

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: September 5, 2010

## The Shepherd Will Lead Us To Rest

by Dan Trygg

"And Jesus was going around all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the good-news of the Kingdom and healing every disease and every weakness-caused-by-disease. <sup>36</sup>But seeing (at a point in time) the crowds, He felt compassion concerning them, because they were-in-the-ongoing-state-of-being having-been-harassed/troubled/bothered and having-been-thrown-over-lying-helpless like sheep not having a shepherd. "

Matthew 9:35,36

34:15 "I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord God."

Ezekiel

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will rest you up. <sup>29</sup>Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For My yoke is kindly and My burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

In Matthew 9, we are given a glimpse into Jesus' perception of some of those to whom He was ministering. "Looking upon the crowds, He felt compassion for them." The word used here is a verbal form of the word for one's intestines. It describes an instant inner response within His being as He saw the condition of these people, ...a "gut reaction", if you will, ...an inner melting or a yearning with pity, sadness, and longing for those who were hurting. This is consistently His reported experience as He was led to minister to others (Matt. 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mk. 1:41; Lk. 7:13). *Why did God bother to tell us this? Is it not so that we would begin to notice such things within ourselves?*

**What did Jesus see?** He saw them being in a sorry state, a condition of "having been harassed/troubled/bothered" and "having been thrown down and lying helpless". These are very vivid word pictures. Both of these descriptions indicate that **something else had been allowed to attack them**, to trouble and annoy them. The first word picture suggests the image of wolves that had nipped at, torn, and wounded a sheep, running it ragged, and leaving it bloody and worn out. The tense of the word indicates that this is an action that had already taken place, but the effects of this abuse continued so that **the present state of these people was that they were emotionally, spiritually and/or physically hurt, broken, weighed down, fearful, drained, and tired**. The extent of this condition is described in the next phrase, "they were having been thrown down lying helpless". In the case of sheep, this describes the condition of an animal which, either by an accidental stumbling or as a result of harassment, had lost its footing and had fallen over on its back so that it was helpless to get up. Such "cast sheep" were a well known phenomena that every shepherd had to be watchful for, because such an animal could quickly wear itself out in its struggles and panic, and could even die as a result. Such sheep were virtually helpless, and were at the mercy of any beast of prey that may come along. What is the application to human beings? **Such people were in the ongoing state of having become stuck and helpless**. As much as they might struggle, they would not be able to get back on their feet, and they were vulnerable to abuse by those desiring to prey on them. **They needed someone outside themselves to help them** (Gal. 6:1-5; I Thess. 5:14). *They were in this state because no one was present, capable, or concerned to help them.*

**Just a couple of chapters later, we find Jesus giving an invitation to another crowd. Once again, His perception of their need is very telling.** It is clear from His exclamation in prayer in the previous verses that He saw that those who were spiritually receptive were *not* those who were recognized as "wise" or "understanding", but those who were as teachable as babes or small children. **Some thought they had the answers and were well in control of their lives, when in reality they were spiritually blinded by their self-importance and self-sufficiency.** Like the Laodicean believers, who thought of their wealth as their self-sufficiency and a sign that they had need of nothing, the so-called "wise" and "intelligent" had no idea of how spiritually bankrupt and confused they really were. In spite of the Laodiceans' material wealth, they were spiritually "wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked" (Rev. 3:14-19). In a similar way, the "wisdom of the wise" had actually served to make them less open to the truths of the Kingdom of God. Instead of leading them toward God, their understanding actually caused them to look within themselves for how to deal with life. They, too, had stumbled over the stumbling stone of self-reliance. **It was those who knew they did not understand who were more open, teachable and prayerful. God chose to reveal, or disclose, His truth to them.** After stating this principle, Jesus cried out to the crowd, "Come with Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will rest you up. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls, for My yoke is kindly and My burden is light."

