

## The Good Shepherd

Jeremiah 18:

18 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying: <sup>2</sup>“Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause you to hear My words.” <sup>3</sup> Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. <sup>4</sup> And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.

<sup>5</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: <sup>6</sup>“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the Lord. “Look, as the clay *is* in the potter’s hand, so *are* you in My hand, O house of Israel! <sup>7</sup> The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy *it*, <sup>8</sup> if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. <sup>9</sup> And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*, <sup>10</sup> if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

<sup>11</sup> “Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.”’

I would like to say that God is good. He is so good to give us Himself. In this passage in Jeremiah He offers a way out of the destruction... “if every one turns from his evil way.” And in the beginning of the passage, the vessel was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.

I am realizing more and more that I don’t understand this work of the Lord in my heart... not very clearly anyway. But that’s ok, you know? Like Paul says, He lays ahold of what is ahead, presses on toward the upward calling. He recognizes that he falls so far short, but he doesn’t stay there. Paul let’s the potter work on the vessel. Paul doesn’t spend time looking at the vessel, he is looking at the contents. God is dealing with the vessel, or the land, or the soul of man... however you want to put that. We just need to look to the Lord and trust and know that His work is always toward good.

So like everyone that is knowing the Lord, I will spend all of eternity knowing Him and growing up into the realization and reality of what God has created me and you and the whole body for.

So I feel like more and more, as I continue to see this inward division of the goodness of God and “badness” of Adam, it just becomes more and more obvious that I have no good in me, and I’m sure you can relate to that.

You would think that as we know the Cross of Christ... as that work continues to be a reality in our hearts, that we would eventually be good. You know? You would think that we would eventually attain some measure of goodness! Well, as I’ve been learning, it is ACTUALLY true what Jesus says to the guy who asks Him, “what good thing can I do to earn eternal life?” And Jesus says no one is good, but God. So while you would think that we would be attaining a measure of goodness in and of ourselves as Christians, it is once again the exact opposite to what I thought! Go figure! That has been totally consistent: The fact that the reality of the Truth in Christ is totally contrary to what I would think. Not surprising really, but always consistent.

From the very beginning Adam has been believing what is totally contrary to the Truth... From the moment the serpent said to Eve: “You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” And so it begins... the blindness. Thinking that we are like God, and believing that we can know something outside of Him, Adam is fooled... he is blind. You see, Eve suddenly knew herself... and that was the result of darkness. The darkness she immediately knew was her SELF. And knowing God is the complete opposite of knowing self, because it is knowing the Light, the Truth. Isn’t that cool though? That knowing ourself is death and knowing Christ is Life. Doesn’t that make it so clear as to why the Cross deals with Adam? Because to know Adam is to know Darkness, and to know Christ is to know Light. Jesus says, “I AM the Light of the world.” And they did not receive Him. So we, being blinded by darkness... and thinking that it’s light, believe that we know what is good in ourselves.

We really do believe that we are the ones God wants to see. So back to my first point: as the years have ticked by, I have come to these points of frustration in myself because I really do expect something good to come of me. And it never fails that I come to see that I will never have anything good in me. But here’s the good part: I am in Christ and God sees Him, not me.

I read something from T. Austin Sparks that really hit me this week. And what’s kind of funny about him is that most of the time when I read something that totally condemns Adam, it is really good. I mean, the stuff that he writes that is the most challenging to our hearts are the things that I really like, because they just say it how it is. Unfortunately, I deleted it so I’ll try to recall the gist of it. He was basically saying that he reaches these same points of frustration with himself... but he just really hammered on the fact that we are hidden IN Christ, and that is the WHOLE point of what Jesus has done. The Father is looking at the Son. Just think about the book of Revelation, with Christ in the center of the churches, or when Jesus is lifted up with Moses and Elijah, but then it is just Jesus, or the elders gathered around the throne. Jesus at the center... Jesus the source... the Life. And we have been brought into this relationship of the Father and the Son.

I listened to a teaching by Sparks called the Cup and the Fire. He was talking about the fact that God doesn't hold back the dirt from the men of the Bible. He talks about the flaws of David, the flaws of Solomon, the weaknesses of the men that, although are totally imperfect, they are seeking the Lord. Think about Peter. Jesus loved Peter, but Peter denied Him. Peter just seemed to do so many things that were contrary to Christ. But that's OK, right? I mean, not to live in and dwell in darkness, but to seek the Lord, and understand where we are. Paul understood what was in his flesh, but He counted everything as dung outside of knowing the Lord. You see, if we live in condemnation, it is only because we are not seeking the Lord, or not walking in the Light, however you want to say that. Because in the Light we see Him. And He calls us friends, even in our blindness and faults. He doesn't forsake us, He comes and finds us. Jesus comes and finds the lost sheep.

