mk. 6:7-13)

1. Then he went about among the villages teaching; and he called the twelve and began to send them out, two by two, and give them authority over the unclean spirits.

2. And he ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics.

3. And he said to them, “Where you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave shake off the dust of the feet as a testimony against them.”

4. So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent; and they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.
b. Herod, John [and the Ministry of Jesus (Mk. 6:14-20)]

1. King Herod heard of it, THE PRESENT:
   For Jesus’ name had become known. Herod
   Some were saying, Jesus = John raised
   “John the baptizer has been raised from the dead,
   and for this reason these powers are at work in him.”

2. But others said, “It is Elijah.” JESUS = Elijah
   And others said, “It is a prophet,
   like one of the prophets.” JESUS = a prophet

3. But when Herod heard of it, he said, HEROD
   “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.” Jesus = John raised

4. For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, FLASH BACK TO PAST:
   bound him, and put him in prison Herod
   on account of Herodias, his brother Phillip’s wife, John imprisoned
   because Herod had married her.

5. For John had been telling Herod, JOHN’S
   “It is not lawful for you Judgment
   to have your brother’s wife.”

6. And Herodias had a grudge against him HERODIAS’
   and wanted to kill him. Response
   But did not have the power.

7. For Herod feared John, HEROD reacts to JOHN:
   knowing that he was a righteous fear
   and holy man and he protected him.
   And when he heard him respect: righteous, holy
   he was greatly perplexed; protection
   and yet he liked to listen to him. confusion
   enjoyment
c. Herod and John [a banquet of death] (Mk. 6:21-29)

1. But an opportunity came when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. 

2. When Herodias’ daughter came in and danced she pleased Herod and his guests.

3. And the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it.”
   And he solemnly swore to her, “Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half my kingdom.”

4. She went out and said to her mother, “What should I ask for?”
   She replied, “The head of John the baptizer.”
   Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

5. And the king was deeply grieved, yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her.
   Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John’s head.

6. He went and beheaded him in the prison and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl.
   Then the girl gave it to her mother.

7. When the disciples heard about it, they took his body, and laid it in a tomb.


d. The twelve return (Mk. 6:30-33)

1. The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught.

   He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.”

2. For many were coming and going

   and they had no leisure, even to eat.

3. And they went away in the boat
to a deserted place by themselves.

4. Now many saw them going and recognized them,

   and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.
III. The new Moses: The Good shepherd spreads a banquet of life (Mark 6:34-45)

1. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; [and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.] And he began to teach them many things.

2. When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late. Send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.”

3. But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “Are we to go, and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?”

4. And he said to them, “How many loaves have you? Go and see.” When they had found out, they said, “Five and two fish.”

5. Then he ordered them to make all the people lie down in groups in the green pastures. So they reclined in groups of hundreds and of fifties.

6. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave it to his disciples to set before the people.

7. And all ate and were filled; and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish.

8. Immediately he forced his disciples to get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.

9. And all ate and were filled; and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish.

After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray.
Mark 6:34-45  A New Moses, a Good Shepherd and a new Banquet:

The Theological Cluster

A. A Good Shepherd feeds his sheep
1. Jesus sees the crowds as sheep without a shepherd.
2. He has compassion on them in spite of his exhaustion and pain and decides to lead and feed them.
3. The setting of the story is in the open pastures (not in a city, house, shore or Synagogue).
4. He orders them to lie down in Green pastures (as God does in Psalm 23).
5. They are in the valley of the shadow of death (John has just been killed).
6. He spreads a “table” before them in spite of that shadow.
7. “My cup runneth over” (they have more than enough).
8. He takes charge of the flock (at the beginning, in the middle and at the end) like a good shepherd.
9. In the next story they are on the sea and he provides “still waters” for them.

Taken together it is clear that the account in Mark presents Jesus as fulfilling the role of the good shepherd of Psalm 23. Indeed, “the Lord is my shepherd.”

B. The New Moses cares for the people in the wilderness
10. Moses provided bread and meat for the people in the wilderness. Jesus does the same thing. Jesus is also the new Moses. But there is a difference.
11. Moses was obliged to ask God for the bread and meat. Jesus looks up into heaven, but it is Jesus who provides the meal. He is the divine presence among the people. Jesus is the primary actor.

