



FRANKLIN ROAD

baptist church

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THE SHEEPFOLD



I DON'T KNOW THAT YOU'D SEE ONE ANYWHERE IN INDIANA BUT IF YOU TRAVELED TO IRELAND OR NEW ZEALAND YOU MIGHT SEE SHEEPFOLDS DOTTING THE RURAL COUNTRY-SIDE. THEY ARE WONDERFULLY SIMPLE AND AMAZINGLY PRACTICAL ENCLOSURES WHERE SHEEP WITH THEIR SHEPHERD FIND REST AND REFUGE FOR THE NIGHT.

THE SHEEP AND SHEPHERD THEME IS QUITE FAMILIAR IN SCRIPTURE. THE FAMOUSLY FAMILIAR 23RD PSALM REMINDS US THE GOD LEADS US BESIDE STILL WATERS AND PSALM 100:3 TELLS US THAT WE ARE THE SHEEP OF HIS PASTURE. IN MATTHEW 9:36 WE'RE TOLD THAT JESUS LOOKED UPON PEOPLE WITH COMPASSION BECAUSE THEY ARE DISTRESSED LIKE SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD. AND IN JOHN 10:11 JESUS INDICATES THAT HE IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD WHO LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP. INDEED 1 PETER 5:4 INDICATES THAT ONE DAY THE CHIEF SHEPHERD WILL APPEAR.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE HOLDING PENS WHERE SHEEP GATHER FOR THE NIGHT? WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE SHEEPFOLD?

THE SHEEPFOLD IS A PLACE OF CARE. IT'S WHERE SHEEP GO FOR PROTECTION FROM THE SAVAGE WOLVES WHO SPEAK PERVERSE THINGS IN ORDER TO DRAW AWAY DISCIPLES AFTER THEM. (ACTS 20:29-30). IT'S WHERE THEY GO FOR SAFETY FROM THOSE WHO WOULD STEAL AND ROB. (JOHN 10:1). AS SHEEP ENTER THE SHEEPFOLD EACH EVENING THE LOVING SHEPHERD WOULD EXAMINE EACH ONE AND TREAT ANY SCRAPES AND UNTANGLE ANY MATTING OF THE SHEEP'S WOOL COAT.

THEN TOO, THE SHEEPFOLD IS A PLACE OF COMMUNITY. IT'S WHERE SHEEP REGULARLY RETURN AS A PART OF THEIR DAILY ROUTINE THAT IS QUITE COMFORTING KNOWING THAT THEY'LL BE CARED FOR THERE. THEY BECOME ONE FLOCK WITH THE SHEPHERD. (JOHN 10:16). IT IS HERE THAT THE OLDER SHEEP MENTOR THE YOUNGER; A PLACE WHERE SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT HAPPENS; A HOME WHERE THE CLOSENESS OF CONGREGATION IS ENJOYED. IT IS IN THE SHEEPFOLD WHERE COMMUNICATION TAKES PLACE.

FINALLY, THE SHEEPFOLD IS A PLACE OF COMMITMENT. WHEN A SHEEP FAILS TO GATHER THERE, THE SHEPHERD AND OTHER SHEEP KNOW THAT ITS MISSING. MATTHEW 12:11 SPEAKS OF LIFTING THE SHEEP OUT OF A PIT AND MATTHEW 18:12 TELLS OF THE SHEPHERD WHO LEAVES THE NINETY AND NINE SHEEP TO LOOK FOR THE ONE WHO HAS STRAYED.

THE SHEEPFOLD: A CARING, COMFORTING COMMUNITY OF COMMITTED CHRISTIANS ... THAT'S THE KIND OF PLACE I WANT TO BE! DON'T YOU?

LOOKING UP,
PASTOR CHUCK CIRCLE