Luke 15:

Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." <sup>3</sup> So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

<sup>4</sup> "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?

<sup>5</sup> And when he has found *it*, he lays *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing. <sup>6</sup> And when he comes home, he calls together *his* friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' <sup>7</sup> I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

Now I know that there are many ways we view this... it could be this one time salvation message that means that we say a prayer and we're in. But I'm telling you... this lost sheep is me... and repenting, or turning back to the Lord is something that, thank God, I feel like I can do over and over again. I'm reminded of Paul talking about going on in sin so that Grace should abound... but we know that's not the case. It is so much deeper than a one time agreement with a thought or a belief. This is a dealing of our hearts, a growing up in the Truth. And inward land that is being filled with Christ, as He conquers it.

On Tuesday, Meghan was reading a verse that has been on her heart for a little while, and it's so true about this relationship and this reality of the Lord coming to FIND us. Think about the disciples... Jesus sought them out. Jesus seeks out the lost sheep. And this verse that Meghan read is from John 15: " We have been given a gift! Jesus says it right here in John 15: <sup>16</sup> "Ye did not choose out me, but I chose out you, and did appoint you, that ye might go away, and might bear fruit, and your fruit might remain, that whatever ye may ask of the Father in my name, He may give you.

He chooses us.

Revelation 3:20 <sup>20</sup> lo, I have stood at the door, and I knock; if any one may hear my voice, and may open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

We hear his voice and turn, but He has come and knocked on the door of our heart.

What a huge deal that is!!!! It is why we were created! In that passage in John 15 He calls the disciples friends! He wants to come in and eat with us! To come into us and give us food that is not passing, and show us that we should be storing food up in His creation where we are, where there is no pain or hunger or thirst or cold or darkness. That is the reality of what Jesus came to do. It is personal and inward and real and wonderful. He has put away me and given me Himself! And I am so foolish to sit around and mope about why I'm not getting better or why I do this or that. It's such a waste of time to dwell there and contemplate myself. It is such a waste of time because there is something entirely different and perfect that we can turn to see, and we are IN it... it is the new creation that we are born into.

You know... this life is so short... this human, earthly life. Remember when Milo was talking about coming to the realization in the mirror that "hey, I just brushed my teeth and from the last time I brushed them to now, I haven't done a thing!" That is so true. This natural life cannot be put on pause so we can do more or accomplish more or enjoy more. Yet we invest our hearts in this world. We turn to it and try to capture moments, reach for things, find fulfillment in it. It could be so many different things. It could be our work, our family, our money, our retirement, our expectations of other people, our view of ourself, the betterment of ourselves, our education, our "legacy", our house, our past, our future. You name it... our ability to hang out in the darkness and think about all things earthly is the most natural and easiest thing we can do. It is in fact, the only thing that Adam CAN do. And it is what keeps us from experiencing the Life God has given us.

What does Jesus say about what we can do apart from Him? *John 15:5...*

*<sup>5</sup> I am the vine, ye the branches; he who is remaining in me, and I in him, this one doth bear much fruit, because apart from me ye are not able to do anything." Apart from me you can do nothing. You are not able to do anything. So why do we want to be apart from Him?*

I think the following parable perfectly displays the two hearts and the desire of the heart of Adam to covet the things of the earth.

*Luke 12:13: <sup>13</sup> Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."*

*<sup>14</sup> But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" <sup>15</sup> And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, [\[b\]](#) for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."*

*<sup>16</sup> Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. <sup>17</sup> And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no*

room to store my crops?’<sup>18</sup> So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.’<sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’<sup>20</sup> But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’

<sup>21</sup> “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

So the question that comes to me, it seems pretty offend, is: What am I storing up for? Am I storing up in this temporal, natural earth where everything is passing at what seems to be an insanely fast pace? Or are we seeing that we are in Christ and abiding and storing up in the Heavens?