C. Jesus offers a banquet of life.
12. Herod had a banquet for his “disciples” (courtiers, military officers and village leaders) and the result was a “sumposia” (a drinking party that ends in murder). It was a banquet of death. Jesus had the people sit in groups (sumposia: a word that occurs only here in the NT). Jesus offered a banquet of life.
13. This banquet is his public response to the murder of his cousin, John the Baptist. Retaliation is not the only option. Jesus reprocesses anger into grace. He does not strike back, but he does offer a challenge. In the face of a banquet of death, Jesus offers the people a banquet of life. The people can choose between them.

D. The Eucharist
10. The overtones of the Eucharist are clear. He takes the bread, prays, breaks it and distributes it. A part of the meaning of the Eucharist is a continuation of table fellowship with the Lord. That table fellowship is at the heart of this story.

“Truly, truly, I say to you,

1. he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, THIEF
   that man is a thief and a robber; Robber

2. but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. SHEPHERD
   To him the gatekeeper opens;

3. the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, SHEPHERD
   he goes before them,
   the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

4. A stranger they will not follow, STRANGER
   but they will flee from him,
   for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

5. This figure Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

B. The Good Shepherd and the Thieves: Overnight in the Wilderness (John 10:7-10)

So Jesus again said to them,

“Truly, truly I say to you,

6. a. I am the door of the sheep. I AM - DOOR

7. All who came before me are thieves and robbers; THIEVES
   but the sheep did not heed them. Robbers

8. a. I am the door; I AM - DOOR
   b. if anyone enters by me, he will be saved, Be Saved
   c. and will go in and out and find pasture. Find pasture

9. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; THIEF
   and find pasture. Steal/Kill

10. b. I came that they may have life, I CAME
    c. and have it abundantly. For Abundant Live
C. The Good Shepherd and the Wolf (John 10:11-18)

1a. I am the good shepherd. GOOD SHEPHERD

b. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

2. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, HIRELING
   whose own the sheep are not,

3. sees the wolf coming WOLF

4. and leaves the sheep and flees; HIRELING
   Flees

5. and the wolf snatches them
   and scatters them. WOLF

6. He flees because he is a hireling HIRELING
   and cares nothing for the sheep.

7a. I am the good shepherd; GOOD SHEPHERD

   I know my own and my own know me,

   as the Father knows me and I know the Father;

b. and I lay down my life for the sheep

   --------------------------      -------------------------

8. And I have other sheep, THE VISION
   that are not of this fold; For Proclamation

9. I must bring them also, THE TASK
   and they will heed my voice. Of Proclamation

10. So there will be one flock, THE GOAL
    one shepherd. Of Proclamation

   --------------------------      -------------------------

11. For this reason the Father loves me, FATHER LOVES

12. because I lay down my life, I LAY DOWN LIFE
    that I may take it up again. I Take It Again

13. No one takes it from me, NO ONE TAKES IT
    but I lay it down of my own accord. I Give It – Freely

14. I have authority to lay it down, I - AUTHORITY TO LAY DOWN
    and I have the authority to take it again; I – Authority To Take it Again

15. this charge I have received from my Father. FATHER GIVES CHARGE
Theology of John 10:1-10

v. 1-10
1. The Sheep know the voice of the Shepherd and follow it. (they will not follow thieves, robbers or strangers)
2. Jesus is the door to salvation that is abundant life. (thieves/robbers kill and destroy)

Theology of John 10:11-16

v. 11-15
1. Jesus is the good shepherd of Ps. 23, Jer. 23, Ez. 34, and Zech. 10:4-6. He lays down his life for the sheep. Jesus has “The name that is above every name” (Phil. 2:9) because of the Cross.
2. The intimate relationship between the Father and the Son is a pattern for the intimacy between the Son and the believing community—because of the Cross. The intimacy between the Father and the Son is not broken, even by a Cross, because of the obedience of the Son (Phil. 2: 8-9). The intimacy between the Son and the Faithful is fashioned by the Cross.
3. The struggle between the Good shepherd and the Wolf inevitably creates a bond between the Good Shepherd and the Sheep.
4. The Wolf symbolizes the combination of evil forces (religious and political) that Jesus fought with and overcame on the Cross, and through the Resurrection.
5. The good shepherd “cares for the sheep.” His action is the action of the Father and its motive is love. The Hireling (the temple leadership?) has no such love and is not willing to get hurt for the sheep.
6. The suffering of the good shepherd for the sheep is not described, it is simply affirmed. There is no “pornography of suffering” in the text.

