

SPECKLED AND SPOTTED

Rev. Frank S. Rose

Lessons: Genesis 30:25-36; Mark 2:15-17

Jacob worked for his uncle, Laban, for many years. During those years Jacob got married and had a large family. But he didn't want to live with his uncle forever. He wanted to go off and live with his family on his own. Since he had worked so many years looking after his uncle's flocks and herds of animals, it was only fair that he should have some animals so that he could build up his own flocks and herds.

Laban asked him what he wanted, and Jacob said that all he wanted were the spotted and speckled cattle and the brown sheep. Why did he want those? Most people would have asked for only the perfect sheep—the ones with pure white wool. The brown wool was not nearly as valuable. And they would want the cows with perfect coats, not ones that were covered with spots or specks. When Jacob asked for the spotted and speckled, and the brown lambs, he was asking to have the ones that weren't perfect.

And this tells you something about the Lord. The Lord is our shepherd. And who does He choose for His flock? Does He pick only people who are good looking, or smart? Does He pick only people who never do anything wrong or make any mistakes? If He did, He would not have very many people in His flock.

When the Lord came into the world, He helped people who were sick and poor. He talked to people who had done evil things. He talked to people who were rejected by everybody else. He even touched people with leprosy! (Leprosy is a terrible skin disease. People with leprosy look so awful that no one wants to go near them or touch them.) The Lord sat down with people who were hated because they collected taxes, or who were criminals.

Why did He do that? Because He knew that these were the people that needed His help. He said that He was like a doctor who goes to help sick people, not to people who are healthy and well. If you had lived in those days, you might have been amazed to see whom the Lord talked to and helped. He was not just going to people who were popular or good looking or rich. He went to people who needed Him.

Sometimes you get discouraged about yourself. You feel that you are not as good as other people, or you worry about the stupid and evil things that you sometimes say and do. You might even feel that other people don't really love

you or care about you. But remember, the Lord loves you. The Lord wants you to be in His flock, and He doesn't keep you out because you are speckled or spotted, or imperfect. He wants to help and lead you, and make you a better person. He loves you and wants you to become a part of His Kingdom.

Even the angels in heaven are not perfect. But they are always growing better and better, and learning how to love the Lord more, and how to love each other more, and that is what matters.

The next time you hear someone say to you, "You're dumb. "You're stupid," just remember, it is true, you probably do things that are foolish and selfish. You are not perfect. But the Lord still loves you, and He can help you to become a better person. He wants you in His flock. He doesn't reject you because of the things that are wrong with you. He sees the things that are good. That is why it is possible for you to become an angel. As He told the people: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). *Amen.*