

# “Can A Demon Open The Eyes Of The Blind?”

*Jason Hardin*

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:7-11).*

The gospels are full of the accounts of wandering sheep making their way into the fold of the good shepherd. Nicodemus came by night. Lepers came, seeking a miracle. A centurion came on behalf of his paralyzed servant. Disciples of John came with questions. Peter came on the waves of Galilee. A father brought his epileptic son. Jairus brought a plea for his dying daughter. Martha came with news of Lazarus’ death. A woman brought an alabaster flask filled with costly ointment. Each, in his or her own way, was seeking what only the good shepherd could provide. Abundant life.

Others also came to the good shepherd, but in search of something different. Pharisees came, defending their traditions. Scribes came, demanding a sign. Sadducees came, seeking to trap him with difficult questions. Great crowds sought him out, not because of his message, but for a meal. Judas came with the kiss of betrayal. A mob came to Gethsemane with swords and clubs. Each, in his or her own way, rejected the pasture that the good shepherd had to offer.

And so Jesus promised, *“I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father” (John 10:16-18).*

The reaction of Jesus’ audience? *“There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, ‘He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?’ Others said, ‘These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’” (John 10:19-21)*

Such division and disagreement over Jesus’ identity flourished throughout his ministry. From his hometown synagogue, to a boat on the freshly calmed Sea of Galilee, to the halls of the Temple itself, men and women were forced to ask, “Who is this Jesus?” Even on the day of his death, the disagreeing dialogue continued.

*“Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left” (Luke 23:32-33).* How ironic that even in Jesus’ final hours, he was placed squarely in the middle of what would grow to be opposing opinions.

Both criminals saw the charge against this one dying on the center cross, *“This is Jesus, the King of the Jews” (Matthew 27:37).* Both criminals heard the good shepherd’s heartfelt cry, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).* But once again, there was division.

*“One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, ‘Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!’” (Luke 23:39).* If you are indeed the good shepherd of Israel, why not come down from the cross? While you are at it, why not save your fellow sufferers? And if not, this criminal

was content to hurl abuse at the imposter. “Perhaps this Jesus has a demon. Maybe he is insane. Why should I listen to him?” This first criminal stands in a long line of those who rejected the message and methods of the good shepherd.

But on the other side hung a second criminal. *“The other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong’”* (Luke 23:40-41). After all, what sort of man prays for those who have driven nails in his hands and feet and continue to mock his every agonizing move? “Why listen to him? These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

This second criminal also stands in a long line—the line of those whose blinded eyes have been opened, whose hardened hearts have been melted. Here is one more sheep that struggles to enter the fold of safety provided by the good shepherd before death’s door finally closes. His plea? *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”* (Luke 23:42).

How will Jesus respond? To welcome Nicodemus is one thing—he is influential and educated. To accept Jairus is to accept a ruler of the synagogue. Receiving a centurion could certainly have its privileges. Peter, while a little rough around the edges, has great potential. Even the healed leper presents Jesus with an opportunity to confirm his power.

But a criminal? This criminal? What does he have to offer? What possible benefit can be derived? He hangs on death’s doorstep. Why wouldn’t he beg?

As the good shepherd struggles to lift the head that has been pierced by thorns, how will he respond? As he opens the eyes that have swelled from the beatings of those who rejected him, what will he say? As he opens the mouth that has been silent before his accusers, how will he answer?

The good shepherd has not forgotten his promise—*“if anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.”* He believes, he lives, and he dies by the words of his parable.

*“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance”* (Luke 15:4-7).

How, then, does the good shepherd respond to the lowly criminal? *“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise”* (Luke 23:43).

More than a hypothetical case study of the beginning and end of the covenants, this criminal was an image-bearer of God. The dust of his body may have returned to the earth, but his spirit has returned to the God who gave it. The joyful cries of the angels echoed throughout the throne room of heaven over this one sheep who was willing to come back into the arms of the good shepherd.

There are many things we can learn from that most famous of criminals. So many elements

of God's amazing plan to redeem mankind either came to an end or were inaugurated with the death of the good shepherd. However, let us never lose sight of this simple, straightforward truth—a forgiven criminal continues to rejoice with joy inexpressible in Paradise.

Was he unworthy? Absolutely. But so are we.

Did he deserve death for his crimes? Undoubtedly. But so do we.

What could possibly qualify him to enjoy a place at the table of the King? Only the amazing grace of his Creator and the atoning blood of Jesus! But are we not also helpless and lost without the undeserved favor and atonement of God?

Let us always remember the price which was paid that we might find our own place beside forgiven thieves and pardoned sinners at the table of the Lord.

*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (Romans 5:6-11).*

Published in  
***Beneath The Cross: Essays and Reflections on the Lord's Supper***  
DeWard Publishing