v. 16
1. This verse describes:
   - The vision for proclamation
   - The task of proclamation.
   - The goal of proclamation.
2. This threefold task is set in the center of two discussions. The first is on the Cross and the second affirms Cross/Resurrection. The vision, task and goal of evangelism are like a rocket fired from the “launching pad” composed of the Cross and the Resurrection.
3. The “other sheep” are best understood to be the Gentiles.
4. The centrality of Christ and the unity of the flock (the church) are a part of this evangelistic vision.
The Cross and the Resurrection (v. 17-18)

1. **As regards the Jews:** Jesus lays down his life. No one takes it from him. The text does not blame the Jews. In the book of John the Greek word, “ιουδαῖοι” means “the Judeans.” In 1 Cor. 2:8 Paul affirms that both Herod and Pilot, had they known who Jesus was, would not have crucified him. John 13:3 affirms that on the eve of the cross, “The Father had given all things into his hands.” (i.e. Jesus was in charge of the drama of the Passion.) At the trial Jesus tells Pilot that he has no power (εξουσία) over Jesus other than what was given him from above (i.e. all that is taking place is under the control of God).

2. **As regards Islam:** In Islam God always gives victory to his prophets. Islam thinks it is showing honor to Jesus by denying the historicity of the cross. This text affirms the greatest victory of all, the victory over sin and death, for Jesus.

3. **The cross is an expression of the love of God.**

   God does get angry over sin (Romans 5). That anger flows from the betrayal of a covenant of love. At the Cross, at great cost, anger at betrayal and injustice is reprocessed into Grace that flows from that cross in the form of love.

4. **There is a Theology of Mission:** There is no surrender of the freedom to choose the direction of servanthood. “I lay down my life” says Jesus.

5. **Salvation flows from the cross and the resurrection** (Here the Greek and Latin traditions meet). Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15 “If Christ is not raised you are still in your sins.” (Victory over sin and death is what matters).

6. **Paul and John.** Paul writes, “God raised him up.” John records, “I have power to take it again.” A diamond sheds light in many directions.

7. **Theology of the Cross.** There evil is engaged, suffering is endured, costly love is demonstrated, and victory is won. “I lay down my life that I may take it again.” Why? To demonstrate that sin and death are defeated. The shepherd dies, but in the process sin and death are defeated on the cross and through the resurrection.
The Church Leader as a Good Shepherd (Matthew 18:10-14)

1. Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones;
2. for I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father who is in heaven.
3. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray,
4. does he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go in search of the one that went astray?
5. And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.
6. So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven
7. that one of these little ones should perish.
The Theological Cluster of Matthew 18:10-14

1. **Luke’s account** of this parable focuses on Jesus as the unique agent of God who goes after and finds his lost sheep. Matthew’s text presents the good shepherd as a model for leadership in the Christian community.

2. The leaders of the community are warned against neglecting/despising/looking down on the “little ones”, i.e. the humble powerless.

3. Those same “little ones” have friends in high places who have unbroken access to the face of God. God wills that they be found and cared for. By implication, any neglect of them will invoke his displeasure.

4. The lost sheep is important enough that the shepherd leaves the 99 “in the hills” to go after it.

5. If he/she finds the lost sheep (a conclusion not assured) the shepherd:
   a. Does not scold the sheep for getting lost.
   b. Does not ring her hands over the expended energy that could have been saved and used for other purposes if the sheep had but paid attention to his leadership.
   c. Does rejoice more over this one than over the ninety-nine. (The mind of the listener/reader is stimulated to reflect on the reaction of the 99 to all the attention given to the lost sheep. He is clearly free to rejoice over the one more than the 99.)

6. God is both a father to Jesus (my father) and to the disciples (your father). The Aramaic Abba carries both of these meanings. Matthew carefully balances the two. The first appears in an opening stanza (no. 2) and the second matches it in a stanza near the end (no. 6). The distinction is worthy of much careful reflection.

7. The “little ones” can and do perish, but it is not the father’s will that they be lost. The mystery of the tension between the will of the Father and the freedom and responsibility of people in history is set forth in the parable but not resolved.

