**Ezekiel 34 : Shepherding and Sheep**

**James Allan’s sermon notes and questions**

Book suggestions: Philip Keller, *A Shepherd looks at Psalm 23*.

1. **Sheep** (Ez. 34:17-22) Sheep have responsibilities. Sheep can trample the pasture for other sheep, and or muddy the water of other sheep (vv. 17-19). What does “trampling” and “muddying” mean in our own situation, with our fellow Christians in All Saints, or St. Luke’s ? Which of our actions or attitudes make it more difficult for our fellow Christians to see Jesus, and to grow into Him ? Which of our actions or attitudes discourage others from following Him ? On a practical front, do we like to hog conversations instead of listening to others ? Do we fail to speak words of appreciation to others, about what they say, what they do, the people they are ? Do we care enough about others ? Have we checked out our theology with the Bible before we tell others what we think or believe ? And in vv.20-21 - pushing others out of the way: “the butting order”. Do we try and assert ourselves above those around us ? And what about the opposite, contemporary problem, of not wanting to get involved at all ? Are we too preoccupied by life to use our gifting on behalf of the Body of Christ ?
2. **Shepherds** (Ez. 34:1-10) Here God has set his heart against them (vv.2 and 10). Why ? Because, “You only take care of yourselves.” Being a shepherd is a huge responsibility, and it can weigh heavily. We must pray for our shepherds, our bishops, our vicar, and any others in the church with such responsibilities.

But in reality we are all shepherds! Who are you shepherding? Your children, other members of your family, a parent, those who come under you at work, or a colleague there, a friend, or a neighbour ?

What are the duties of a shepherd ? Look at those in vv. 3-5, and more in vv.12-15. How do you match up ? NB “Lying down” is mentioned twice (vv.14 & 15). To lie down, Keller says, sheep need:

1. Freedom from fear. How can we do that ?
2. Freedom from friction within the flock (“butting order”). Can we help there ?
3. Freedom from pests. How we can protect those for whom we care ?
4. Freedom from hunger. Those we shepherd need to be fed spiritually. Can we encourage them to read the Bible, or listen to the Bible being read (e.g. What Bible Reading Notes would we recommend ? And for listening, what about Nicky and Pippa Gumbel, “The Bible” App.?) ?

A question for our church: are we as a church structuring our pastoral care, and teaching about it, in such a way that we are all being shepherded appropriately ?

1. **God’s promise that He will be the shepherd** (Ez. 34:11-16, 20-end) – vv.11-16 are a wonderful, encouraging, comforting passage, fulfilled in Jesus, the Good Shepherd of John’s Gospel, Chapter 10.

What does it feel like to have Jesus as your Good Shepherd? Is it wonderful in theory, because you have read or heard about it in the Bible, or heard about it in a sermon ? Or can it be real ? Can you actually feel, or experience, it ? Can you testify in your own life to Jesus being your Good Shepherd ? Are you open to His using different, and sometimes unexpected, methods of attracting your attention – e.g. dreams ? Are your eyes open to see Him, and your ears open to hear Him, at different moments in your daily life ? Are you willing to let him use your feelings and emotions ? Are you in love with Him ?