

Hearing His Voice  
Fourth Sunday of Easter  
May 12, 2019  
Mother's Day  
John 10:22-30

Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC

**John 10:22-30 (NRSV) Jesus Is Rejected by the Jews**

<sup>22</sup> At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, <sup>23</sup> and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. <sup>24</sup> So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah,<sup>[a]</sup> tell us plainly." <sup>25</sup> Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; <sup>26</sup> but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>30</sup> The Father and I are one."

The question of Jesus' identity comes up a lot on John's gospel. Just last Sunday, Jesus stood on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and was "somebody." "Who IS that?" And John recognized "the Lord."

Remember that I mentioned, last week, that the readings in this season of the church year were specifically chosen for new believers and newly baptized folks could have their faith reinforced? Well, we've circled back a bit chronologically with our lectionary reading today, but, in the middle of miracles and healings and teaching, some people just aren't clear so they asked Jesus "Are you the Messiah? Tell us plainly."

"Goodness people," Jesus must have been saying. "It's NOT about me. **You** should be concerned about WHO you identify me as!

Because Jesus has told them who he was – in words and in actions, again and again, and they still don't believe AND IT IS them who aren't connecting to being a part of God's people!

In the verses just before our reading, Jesus uses one of the "I AM" statements in John's gospel. "*I AM the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me....I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.*" (Jn. 10:14-15)

There are many suppositions of the WHO "those that don't belong" might be.

- Gentiles? They'd come along soon enough
- Or is it people that don't believe Jesus is the long awaited Messiah?

Today's verses say "**you** don't believe" and we can imply that **they** aren't part of the flock of the Good Shepherd.

The shepherd image is powerful AND all through Scripture.

Jesus is talking about his flock, about belonging to the shepherd, but ultimately being God's people.

The Bible often refers to leaders, political or religious, as shepherds.  
And bad leaders are bad shepherds.

It is the *voice* of the shepherds that lets people know who is trustworthy.

And Jesus tells us that **his** sheep will listen to and know his voice.

He's JUST explained to a group of Pharisees that, "the sheep follow him [the Good Shepherd] because they know his voice." (Jn. 10:4)

The flock of Jesus won't follow the voice of a stranger. In fact, they'd run.

Pastor Gene and I have a running joke (although he probably wishes I wouldn't do it) that when we get separated, ESPECIALLY in a place like Walmart, I'll say LOUDLY "Come towards my voice!" Trust me, he can hear me for aisles! We're getting better about BOTH us carrying our cell phones so I don't yell.

Is there a voice that you're familiar with?

Babies even recognize *their* mom's voice in a crowd.

So, *Whose* voice is familiar so that you trust it unconditionally?

And what is that voice telling you?

These days it's becoming harder than ever to distinguish between voices of good and bad shepherds.

There are just SO many who want our attention and loyalty.

As people of the resurrection we need to be very careful to not be distracted from our Shepherd's voice. Satan is too deceptive and he causes confusion!

How are we to figure out WHO or WHAT to believe?

On the news?

On the opposing sides of politics?

Within our denomination?

We are drowned with the near-screaming... 'cause the loudest is always right.

Right?

Wrong.

I think we can agree, it IS a challenge to listen for and hear the Good Shepherd's voice! But our eternal lives depend on us doing just that.

Most of us can recall the RCA logo.

It was a dog, (remember) sitting by a Victrola staring at the speaker, with wonder, at the sounds coming out.

The RCA slogan was: "He hears his master's voice."

They really had something there!

And it wasn't JUST about selling *their* products.

Jesus used that same kind of reality to explain his relationship with his followers.

To Jesus and the people of his day, tending sheep was something very familiar.

A shepherd led the sheep to good pastures, found the strays, protected the flock, was a midwife for lambs being born, and paid special attention to the most vulnerable.

The shepherd knew each of his sheep, valued every one of them, and was deeply devoted to his flock.

Remember, too, that sheep were considered "clean" animals that could be used for sacrifices that God accepted. They were something righteous and good.

So, if WE ARE the sheep of God's flock, Jesus is saying **that those who follow him**, are in the same way "clean," righteous and acceptable to God.

Do you know your Shepherd? And do you believe (unlike those Jesus was challenging in our reading today?)

In referring to himself as a shepherd, Jesus gives us a way to really appreciate his ministry. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, IS the one who cares for and protects God's people. No one can snatch them away.

The flock of Jesus hear his voice.

He knows them and they follow.

He values each of the flock, US, and he protects us with the promise of eternal life.

If we will see ourselves as sheep of the Godly flock, we'll understand a relationship with Jesus better – know Jesus as our savior whom we can KNOW as a good, caring, dependable shepherd.

Jesus was almost certainly playing on an image more ancient than that of RCA's Victrola.

When we used Psalm 23 earlier in our service we recalled a confidence about knowing we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. And that Jesus cares for us as surely as a good shepherd of his day.

As part of Jesus' flock our Good Shepherd leads us to all we need – even to our deepest needs.

When we stray from his way like lost sheep, it is gracious forgiveness that saves us when we turn back to God.

His love protects us and heals us.

He serves as a midwife as we come into spiritual rebirth and he leads us into transformation from the ways of the world to the way of God.

Our Shepherd pays special attention to the poorest and most vulnerable, the least and lost among us.

Our task might be to behave like the RCA dog.

...to listen and recognize our master's voice so we can hear his word and follow him.

...to hear the meaning of Jesus's voice in worship as we hear Scripture and in our private prayer time.

We hear the tone of his voice in the loving example of our saints that have gone ahead of us to their eternal lives with Christ...

And, just as powerfully, we can hear his voice in the cry of the weak, the poor, the sick and the needy of our world.

All these things help us to identify the voice of Jesus, our Shepherd, when he calls to us.

One of the great dangers for us is not recognizing Jesus in our lives, like sheep not hearing the voice of the shepherd.

It's very easy for us to fail to determine his will when we can't separate his voice from the many others clamoring for our attention.

So, we Christians, we who are following Jesus, have to keep our ears tuned for the voice of our good shepherd from all the other voices.

'Cause, if we don't – listen harder and follow the RIGHT voice - there's no way for us to walk through life. We need the protection of The Shepherd's loving care.

The good news is that we can experience joy and happiness if we recognize the voice of Jesus as we journey through life.

When we do that, it's just plain easier to follow the way of our Lord,

- easier (yes) love our enemies,
- easier (yes) to offer forgiveness to somebody who has hurt us,
- easier (yes) to turn the other cheek,
- and easier to be a witness to others about Jesus. YES!

It'll be easier to follow Jesus wherever we are because we'll be living as someone who knows their master's voice. We'll have the assurance of his presence. And others WILL know whose flock we belong to.

We are more than half way through the days between Easter and Pentecost. The last couple of Sundays we might have been incredulous – how could those people who WALKED and TALKED and lived with Jesus NOT recognize him after the resurrection. They were there!

Which is all the more reason for us to re-dedicate ourselves to knowing OUR Shepherd's voice, through:

- reading Jesus' words in Scripture,
- worshipping regularly and inviting others to come and learn His voice, too
- by renewing, maybe re-starting, a personal devotional time and prayers
- and finding ways, in our everyday lives, to hear his call to act as servants who can shepherd others with care and concern for all God's children.

With practice, we'll hear our master's voice and we'll heed it.

We'll be witnesses to others about the very values of God.

Aren't we blessed? Following Jesus, our Shepherd leads us into the way God calls us to live.

Amen.