CONCLUSIONS for “The Good Shepherd” as a model for Christian leadership

The topic is like a diamond that sheds light in a great variety of directions. No brief summary is possible. Perhaps the best that can be said is:

1. God is the Good Shepherd (cf. Ps. 23; Jer. 23:1-8; Ez. 34)
3. The Christian leader is a Good Shepherd (cf. Matt. 18:1-10-14; 1 Pet. 5:1-4)
The Good Shepherd and 1 Peter 5:1-5

1. I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shared in the glory to be revealed,
   CHRIST His Sufferings Glory

2. to tend the flock of God that is in your charge,
   TEND FLOCK Your Charge

3. exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly,
   WILLINGLY No Compulsion

4. as God would have you do it— not for sordid gain but eagerly.
   EAGERLY Not For Money

5. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock.
   YOUR CHARGE Example to the Flock

6. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away.
   CHRIST Chief Shepherd Glory

The Theological Cluster of 1 Peter 5:1-4

1. Peter, as the leader of the church, affirms himself as a “fellow elder,” and thereby affirms collegiality as his leadership style.

2. Peter was not present at the cross. Thus the “suffering of Christ” that he is referring to must have to do with the agony of rejected love that Jesus endured day by day.

3. The glory mentioned in the text is not related to splendor but surely refers to the gravitas (the weight and wisdom) that is a potential outcome of suffering.

4. The “flock of God” all through the OT texts examined, refers to “Israel.” That same language is here applied to the Church.

5. To “tend the flock of God” “as God would have you do it” only makes sense when all of the OT texts examined above are brought to mind. In all four texts studies God gave himself for the flock as the good shepherd. It is that pattern of leadership that is here invoked.

6. Financial mismanagement both then and now is an ever present potential in the church.

7. Lead, don’t drive the flock, urges Peter.

8. The mirror of eternity is held up. Present leadership must be carried out in the light of the end of all things when the “chief shepherd” appears.
### Summary of four OT texts and two NT texts as they shape the story of the Good Shepherd

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ps. 23:1-6 (exile &amp; return)</th>
<th>Jer. 23:1-8 (exile &amp; return)</th>
<th>Ez. 34:1-32 (exile &amp; return)</th>
<th>Zech. 10:2-12 (exile &amp; return)</th>
<th>Lu. 15:4-7</th>
<th>Lu. 15:8-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Good shep. is God</td>
<td>Good shep. is God + David</td>
<td>Good shep. is God</td>
<td>Good shep. is God</td>
<td>Good shep. is Jesus</td>
<td>Good shep. is Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Danger from: Valley of Death, Enemies</td>
<td>Danger from: Bad shepherds destroy/scatter the flock</td>
<td>Danger from: Bad shepherds scatter/eat the flock</td>
<td>Danger from: Bad shepherds abandon the flock</td>
<td>Danger from: Bad shepherd loses a sheep</td>
<td>Danger from: Careless woman loses coin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lost sheep (no flock)</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>One Lost sheep + lost flock</td>
<td>One Lost coin (out of 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Good Host(ess?) is God</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>Good Housekeeper + Good Hostess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. G. shep. will: deliver</td>
<td>G. shep. will: gather,</td>
<td>G. shep. will: search for,</td>
<td>G. shep. will: strengthen,</td>
<td>G. shep. will: search for, find, sweep, search find</td>
<td>G. woman will: light lamp, sweap, search find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from fear, bring back</td>
<td>deliver,</td>
<td>save, deliver</td>
<td>save,</td>
<td>find,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>from fear,</td>
<td>have compassion,</td>
<td>bring back</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rescue, answer,</td>
<td>bring back</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Return is: to God (shub)</td>
<td>Return is: to the land (shub)</td>
<td>Return is: to the land (shub)</td>
<td>Return is: to God (shub)</td>
<td>Return is: to God</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(shub)</td>
<td>(shub)</td>
<td>(shub)</td>
<td>(metanoeo)</td>
<td>(metanoeo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. ------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>good/bad sheep</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>good/bad sheep</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. A celebration</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>A celebration</td>
<td>A celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Story ends in: the house</td>
<td>Story ends in: the land</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>Story ends in:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the land (?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>the house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. ------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>Flock is transformed into:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>God’s war horse,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a battle bow,</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>victorious military,</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tent peg/corner,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rulers</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Discussion Questions

Session 1

1. When you personally explain anything to anyone, do you start with a parable and end with an idea, or do you start with an idea that you may then illustrate? Does this distinction help us understand Jesus?

2. Do you see Jesus primarily as an intellectual (a theologian) or as a divine savior and an example of love? Can he be all three?

3. When you hear the phrase “Jesus the good shepherd” what comes to your mind? Does the image in your mind relate to the cross?

