

The Decision

By Anna Von Reitz



In the final days and hours of his physical life, our beloved Teacher was in a state of turmoil. He was saying good-bye. He was worried about all the people who depended on him for help and for healing. So he turned to his disciples and told them, "Feed my sheep."

The image of him as the Good Shepherd has come down to us in parable and in art, as he is shown carrying a lamb in his arms, with other sheep looking on--- but he wasn't talking about sheep. He was talking about people who are as innocent as sheep, as helpless, strong-willed, and silly as sheep. Yes, he was talking about us. All of us.

His words echo across the centuries. So simple. So desperate. He entrusted those who were left behind to continue his Mission and his caretaking. And it really is our mission now, like never before.

My Mother used to wag her head and say that, "Love is a decision--- and we make it every day."

You decide to love someone or something. It's not at all the airy-fairy, moonstruck dither that springs from infatuation. No, the real deal is altogether different and far more serious, though the decision of a lifetime may be made in a single instant.

When it comes to loving and caring for and feeding his sheep, people seem to approach this decision to love from one of two perspectives. Either they act out of love for him, because they have come to know Yeshuah in their own lives, or they learn to love his sheep, and only later come to realize their love for the Shepherd, too.

Either way, it all comes down to that simple decision to love. It means that you get up early to make breakfast for others. It means you buy fifty pounds of dog food and lug it over to your elderly neighbor, because you know his dog is his best friend and he can't afford to feed his dog this winter. It means you donate to the food bank.

For me, that decision came so early in life that I don't recall making it. There was no single blinding moment of resolve. I didn't fall in love. I grew in love.

Every holiday seemed to find a cavalcade of people, including strangers, seated at our table. Every fall harvest found my Mother "setting aside" extra food for those less fortunate. I grew in love this way, learning day by day to feed his sheep. I was lucky. My parents taught me. They led by example. So I was prepared to face the vast panoply of needs in this world

without being overwhelmed. I also learned to discern when a particular job belonged to me, and when it belonged to others.

We all have our own callings as caretakers.

There are sheep out there with our names on them.

And just as these people and projects are drawn to us when they are hurt or in trouble or facing a great challenge, we need to own up and recognize our own particular sheep when they show up in our lives.

I take all this so much for granted, I don't question it anymore.

When one of my special "sheep" show up, it's like Old Home Week. Usually, I recognize that I have a job to do in their lives long before they regard me as anything but a kindly old lady. Quite often, they have been hurt so much that they are unprepared to receive kindness and help and encouragement. They stare at me in wonder--- who are you? Why would you help me?

They don't know why they are receiving that, and more particularly, they don't know why they are receiving it from me. It can take years of faithful caretaking before they understand the glorious truth --- that the True God drew us together, and I decided to love them, because he loved me --- and in both cases, no matter how unlikely that might be!

This winter, be watching for his sheep, and especially for those that have your name on their foreheads. Millions of people are milling around, uncertain, unhappy, afraid, unsure of what to believe. Millions more are in physical need of some kind. They are in pain from injuries, emotional losses, and disease. They are hungry. They need shoes. Or a new car battery.

All those needs are part of why we are here on Earth, each one of us, individually. The needy among us are providing us with a precious gift -- the opportunity to serve and to give and to be part of life beyond ourselves. And when we make The Decision to care and to be Good Shepherds and to feed his sheep, a very surprising thing happens.

Doors open. All the myriad small daily miracles become more apparent. Your own blessings pop into view. The importance of unselfish love --- and the need for it --- becomes apparent. And life, which seems to be paralyzed on so many levels, flows onward again.

In the church I grew up in, a church that had not yet bowed to the almighty dollar, everyone would be given a candle the first Sunday of Advent, and everyone young and old, would be trusted to light their candle in a hand-to-hand ceremony. The Pastor would light his candle from the altar flame, and it would spread from there until the whole huge room was glowing with candlelight.

In the same way, when one of us makes The Decision to feed his sheep, a different kind of candle is lit. It may be something as small as a smile or a kind word, or stopping a moment to listen --- really listen to someone. Or it may require an actual sacrifice from you.

One Christmas, our son had saved up over \$300 for a new computer game he wanted. He had worked so hard for it, we agreed to make up the additional \$50 and were all set to go shopping the next Monday.

That Saturday, a winter storm blew in, and with it, our Granddaughter and her babies, all in tears. Her marriage was breaking up. She and the children had been left homeless and

penniless. She didn't even have traveling money to get back home to her Father in Massachusetts.

Our teenager gave up his warm comfy bed and his dream of the new computer game.. He decided to love. The four year-old crawled up onto his lap and settled into his arms with a sigh, missing her Daddy. It was a tragic time for us all, and yet....

The real miracle of Christmas came shining through. We all made The Decision to love, above the pain, beyond it, through it. And our son couldn't have given us any greater gift that Christmas, than to see him rise to that occasion.

In the days to come, we will all be facing many challenges as our country comes to terms with the vast criminality that has all-but overtaken us. Many people will be stunned and many will face hardships. It will be hard to comprehend the many ways that we have been lied to and defrauded. The whole situation will heap emotional pain on top of physical privations.

Some people will believe the Talking Heads and think that Joe Biden won this past election.

They will be angry and believe that President Trump is doing something improper when he objects to the vote rigging that went on. More people will let fear of a "live exercise" pandemic ruin their lives--- and because of all the lies and crimes and the confusion that results, our social fabric and safety nets will break down.

We will all face The Decision again and again and again.

I hope you hear him saying, "Feed my sheep." I hope you make The Decision and keep making it every day. Invite the miracles of love into your lives and don't turn away from the heartbroken and the destitute.

Let your light shine even brighter in the darkness and pass it along, like the Advent candle flame passing hand-to-hand. Light up each heart. One smile, one bag of beans, one reassuring word, one pair of winter boots, one bag of dog food, one unselfish action.....at a time.

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