

Mystery of Sheep

by Jonathan Ross – for a high school audience

Growing up, my family moved from the busy city of Milwaukee to rural farm life in Minnesota. For many of us it meant some major adjustments. We now had to travel “long distances” to see a movie. There was a lot more grass to mow and snow to shovel. To aid in our “grass mowing” my parents decided to borrow some sheep from our neighbor farmers.

I never had the opportunity to observe sheep behavior before that time. If you ever get the chance, I encourage you to do so—it will often leave you scratching your head. I’ve witnessed sheep lodge their heads in fence-line, not able to get themselves out. I’ve seen sheep make a leap into the barn-house forgetting the door to the barn was closed. I’ve also seen sheep tremble in fear and huddle in the corner of the pen when our “big bad” Yorkshire terrier would come out to chase them. Sheep behavior will always be a mystery to me.

That’s not where the mysteries of nature end. When we look at the world around us, there is so much of creation which we have not yet understood or explored. Are there planets in the universe with atmospheres like earth? How does one communicate with cancer cells to make them stop growing? Just how many species of living things inhabit our planet? The more we dig into answering the mysteries of nature, the more we realize how intricate the design of God’s creation.

Yet when we break the First Commandment by not placing God first in our lives, we try to rob our Creator of this glory. Like sheep, we become ignorant of our surroundings, catching our heads in the fencing of human reason. Some people even try to remove God from his creation, removing the Bible as their authority, and instead look to evolution. Casting out the Creator from his creation can lead to casting out the Savior, and that closes the door to salvation. Those who reject their Savior will be found trembling in the corner confronted by death, when death has already been destroyed by Jesus. The all-knowing Creator of the universe can never be surprised or mystified, but if he could, we would so often make him scratch his head.

It's time to do a check of who's in charge. When God is our priority, we begin to see his creation like the Psalmist:

Yes, the word of the Lord is right, and everything he does is trustworthy. He loves righteousness and justice. The mercy of the Lord fills the earth. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made. By the breath of his mouth he made the whole army of stars. He gathers the water of the sea into a heap. He puts the depths into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world revere him. For he said, "Let it be," and it was! He gave a command, and there it stood. May your mercy, O Lord, be on us, even as we wait confidently for you.
Psalm 33:4-9, 22 (EHV)

We will never fully understand everything in nature, but it is assuring to know that our God certainly does. And in all his knowledge and wisdom, he still found it vital that we were to be rescued from our foolishness. It's difficult to imagine you or I putting ourselves in harm's way to rescue a sheep, but that's exactly what God did for us:

I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me (just as the Father knows me and I know the Father). And I lay down my life for the sheep. *John 10:14-15 (EHV)*

So, in thanks to our God, let's encourage each other to remain in God's Word, seeking him as our authority, and using our gifts of reason and intellect to his glory.

We pray:

Lord it is challenging sometimes to understand the world around us. When we wander, remind us of your love and promises through your Word, strengthening us to confront our doubt, and giving us the courage to face others who oppose your name. Amen.

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