4. Does the image of the good shepherd really include Christmas and Easter? If so, how and where?

5. Why do you think the NT leaves out all the “home land security” language found in the Psalms? Why does Jesus leave it out?

6. What about the first, second, and third person in Psalm 23? What does it mean? Is it random? How does it help us understand the psalm?

7. Was there a point in your life where “the Lord is my shepherd” was especially meaningful to you?

Session 2

1. “The Lord is my shepherd” was David’s perception of God in the midst of great stress. How can we make such an affirmation in the midst of the stresses of our lives?

2. David discusses food and drink for animals and for people. How can this language apply to us?

3. “Lead me” or “drive me.” What are our perceptions of these two different leadership styles and how can these images help us in our leadership responsibilities?

4. “He brings me back.” How does this fit our understandings of “repentance?” Is this related to Luke 15:4-7?

5. What difference does it make when the literary form tells us that the center climax of the psalm discusses deliverance from our fear of sin and death? How have we managed with these universal fears? How can the good shepherd deliver us from them?

6. What are the “rods” and “staffs” that deliver us from our fears?

7. What do you think about the female component of the Psalm? Had you previously noted the good hostess? What difference does the presence of both male and female images in the psalm make for our lives and for our understanding of leadership in our churches.

8. The Psalm speaks of a banquet spread “for me” at great cost (God endures the hostility of my enemies when he hosts a meal for me). Is this text related to the Eucharist? In 1 Cor. 10:21 Paul discusses “the cup” and “the table”. Why does Paul borrow language from Psalm 23 when he discusses the Eucharist?

9. On our “way home,” what follows us? Are there lurking wolves and thieves? How can we sense the “goodness and covenant faithfulness” of God at our backs?
10. Is the “house of the Lord” to be understood as “a building” or “heaven” or “all of nature?” Is this distinction important? How do you understand “the length of the days?”

Session 3

Jeremiah
1. Jeremiah lives through utter despair and maintains hope. How does he do so? How can we learn from him?

2. Jeremiah promises that God himself will come and straighten things out. What is this all about? Does this promise of personal appearance in history help us understand the person and ministry of Jesus?

3. The return from Babylon will be greater than the return from Egypt says Jeremiah. What did that mean for them and what should it mean for us?

Ezekiel
1. Look at the criticism of the bad shepherds (Ez. 34:1-10). In the light of this very sharp criticism how should we look at Jesus’ criticism of the Pharisees (particularly in Matt. 23)?

2. Ezekiel promises that one day, God will come himself (Ez. 34:11-16). In what ways is this promise stronger than the similar promise in Jeremiah 23?

3. Does suffering make us righteous? What does Ezekiel have to say about his? How dare he criticize people who are suffering?

Zechariah
1. For all three prophets the “return” is to “the land” not to God and his “Paths of Righteousness (Ps. 23).” But in contrast, Isaiah 49:5 takes of the Suffering Servant who will bring the people back to him (God) and not the land. Which kind of a “return” does Jesus seek? Is it “to the land” or is it “to God”? Does it matter?

2. What is to be made of the dramatic transformation of sheep into an attacking army? Would David have been please by such a transformation? What about Jesus?

3. In Zechariah 9:9-10 the savior of the nation will come “humbly riding on an ass” not on a war horse. Now here in chapter ten the “war horse” is prominent. Which text did Jesus follow and what is the significance of his choice? What would have happened in history if Jesus had chosen Zechariah 10 as his model for the triumphal entry?

4. Generally speaking, what do we learn from these three prophetic witnesses about the task of the good shepherd?

Session 4

1. Why did Jesus not write a book?

2. Why did Jesus deliberately challenge the disciples to be the reporters of what he said and did (John 18: 19-21)?

3. The earliest church decided that:
   - Jesus was Lord, and Messiah (Acts 2:36)
   - He died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3)
- He was the one through whom all things were made (1 Cor. 8:6)

Could these early conclusions have contributed to an early recording in Greek of what Jesus said and did? If so why?

4. The church reached out to Greek speaking Jesus at a very early stage in the life of the church. Was this “Missional challenge” significant for an early recording in Greek of the life and witness of Jesus?

