

A REAL SENSE OF BELONGING

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: John 10:1-21.

It is important to feel we belong somewhere. It may be a place which we call home. It may be our family which we feel is 'home' to us. The world is very big and we can feel a very small part of it. We can feel that we are on our own and it can be a very lonely place. Our Lord Jesus Christ is very personal. How can He not be? He is a Person. He relates to and we can relate to Him. He listens to us. He is able to give us time, communicate with us, show sympathy to us, give advice to us and have our best interests at heart.

It comes through to us in the way He speaks about us being His sheep (John 10:3, 4 and 14). What are some of the things that this tells us about His relationship with us and a sense of belonging we can have?

1. God is personal.

God is not an impersonal force or source of energy that does not relate to us or respond personally to us. He talks to us in relational terms such as by being a Shepherd or a Husband to us. There are relationships at the heart of the Godhead. Father, Son and Holy Spirit relate to each other and there is love as part of that relationship at the very centre of who God is. The love the Father has for the Son continues when the Son becomes also a human being. He communicates with Him in a way that is appropriate to who He is as both God and man.

Our sin is personal. We sin against the Person of God. When we sin against the law, it is not something abstract. It is our rebellion against the Law-Giver. God's anger is personal. It is against us as law-breakers who personally offend against His glorious Person.

2. Christ relates to us personally.

All that our Lord did on earth, He did with us in view. People may work, for example, putting food on shelves in the supermarket. But they do not personally know the people that they are providing for, most of the time. Our Lord does know His people, His sheep,

and the good things He brings, He brings for them particularly. This is why, in conversion, we are sometimes overwhelmed by the wonder of the love of God at the cross shown personally to us, although we did not deserve it. It is the fact that 'He did it for me.'

When on earth, He looked out at the people and knew them. He knew those that were His. He was able to call them all by name. He was also able to look out at those who were not His, and He wept for them. He was able to look past those who were present and see people in the future who would be His. He knew that all He was doing on earth He was doing it for them personally.

So He knew that His life on earth was to be lived for them. He had to be holy and righteous so that we could be accounted holy and righteous one day. He knew that He had to endure temptation and stay the course for His people, the people that belonged to Him.

He knew that, in dying, He was doing it for them. When He died on the cross, it was His people, in Him, who were dying to sin, its penalty and its power. He knew that He was dying the death to secure their atonement. Of course, He also knew that He would rise for those same people to prove the truth of all His claims to be able to save and to give them hope in His promise of eternal life. Beyond that, He was going to go to heaven to reign for His people, to hear and answer their prayers, and then to over-rule on their behalf, being willing to remove or install earthly governments for the sake of His people.

It was always in His mind that He would be taking all these people to be with Him in heaven one day. All of it was for us, as individual people, whom He knew and who were His.

3. We are to know Him.

Just as all our Lord's ministry on earth was done with us, personally, in view He now wants us to know we are His sheep and to be able to respond to His voice. It is not a Book that we relate to ultimately but the Christ of the Book. We belong to Him, the Good Shepherd, and we are to know that we belong to Him. We are to read ourselves in the account of what the Lord is doing for His people in the Scripture. All this is given to us that we might become truly who we are and know that we belong. The best of relationships are relationships where we learn and grow.

By belonging to Him, we have an essential identity in a world that is changing and very big. We have a home, belonging to Him, where we are safe. We have someone over us to rule over us as we, like sheep, are not best left to our own devices. We also have someone to care for us by restraining us from folly, and by giving us real comfort and peace.