**Jesus' invitation is to ones "laboring-to-the-point-of-exhaustion and having-been-loaded-down"**, hence, He perceived that at least some in the crowd were in this state of being. They were people who were working hard, but were worn out. They had been loaded down with burdens at some time in the past, and were still carrying them. The

Greek could mean that someone else put these heavy burdens on them (e.g., the religious leaders – Matt. 23:4), or they had loaded themselves up with guilt, disciplines, expectations or anxieties that were too heavy for them to carry. Like the crowds in chapter 9, that had been harassed and worn down, and were now stuck, **Jesus saw these people also as weary, at the point of exhaustion, weighed down with so much that they could hardly go on.**

**What had been the cause of this problem?** As I mentioned, **some of it was self-induced.** Some personalities are more prone to being high performance achievers, seeking to gain approval by their good behavior. Others may not be so driven to high achievement, but they are more sensitive to the expectations of others around them, and weigh themselves down with guilt or anxiety. **Some of it comes from the training we received** in our family systems, growing up (cf. I Pet.1:18), or from the messages we receive from the world system around us. **A good portion of it, however, is produced by a religious system that is focused on self-performance.** Sadly, even churches today often misrepresent the teachings of Jesus, presenting a message of acceptance with God through being “good enough”, or on the basis of good works, or by the performance of religious activities. **The message of the Gospel is that our righteousness can never be good enough, BUT God has provided another righteousness, one which Jesus purchased by His blood. This righteousness is available to those who will trust God** to not only cover them but also to work within them to give them a new power to live. Unlike the messages of the performance-oriented teachings of this world, **we don’t work to become good. We can’t ever be “good enough”. If we get on that treadmill, we wear ourselves out, and get nowhere.** Righteousness is a *gift*, offered *by grace*. God *counts us* righteous, and treats us so.

**What does Jesus offer those who are weary and heavy laden? What can help them? Rest. Refreshment. Rejuvenation.** Now, at first blush, that might seem to mean that we are just to stop, to give up, to quit pursuing God, righteousness or spirituality. But that is *not at all* what it means. **Jesus tells us what we are to do. We are to come to and with Him.** The Greek expression is “Come now to/with Me.” It indicates movement towards *and* with Him. **Rest and refreshment are not promised to everyone, but only to those who go with and towards Jesus.**

This language would have been easily recognized as a reference to a shepherd/sheep relationship. **The shepherd leads the sheep to places of rest and refreshment. Of course, for that to happen, we must follow the Shepherd.** Just *saying* that we belong to the Shepherd does not mean that we will automatically get rested up or refreshed. If we continue to live life as we used to do, relying on our own wisdom and strength, we can expect to still get the same wearisome results. **Jesus will show us how to live life differently, so we obtain different results.** In the OT, God Himself is described as the Shepherd who gives His people rest (Psa. 23; Ezk. 34:15). Any shepherd was to care for his sheep in such a way. Furthermore, kings and leaders were referred to as shepherds in the OT. **To the ears of Jesus’ audience, they certainly would have heard that Jesus was recruiting followers and fellow-workers, maybe even making a claim to be somebody special.** Was He hinting at being the Messiah? ...or even more?.

**More than just a Shepherd/sheep role, however, Jesus commands us to take His yoke upon ourselves.** This word, “yoke” is referring to a cross beam that was put across a pair of animals, so they could work together as a team. Often a skilled craftsman would be called in to shape the yoke so that it was notched to comfortably fit and rest on the animal’s neck. Each animal would have his or her yoke custom made to fit the contour of his or her neck and shoulders. By calling it His yoke, there are two possibilities: (1.) He is the Master we are to work for; and/or, (2.) He is our joint Yokefellow, our Partner in the work. Jesus follows up on this latter idea by what He says next: “Take My yoke upon you, *and learn from Me...*” This would be understood as a younger animal being teamed up with an older, more experienced animal, in order to learn what was expected in the work. The younger animal would observe and experience the other animal’s pace, attitude and responsiveness to each situation. **Jesus said that if we would join Him in His work, walk with Him, and learn from His meek and humble demeanor and attitude toward life circumstances and the direction of His Master, we will discover rest and refreshment to our souls.** Part of why this is true is because the yoke is uniquely shaped for us (cf. Eph. 2:10). It does not chafe or rub us raw. It distributes the load perfectly, making it much easier to handle what we are given to do. **There is work to do in God’s Kingdom. Jesus expects us to be willing to get involved in His Kingdom business. Also, the work load itself is suited to our gifts and abilities. It will not wear us down to the point of debilitation.** With Him as our Yokefellow, and with God as our Master, we will find ourselves challenged but not overworked in accomplishing the work assigned to us.

God’s grace makes possible an entirely different kind of life ability and life experience. **God is grieved to see us beat up, traumatized and held in bondage.** By grace, He has made possible a relationship that is real and personal with Him. **He will remove those oppressive burdens and free us from debilitating patterns of living. This begins when we come to know Jesus, but deepens when we follow Him as our Shepherd and Yokefellow in the King’s business.** We will find excitement, joy and rejuvenation as we serve Him.