5. Why did the Pharisees object to Jesus’ eating with “sinners”?

6. Was it daring of Jesus to retell Psalm 23, at all, let alone with himself as the central figure of his new version?

7. In your opinion is the Christology of this parable as lofty as what Paul says about Jesus in Philippians 2:5-11?

8. What about the “one” and the “many” in this parable? Is it significant? Why?

9. Why in the parable are the 99 left “in the wilderness”?

10. Does this parable help us understand why Jesus was crucified?

**Session 5**

1. Why does Jesus have the shepherd leave the 99 sheep “in the wilderness?”

2. What is the “Mashal” in a Rabbinic parable, and what is a “Nimshal?” Does Jesus have both?

3. How did the Rabbis of the first century define “repentance?”

4. What were the various ways that one could be reconciled to God in the minds of first century rabbis?

5. What is Jesus’ new definition of repentance? Do we participate in that repentance? If so, how?

6. What are the two kinds of sin that Jesus sets out in this parable?

7. What is the primary emotion attached to repentance? Joy or remorse? Explain your answer.

8. Why does Jesus add the second parable about the woman and her coin?

9. What unique ideas are embedded in the parable about the good woman?

10. It is obvious that Jesus compared himself to a woman. Did he also compare God to a woman? What significance does this have for the life of the church?

**Session 6**

1. What three principles of mission does Jesus set out in his sending out of the Twelve?

2. How can we go out into the world in need of those to whom we go?

3. What do you think about Jesus’ instructions regarding how to cope with failure?

4. What about mission and risk? Are we ready to expose ourselves to risk as we engage in mission? How much risk did Jesus and Paul take in their missions?
5. What options for response did Jesus have when John was murdered? Which one might we have chosen?

6. Jesus “had compassion” on the crowd. Is compassion a feeling or a prelude to action? What is the difference and does it matter?

7. What do you think Jesus may have taught the crowd?

8. How would you compare Jesus’ banquet and Herod’s banquet?

9. In this story, in what ways is Jesus like Moses in the Wilderness and in what ways are Jesus’ actions different?

10. What does this story tell us about the identity of Jesus? That is, what is the Christology of the passage?

11. Why does Jesus force the disciples into a boat and dismiss the crowd? What is the significance of these actions?

**Session 7**

1. In the morning in a Middle Eastern village, does the shepherd lead the sheep out or drive them out? How is this distinction significant for our ministry today? Give examples.

2. Jesus says, “I am the door.” What is the picture this language invokes and what do we learn about Jesus from this image?

3. Who are the “thieves” that threaten the flock today?

4. What does John 10:1-5 teach us about “salvation?”

5. What is the connection between the Shepherd’s surrender of his life and our relationship to him and to the Father?

6. The shepherd’s enemies are the “wolf” and the “hireling.” What is Jesus talking about?

7. Why does Jesus avoid describing the shepherd’s battle with the wolf? Does our culture respect his choice?

8. Why is the challenge to mission presented in between a discussion of the cross and a second discussion of the cross and the resurrection?

9. Jesus looks forward to “one flock” not “one sheep fold.” Is this language significant? If so, in what way?

10. In what way is Jesus presented as the greatest of all prophets?

11. In what way is this text significant to the subject of the often assumed “Anti-Semitism” of the Gospel of John?

12. In what way is this text significant for any Christian conversation with Islam?

13. Is the Cross enough to assure our salvation or is the resurrection a crucial component to it? Is 1 Cor. 15 essential to this topic? If so, how?
Session 8

Matthew 18
1. Why do the powerful often despise the weak?

2. Today, how can we labor to assure that the powerless in our churches are not overlooked and ignored as we focus attention on the powerful?

3. As citizens of a superpower how can we protect ourselves from the temptation to look down on the weak?

4. The weak have angels who speak for them before the presence of God. What difference does this make?

5. How do “Missional Churches” differ from “Country-club churches” when it comes to allowing church resources of staff and budget to focus on the lost?

6. What does this text say about the will of God and our freedom and responsibility?

I Peter
1. How can leadership and collegiality be joined in the life of the church today as it was in the days of St. Peter?

2. What was the “suffering of Christ” to which Peter was a witness? Where is that suffering apparent in the Gospel records?

3. How can suffering and glory be seen together?

4. What negatives and what positives can potentially emerge from suffering?

5. Reflect on Glory and Gravitas. How and where do we see them joined in our day and where do they come together in Church History?

6. What is leadership “in the way of God?” Where in the Good Shepherd tradition do we see these characteristics exhibited?

7. In what ways should the anticipation of the appearance of the “Chief Shepherd” at the end of all things influence our shepherd leadership today?