Good Morning!

“Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. Deuteronomy 22:1 [KJV]

In Deuteronomy 21:1-4 we have what seems like a simple social nicety. Return a neighbor’s lost property. It is read by people, who today live urban and suburban areas. We may relate to this on the level of stray dogs, but we look at them as a nuisance and usually have an official to catch the dog and then fine the owner.

We also translate one of the Hebrew phrases into the English, “neglect” or “pay no attention to.” It flows much better in English, but it has the negative effect of taking a certain bite out of the expression. The original says that you shall not hide yourself from” the ox or sheep.

We can all understand this expression quite easily when we apply it to running into certain people in the supermarket. All of us have been shopping or out socializing [before the quarantine] and seen from afar someone we do not want to talk to. It may be just someone that is exuberant in their speech, and we just don’t have time to visit them. However, it is often people we are at cross-purposes with and don’t want to entangle ourselves in an awkward conversation with them. So we “hide ourselves.” We backtrack and head down a different isle. We head to a different part of the store. We checkout before we are really finished. And then we make excuses in our mind why this was best.

Now let’s apply this to sheep and cattle. Have you ever tried to move sheep or cattle, even ones that were familiar with you? It is a pain and a struggle. Each year in the spring, we would lead the 6 or so feeder cattle my father kept, from the field across from our house, down the road to my great-grandfather’s old farm. It was a mile and a half with six homes, many open fields, and yards, and a side road - all of these, calling our cattle to wander off. One time a heifer upon hearing her mother bawling in the pasture ahead, decided to take a short cut and took out two fence posts and 9 rods of fence. This task usually took six of us and it was never a happy experience.

So now you may understand why it was so important for the LORD to say that you could not “hide yourself” from this task. Hiding yourself because you didn’t have time or because you didn’t want to see the other person was the easier route.

The Hebrew also uses the term “brother” where we translate either neighbor or countryman. However, brother helps us to understand the relationship we are to take with our neighbor or countryman. They are never “them;” they are always “us.” Part of the family. Someone we *want* to look out for. We do hard things for them because they are family.

Who is your brother or sister today? For whom are you willing to do hard things? Or for whom have you hidden yourself or turned your back?

In Christ, in whom we live…”

Pastor EA

Roman 14:7-8 “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, *we are the Lord's.”*