

Human Flourishing in the Academy – An Introduction

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A. Introduction: Why Am I Thinking about Human Flourishing?

“As Christians we join in the work of Jesus, who (by his own testimony) came that we might have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10)...from this root grows our commitment to human flourishing.”

- Preparatory materials for *Following Christ 2008*

B. Flourishing in Biblical Context: John 10:1-18

1 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. 2 “But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.

3 “To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.

4 “When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 “And a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

6 This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.

7 Jesus therefore said to them again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

8 “All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

9 “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

10 “The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.

11 “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

12 “He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them. 13 “He flees because he is a hireling, and is not concerned about the sheep.

14 “I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me,

15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

16 “And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd.

17 “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

18 “No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”

1. Our ideas about sheep and shepherds
2. Real sheep and real shepherds in Palestine

C. Jesus the Shepherd

1. The Shepherd has *real authority* over the sheep

“To him the doorkeeper opens..” (v. 3)

- a. The backdrop: A huge Old Testament idea! (Ezekiel 34, Zech. 13, Num 27)
- b. Shows up again and again in the New Testament (Matt 9:36; Luke 15:4)

2. The Shepherd is *everything* to the sheep

“The command of Jesus is hard, unutterably hard, for those who try to resist it. But for those who willingly submit, the yoke is easy and the burden is light.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, p. 40

3. The Shepherd is *everything* to the sheep

4. The Shepherd *knows* the sheep *completely* (v. 3, 14)

5. The Shepherd is *radically* for the sheep

- a. The shepherd’s whole life is wrapped up in the sheep

- b. The shepherd “lays down his life” for the sheep (v. 11, 15)

“Greater love has no one than this, that one *lay down his life* for his friends.” (John 15:13)

“We know love by this, that He *laid down His life* for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”(1 John 3:16)

D. We the Sheep

1. The sheep are *sheepish!*

2. The sheep *hear the voice* of the Shepherd (v. 3)

3. The sheep *don’t hear* other voices (v. 5), including...

- a. Ideologies

Barmen Declaration

1. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me." (John 14.6). "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. . . . I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved." (John 10:1, 9.)

Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death.

We reject the false doctrine, as though the church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one

b. Self (Authentic Happiness movement, Eudaimonistic ethics ala Rand, etc)

"My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute." — Appendix to *Atlas Shrugged*

"...the very concept of humanity - is not plain to me outside of Christ. If I seek it apart from him, what I come up with is simply the ideal of man in conflict with himself, or the ideal of a beautiful soul,...or one of many other variants. What these all have in common is that they construct their image...not from what man was intended to be, but from what he presently is; they take fallen man as their model and idealize him." - *Theological Ethics, Vol. 3, p. 613*

c. Other siren songs in the academy (you guys help!)

4. The sheep *follow* the Shepherd (v. 4, 5)

5. The sheep are *plural*

"Cloaked in simple shepherd's garb, Jesus is proclaiming nothing less than the reign of God in our midst with every word and movement. Such boldness ought to trouble us, because these claims about Jesus' identity and his relationship to the flock are also claims about us--about who we are, what we're about and to whom we belong...In our essential belongingness, our being is bound up with the entire flock: with believers who break bread and recite prayers with us, and with those sheep whom Jesus knows and God sees, but whom we can scarcely bring ourselves to acknowledge and welcome, let alone live alongside or die to protect. - Cynthia Lindner. Reflections on the lectionary. *Christian Century*, April 21, 2009

E. Lessons for Our Lives

1. Am I in a position where I can hear the Shepherd's voice?
2. Am I letting the Shepherd "lead me out"?
3. Am I contributing to the health of the Shepherd's flock?

F. Conclusion: Heb. 13:20-21

"The call of Jesus makes history when it is heard and taken seriously."
Karl Barth, *The Call to Discipleship*, p. 34

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