God has given us something so great, yet we barely understand it... or worse, we, in many cases, don't want it or care about it, yet it is the only thing that matters at all. Really, the Life of Christ that has been given to our soul is the ONLY THING THAT MATTERS IN THE ENTIRE CREATION OF GOD. I don't mean this natural creation, I mean that God has made a new creation in His Son, and He has chosen us and given us access to Life. Access to eternal Life, His Son, and that is the only reason that we are even created.

Turn to John 14 and read this, it is so cool. It is the Gospel, it is what Jesus did and has done and is doing with the Father by the way of the Cross.

John 14

<sup>19</sup> “A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. <sup>20</sup> At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

<sup>22</sup> Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. <sup>24</sup> He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

Don't you love that? Judas asks him how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world? You see, the Jews wanted the world to be changed, they wanted a messiah that was going to conquer the world, to bring peace to the world, but Jesus says that He came into the world to judge the world. And then, in answering Judas, the place of the judgement is made known... He says, “We will come to him and make our home with him.” And you know what that makes me think, “Christ in YOU, the expectation of Glory.” or the mystery is: CHRIST IN YOU.

You don't have to think a whole lot about storing up in the earth and why that doesn't matter when you read "we will com to him and make our home with him."

The problem is not the natural world, the problem is the heart of man, and that is what Jesus says he will do with those that are willing to receive the word, the indwelling word, Himself. Those that God has given to Him, those that will receive Him, are given eternal Life, inwardly, a realization and knowledge of a new creation that gives us a ticket out of the world, although we are in the world, our hearts are taken out of the world. It is of no consequence to us. Here is where Jesus very plainly says that:

Turn to JOHN 17:

17 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, <sup>2</sup> as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should<sup>[a]</sup> give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. <sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. <sup>4</sup> I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

<sup>6</sup> "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. <sup>8</sup> For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

I probably don't even really need to say anything else, you know? What else is there? We have been given Light, and that Light is the only Life that has anything lasting, important, real... you name it... if it matters, it is Christ. And I guess I've just been reminded that that is so huge and important. We have received Life... so let's not squander that. Let's continue on in knowing Him. We must continue on in knowing Him.

Jesus spoke of water and food that we not of this world. He spoke of His Life being the source of eternal Life, the source of fulfillment and rest and peace, inwardly, in the place where He is known. We have to continue on in knowing Him because if we don't we will die of thirst and starve without food. Its an inward death... and we will live in that death, that totally empty darkness.

Do you realize what a huge deal that is? And do you realize what a huge deal it is to just treat it like it's some THING. It is the only THING! I waste so much of my time and energy on THINGS! And what does that mean? It means that I am really just letting my heart be captivated by darkness... by myself. I am letting the world reign in my heart. And why? Well, I guess because I want to be someone. I want to have something. I want to live in this world and love this world.

And we can make that statement of wanting to live in the world a statement that just doesn't seem like a big deal. I think that's why it's such a trap. We can really just kind

of blow it off like, “you know... why not? Why not just do this or want that or whatever... I mean, it’s just natural... it can’t hurt.” But it’s subtle. I think that’s the danger of it... it’s subtle. You know who was really subtle? The serpent in the garden. He was subtle in his lie, he presented something that was so huge, but really made it seem like it wasn’t a big deal. And that made it easy for man. In fact, it is easy for man to be captivated by darkness because that is exactly what we are and what we love. And in darkness, we live, and who doesn’t want to live?

So I’m drawn back to the verse I read earlier about the lost sheep and how turning to the Lord, carrying our cross, or how the verse says it, “repenting” is the joy of the Lord. David did some pretty awful things, Peter denied the Lord, Abraham was not perfect, but those men turned to the Lord. They let the dealing of the Lord be real in them, and continued on. The parable of the Lost Sheep says this at the end: *“I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”*

So I’m not really sure what I said this morning that was new... probably nothing. I also don’t really know if I had a good “point.” But I do know that I love these verses, and I love the fact that the Lord is patient with me, and with you and the rest of the body. And that His desire is to continue to reveal Himself in us where He and the Father have made their home. And this is so amazing and awesome. And I feel like I know just the tip of the iceberg.

I’m going to read this chunk from John 15, since we spent some time there already. This is just exactly what Jesus was accomplishing in the cross. The commandment written by the finger of God on the human heart...

JOHN 15:

*<sup>9</sup> “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.*

*<sup>11</sup> “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. <sup>12</sup> This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. <sup>17</sup> These things I command you, that you love one another.*