

Good Shepherd Sunday
April 17, 2016

Text: John 10:22-30

Theme: Jesus is the Good Shepherd

1. He Speaks Plainly
2. His sheep listen to him
3. His sheep follow him

Aren't you glad that for the time being anyway, the phone calls have stopped, the postcards have ceased, and the radio ads highlighting the craziest things a political opponent has ever said or did have silenced? Even though we recognize that it's a privilege and great responsibility that we have to participate in the election of our local, state and federal leaders, there are negatives that go along with it. And we're happy to have this few months of relative quiet before the general campaign begins again in earnest and it starts all over again. It can be hard to sort through the cacophony of sounds and distill it down to who's really telling the truth.

The same is true in the church today. There is a plethora of denominations, plus the so-called non-denominational churches, each putting their own spin, their own twist, their own interpretation on the words of God and Christ in the Scriptures. Some accept homosexuality, some don't. And some have changed their positions in the last 5 or 10 years. Some accept the 6 day creation account of Genesis, some don't and some have tried to blend creation and evolution. Some accept the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and some reject it. The list could go on and on of the different doctrines in the Bible that find some within the church on each side. And if you listen, it can be confusing. If only someone would speak the truth! Thankfully we have someone. **Jesus is the Good Shepherd.**

It's quite a picture Jesus paints really as he continues this dialogue on the Good Shepherd. Can you imagine anyone genuinely interested asking Jesus, **How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.** Very little that Jesus said was done in secret. Even less that he had said. He lived openly. From the day of his baptism, to his first miracle at the wedding at Cana, to the raising of the young man at Nain as well as Jairus' daughter. **The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me.** It's not that hard, because **Jesus the Good Shepherd Speaks Plainly.** He did then, and his words and his works stand still today speaking clearly of him and revealing his will.

So perhaps it should not surprise us that many today refuse to hear the plain, clear voice of the Shepherd. Even when he walked on this earth, people even within the church of his day missed his clear words and the life they give. These Jews lost out and failed to enjoy the peace and tranquility in this life and the eternal blessings in the life to come as pictured by David in the 23rd Psalm, because they thought they knew better. **From Nazareth? Can anything good come from there? (John 1:46) Who can forgive sins but God alone? (Mark 2:7)** Over and over and over again, they failed to listen. They failed to understand. About them Jesus said, **you do not believe because you are not my sheep.**

But Jesus said, **My sheep listen to my voice.** In his word, he has spoken plainly. Through his Word he has sent the Holy Spirit who makes us part of his fold through faith. We have heard his voice. It stands to us as that clear voice of one who will lead us through the gauntlet of lies that lead us into brambles, and he would have us drink not from a flowing stream of poison that gives death, but from the still waters of his life giving truth. In his word that speaks plainly, he leads us. He guides us. We aren't left to our own devices, to find our own way or to make our own path. When we go out to the pastures for respite from this world of war and division, it's the Savior's voice that leads us. When we're looking for food to quench our spiritual hunger, it's not the voice of the world, of philosophers, of great writes and orators, or other so called experts. Just Thursday an article was posted in USA Today Online entitled *Ancient Letters Reveal Bible Bombshell* that said, **Experts have long believed there wasn't enough literacy for the majority of biblical texts to be inscribed before 586BC when Judah's capital of Jerusalem was destroyed and elites were exiled to Babylon.**

[\(http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2016/04/13/ancient-letters-reveal-bible-bombshell/82977310/\)](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2016/04/13/ancient-letters-reveal-bible-bombshell/82977310/) And one has to ask, who are these experts that are just now coming around to that understanding that the Bible might be a little older than 586 BC?

See it's the voice of the Savior we listen to. Sometimes we turn that into picking and choosing. We like to joke about the selective hearing of husbands sometimes, but selectively listening to the voice of the Savior is nothing to joke about, it is dangerous. We drift and are distant from the safety and security he promises. We are threatened by and targets for the wolves who come dressed in sheep's clothing, but whose false hope leads to spiritual death. As Jesus leads us out to the green pastures and cool, still waters that nourish our souls, that cacophony of spiritual voices calls to us too, tempting us to turn aside here or stop there. In the end that is what we're doing if we make one doctrine of God's Word unimportant. That is what happens when if we allow society to stand in judgment of this Scriptural truth or that. I get it. It's a difficult world to live in right now. It's a complicated world we live in and trying to keep balance truth and love is a challenging thing. I would submit that no one here faces that more often than I.

Listen to the voice of Jesus, not with a preconceived view of what you want to hear or what a world bent on political correctness tells you might be right. Listen to his plain, unadulterated voice as you seek to follow him.

That's ultimately what's important. Jesus came to show the way to the Father and he has returned to prepare a place for us. The Good Shepherd has been there. He's walked temptation's road and he has overcome. He's been through the brambles and to the edge of the cliff. He's been **tempted in everyway, just as we are, yet was without sin.** (*Hebrews 4:15*) Because he has, it means something when he says, **I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.** If anyone knows the way to eternal peace and safety and security, it's the one who came from and returned to the place he desires to bring us. It's the one who endured all that Satan's fury could throw against him, all that was really designed for and intended for us. But Satan's joy was short. Jesus conquered and stands now as a Good Shepherd guiding us safely to our home.

In our politically correct world, it's easy to hear the voices within and outside the church speaking about the need to love. And we can learn something of love and better show that love within our congregation and outside. But don't allow yourself to be distracted by an over-emphasis on love at the expense of the truth - that becomes hypocrisy. Listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd and follow where he leads in truth that is seasoned with love, the true love as revealed by that same Good Shepherd in both word and deed throughout his ministry which endures still today.