

It is of the utmost importance to learn early to listen to and to follow the voice of Jesus. There are many wandering away. They cannot hear the voice in the din and noise of the world. Our children are within the fold; but, unless they learn to hear the divine voice for themselves, they will wander away. There are many siren voices calling that will surely lead them into evil. Their only safety is to listen in early life to the voice of the Good Shepherd. Then, O Lord Jesus, speak to us in Thy gentlest whispers and teach us to know Thy voice; and, through all life's changes, may we follow it with unswerving constancy, and, when we have done our work here, may we at the last hear Thy voice saying, "Come ye blessed of my Father!"

"*He goeth before them,*" v. 4. Christ's method is to lead, not to drive. His great word is "Come." As the mother leads a child, as the shepherd guides his flock, as the captain leads his soldiers into battle, so Jesus goes before His disciples, pointing to the path of duty, sustaining them in the time of danger by His presence and holding them even in the solemn hour of death.

"*A stranger will they not follow,*" v. 5. We may learn a lesson even from the silly sheep. Sheep are social animals. They do not like loneliness, but they are wise enough to keep company with their own kind. They live on the "follow my leader" principle, and though sometimes they carry this out foolishly, can we afford to reproach them? We have these two features in common with them: we are fond of society and we need a leader. When we have the true Leader and the fellowship of those who have a like precious faith, then we have both safety and strength. Let us note the wisdom of the sheep. "A stranger will they not follow." They prefer the trusted, the true and the tried. How often young people are led astray by going contrary to this. They follow the charming voice of some stranger and heed not the tender tones of mother, the kindly counsels of father, the wise teaching of the pastor. Young men who despise the silly sheep have often committed this great folly. Wearying of the well-known voices, they have followed strangers and have had to learn the lesson at a terrible cost.

"*Saved . . . go in and out . . . find pasture,*" v. 9. This describes the free, active,

plentiful life of the sheep. The salvation that Christ brings means rest, safety, freedom, heavenly care. Christ's gifts are abundant, but do not pauperize. His ministry calls out our activity. The man who finds the real King and the true Leader finds also his own best self.

"*Life . . . and more abundantly,*" v. 10. The meaning of this word "life" grows with our growth and with our experience of God's Holy Spirit within us and of the activities to which Christ calls his people. To the child, it means little; to the wise, saintly man, it means something that God alone can reveal and satisfy. Life is God's greatest gift, and it comes through Jesus to those who hear the Shepherd's voice.

"*The Good Shepherd,*" v. 11. The title gives us a glimpse of the spirit of Christ's service to men. This may be expressed in one word—love. "The King of Love my Shepherd is." It was love that sent Him (John 3: 16). Love was the secret of His life (John 13: 34). Love was His reward (John 17). He placed Himself in contrast with thieves and robbers, those who by cunning or violence robbed the people of liberty and gave them stones instead of bread. He also distinguishes Himself from hirelings—those who love the office and take the reward, but who lack the real spirit of service. The hireling may be a pastor or a teacher or a man in any profession to whom money is the chief end and who has no real "vocation," no enthusiasm for duty, no real call to the service of humanity.

"*I lay down my life for the sheep,*" v. 15. This is the true shepherd idea. "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am" (John 13: 13). "But I am among you as one that serveth" (Luke 22: 27). The Ministering Master is the Servant-King and the climax of His service is, "I lay down my life for the sheep." Our life comes through His sacrifice; our power of obedience through His redemption. It was the Jehovah who redeemed His people from the "House of Slaves" that gave them the Ten great Commandments. It is the Good Shepherd who sacrificed Himself in the spirit of love that lays upon us the new commandment of Love. We must know the service of the Christ for our own soul before we can be His servants to others.

"*Other sheep I have which are not of this fold,*" v. 16.