

Those Who Follow

Marian

Scriptures:

John 10

Mark 12:30-31

John 13:35

My childhood is filled with happy memories of days spent helping Grandpa Tom on his farm. Among his animals were sheep who had a happy life in a beautiful lush green meadow. Spring was a special time when Grandpa would often be out all night helping any sheep who experienced a difficult birth. His care for them was amazing. What I loved most was the way the sheep came running, bleating in noisy excitement every time Grandpa appeared at their gate, and when he walked into the meadow they would follow him with great joy, trusting him even as he sheared their thick woolly coats before dipping them into the sheep dip containing insecticide and fungicide to ensure they were protected against external parasites. Grandpa's sheep all knew his voice – of that I had no doubt.

One of my favourite passages in Scripture is John chapter 10. I encourage you to pause here to read and meditate upon the whole chapter before continuing. Such precious words. Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees who misunderstood and thought He was being blasphemous.

I find great comfort in verses 27-30:

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

How precious was that moment when I first heard Jesus speak my name! I fell on my knees before Him in repentance and then followed Him through the waters of baptism – the sheep dip, that symbolises our dying to sin and rising to the new life in Christ. To this day I still hear echoes of the congregation singing as I went down into the baptistry:

*Down in the valley with my Saviour I will go,
Where the flowers are blooming and the sweet waters flow;
Everywhere He leads me I would follow, follow on,
Walking in His footsteps till the crown be won.*

*Follow, follow, I will follow Jesus
Anywhere, everywhere I will follow on.
Follow, follow, I will follow Jesus,
Everywhere He leads me I will follow on.*

Throughout the years that followed I learned what it meant to follow Jesus. We are called to leave our own desires behind and replace them with a life worthy of our calling, choosing willingly to deny self and take up our cross. We are called to be generous toward others and to store up treasure in Heaven; to become fishers of men and, above all, Jesus gives us two commandments which fulfil the ten commandments written by the finger of God.

"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself...." (Mark 12:30-31)

When we are obedient to His second command, to love one another, He promises that the world will know that we are His disciples. (John 13:35)

Following Jesus is not always easy, nor are we promised a trouble free life. However, Jesus does promise He will never leave nor forsake us. Our precious Lord identifies with us. He knows how it feels to be tempted, rejected, betrayed, denied, beaten. He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and He took upon Himself the sin of the whole world when He was crucified. He was willing to go through it all for you and for me, because God so loved the world.

Jesus died that we might be forgiven. He gave his life as a ransom for all who will follow Him. But He doesn't leave us to do this alone, He has sent Holy Spirit to strengthen, help, guide and lead us into all truth until the moment we reach His beautiful eternal paradise.

Prayer: Precious Lord, thank You for all You went through to secure our salvation when You took upon Yourself the sin of the whole world. May my ears be ever attentive to hear Your voice beckoning me to follow, and my obedience be born out of my love for You. Hallelujah! You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God and I love you with all of my heart. Amen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfyLNvQFMxI>