

The Gentleness Of Strength

“He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart;”

Isaiah 40:11

In the Old Testament we read of Jehovah being called or calling Himself the Shepherd of His people (Psalm 23:1; Ezekiel 34:15) In the New Testament Jesus claims to be the Shepherd of God’s people (John 10:11). Peter calls Jesus the “chief Shepherd” 1 Peter 5:4.

So as we read our verse today we have a very warm and gentle portrait of our Saviour. Looking in Luke’s Gospel we can find numerous scenes of Jesus acting out of the gentleness of His strength toward people in need.

Women in Jesus’ time were second class citizens in society and so it is interesting how Luke puts special focus on them. Numerous stories, only found in Luke, show Jesus “carrying the lambs close to his heart”. In Luke 7:11-17 we read of Jesus raising a widow’s only son to life. Then in Luke 7:36-50 we read of the immoral woman anointing Jesus’ feet. The men who witnessed the sinful woman touching Jesus were disgusted at Him and decided He could not be a prophet from God if He did not recognize who the woman was nor recoil from her touch. So Jesus is shown holding those who mourn and those who are sinful close to His heart.

Luke’s Gospel also refers to Jesus and social outcasts such as Zacchaeus the tax collector who cheated people when they paid the Roman taxes (Luke 19:1-10); and the repentant thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43).

It is so evident in the New Testament that Jesus fulfilled the verse for today. There is a special gentleness as He works with those who are bruised and battered by life’s difficulties. Indeed Jesus is shown seeking out people with problems. In John 4:4 we read that Jesus needed to travel through Samaria on His way north from Judea to Galilee. The fact is that most Jews took the longer route north by crossing east over the river Jordan and only crossing back west after they had passed the hated country of Samaria.

The reason for Jesus’ concern to go through Samaria is seen in His encounter with the woman at the well who had many social problems and was despised by her own people. Once again we witness Jesus the tender Shepherd seeking out and gathering into His arms one who was despised and rejected by the world.

Jesus is such a tender and powerful shepherd of people who are not valued by the world. Therefore cannot you, with all your problems, your loneliness come to Him and know you will be welcomed? If you come you will be gathered into His strong and gentle arms and held close to His loving heart.