

The Essentials: The Church

Session 6: FLOCK

Matthew 9:32–10: 13

Opening Collect

Together: Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Read: Matthew 9:32–10: 13

Opening Thought

Thinking of the church as a flock is well established throughout the biblical canon. The church is a corporate body of singular individuals who take their primary identity as a unit, lead and governed by a head—a shepherd. A critical component of this concept is the way in which a flock is simultaneously utterly dependent *and* utterly valued and adored. Additionally, this language of flock extends out to inform our understanding of those whom Jesus gathers to himself and those who are lost (Matt. 18:10-14).

Discussion:

1. How would you characterize the capability and aptitude of a sheep? What are sheep good at?
2. Our passage says that Jesus saw the crowds in all the cities and has compassion on the people (vv. 35-36). Why does Jesus have compassion on them? What does that say about Israel?
3. Read Isaiah 40:10-11. How might this passage from Isaiah point to Jesus?
4. If Jesus is a shepherd and we are a flock, what are the disciples doing as Jesus sends them out?
5. It would be easy to think of the church as a gathering of the capable, competent, and moral elite, what does it say about the church that we are a flock guided by a good shepherd? What's the good news here?

Check in and Closing Prayer

Matthew 9:32 – 10:13

³² As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. ³³ And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, “Never was anything like this seen in Israel.” ³⁴ But the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the prince of demons.”

³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. ² The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. ⁹ Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, ¹⁰ no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. ¹¹ And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. ¹² As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³ And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.