

Sunday 11th October 2020

Living Generously – questions for reflection and discussion

John 10:1-11

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” ⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. ⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. ¹⁰ They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹¹ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. ¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

As we notice some key features from this passage, how do we relate Jesus teaching to our current experience personally and with Covid-19....

- Jesus is challenging Pharisees about their heart for God (look back to chapter 9 to see their attitude to him healing a blind man) and their understanding of salvation (I am the gate = I am the only true way)
- Thieves – steal with deception.....robbers – attack
- Sheep in the ancient world followed the voice of their shepherd
- ‘..come in and out...’ is a phrase used in the Old Testament as short-hand for all of daily life
- The sheep were safe in the fold but they had to go out to find pasture..
- ‘..life to the full.’ – in Greek the word for ‘full’ or ‘abundance’ has the sense of ‘surplus’ and overflowing’
- The way of the Shepherd is the way of the one who lays down his life..

Andrew used the analogy of the difference between using a sat nav and an old style map to ask if this is a season when we need to look for the bigger picture rather than follow a trend to look for shortest routes (which may lead down narrow lanes and even into complete dead-ends!). Do you agree?!

On our annual Gift Day, Andrew spoke about the harsh and difficult realities of Covid-19 pointing us personally to our priorities and to focus as a church

- All in with God – are our personal spiritual disciplines are enabling us to hear His voice and receive his overwhelming generous gift in Christ?
- All in with each other – how can we share in life both gathered and scattered (‘in and out’)
- All in for the world – where are the opportunities for us to share Jesus, the way to life in abundance, the good news of faith that overcomes fear, that death is not the final word?

- With our money – what does living generously in response to God’s generosity look like? What does it mean to truly put God first (NB the Pharisees did religious tithing!)?