

"There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea."

Israel was God's chosen people, but Israel was not called to a monopoly of God's grace, as these later Rabbis taught, but as God said to Abraham, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12 : 3). The true spirit of Judaism was cosmopolitan. "The Lamb of God," said the last and greatest Jewish prophet, "taketh away the sin of the world."

"One flock.....one shepherd." (Rev. Ver.) There may be many folds but there is only one flock, whether or not the different folds which make up the flock recognize this heavenly fact. There is but one flock even as there is but one

Shepherd. We may love our own flock without claiming that it contains all Christ's love. Two evils we must watch against, the one, the unbelief or indifference which does not seek the shelter of the fold, and the other, the bigotry which regards all outside ~~our~~ little fold as being outside Christ's love. Let us love our own Church as the Jews loved theirs, only without their bigotry and narrowness, and as the early disciples loved their little company; but let us remember also the Master's word, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold," and so cultivate a generous spirit towards all everywhere who call upon the Lord Jesus.

TEACHING HINTS

Picturesqueness is a marked characteristic of the lesson of "The Good Shepherd." It affords ample scope for the imagination; and, hence, should not be difficult to teach.

It might be well to begin with a series of questions, clear and rapid, on the story of the blind beggarman and the opening of his eyes. In the questions, take pains to make emphatic these two things, the unsought compassion and help of Jesus and the unpardonable stupidity and brutality of the Pharisees.

This will prepare for the present lesson. The occasion of the parable was the unshepherdliness of those perverse guides of the people and (in the background) the shepherdliness of Jesus Himself in the healing of the poor blind man.

I. The framework of the parable may be first taken up, the treatment being as far as possible by question and answer—on the sheepfold, its construction and use, the enemies to be kept out, the marks of the true shepherd (entering by the door, admitted by the porter, recognized by the flock, going before his own sheep and followed by them). The perils of the pasturage in the mountain wilderness may also be brought out.

II. What the parable means.

Show why the Pharisees did not understand it. Count the "I's" of the parable. Jesus' object in speaking so much of Himself was that He might reveal Himself truly as the Shepherd of the needy and helpless. Show how vividly and tenderly this is done.

In what various characters does our Saviour here reveal Himself?

The door, v. 7.

The provider of safety, freedom, nourishment, v. 9.

The light giver, v. 10.

The Good Shepherd, who gives His own life for the sheep, v. 11.

The Good Shepherd, who knows His sheep and is known of them, v. 14.

The one Shepherd of all who will hear His voice and follow Him, v. 16.

Perhaps there is no better ending for the lesson, none more likely to make the Shepherd and His tender care real, and the importance of personal experience of that care than to have someone (asked beforehand) repeat "The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want" all through; and there could be no more fitting hymn for the closing of the school than that same Shepherd Psalm.

TOPICS FOR BRIEF PAPERS

(To be assigned the Sabbath previous. Only one topic should be given to each scholar. Sometimes all may be asked to write on the same topic. The papers to be read out in the class.)

1. Describe an eastern sheepfold, and how the shepherd deals with his flock.
2. Show in what respects Christ is the Good Shepherd.
3. Quote two verses of any one of the hymns in the Book of Praise on Christ as the Shepherd.