

## Flocks and Herds

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*Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.  
– Proverbs 27:23 –*

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The Bible is an amazing book. It is a clearly unified and thematic tome that speaks with exclusive Voice via the channel of multiple inspired human authors. The most casual reader of the sacred Scriptures (assuming intellectual honesty) will easily identify that its pages present a marvelously cohesive, singular story of paradise lost in Adam and regained in Christ. Within that monolithic account, however, the careful student will constantly discover alongside its cornucopia of spiritual truth a corresponding trove of practical advice and pragmatic instruction. Such is the nature of our meditation here – “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks and look well to thy herds.”

There are certain realities of human life that the Bible both assumes and approbates. One of those is the identification and sanctioning of private property. The Mosaic Law intrinsically recognizes this in the eighth and tenth commandments, forbidding theft and covetousness. Jesus assumed ownership of goods in many places, such as in Luke 6:30 when He instructed His followers to be ready to give those goods away when asked of “every man”. And Paul seems to have himself possessed at least a few items of great importance, including a cloke, books, and parchments, which he requested Timothy to bring with him when he came to him (2 Timothy 4:13).

Here in America, private property rights are a fundamental bedrock to our republic. Time and space forbid us to establish this fact here. Suffice it to say that the Founders, whether Christian or Deist, recognized the God-given sanctity of property ownership within a society. It is in this sense, while considering the growing contemporary clamor and chorus of Socialist and Marxist agitators, that we should re-double our efforts to familiarize ourselves with the Scriptural basis of property rights, lest our posterity (if the Lord tarry) be unduly stripped of this basic tenet of individual liberty and American citizenry.

But while the God of the Word sanctions property ownership as part of human experience, He simultaneously and on multiplied occasions reminds us of the responsibility that accompanies the same. We are to “be diligent” and “look well to” our flocks and herds (i.e., our possessions). The underlying truth, established throughout the remainder of Scripture, is that what we own and accumulate in this life is ours only at the aegis of the Almighty. Stewardship is the balancing truth to ownership, as well as the remedy to the temptations of greed, avarice, covetousness, and materialism. What we possess has ultimately been entrusted to us to use for the advancement of the kingdom of heaven and the benefit of others. As stewards, slothfulness in the matters of our possessions should repulse us. If our Master has provided us with something, our inclination should be to keep, maintain, and even grow it until we hand it off or its usefulness is past. Our stewardship should compel us to a reasonable yet non-consuming attendance to all that we possess – be it our homes, our vehicles, our appliances, our bank accounts, our portfolios, *et. al.* In so doing, we not only ensure the fitness of our possessions for His service, but also secure a more believable witness to a skeptical world and better prepare the hearts of those we can influence to receive the true riches of our most prized possession – the gospel itself.

Andrew Murray once wrote, “The world asks, ‘What does a man own?’ Christ asks, ‘How does he use it?’” Let us look well to the possessions that God has entrusted to each of us, that they may be of optimal use not to our ends, but His.