

John 10:1-18
They Know His Voice
WRCoB 2.27.22

Sheep are easily led astray.

From the Associated Press, January 13, 2015.

ISTANBUL, Turkey – First one sheep jumped to its death. Then stunned Turkish shepherds, who had left the herd to graze while they had breakfast, watched as nearly 1,500 others followed, each leaping off the same cliff, Turkish media reported.

In the end, 450 dead animals lay on top of one another in a billowy white pile, the Aksam newspaper said. Those who jumped later were saved as the pile got higher and the fall more cushioned, Aksam reported.

This takes me back to Iowa to a previous pastorate.

An older farmer shared a children's story during worship.

Back in the early years

Farmers drove took their sheep to the slaughterhouse.

They got behind them and pushed them down the road.

The slaughterhouse was on the other side of town

Which forced the farmers to drive the sheep

Through the town's streets.

But sheep without a leader end up going in every direction.

And so, the farmers got together and devised a plan.

They bought a goat.

And they trained that goat to lead the sheep.

And that goat would lead the sheep down the streets
Right into the pens of the slaughterhouse!

Anytime a farmer needed to take sheep
To the slaughterhouse

They would hire this particular goat
Who knew the way
And the goat would lead them right to their deaths.

It's no wonder Jesus uses sheep
As a metaphor for human behavior!

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Jesus again talks about himself in metaphorical terms.

In this morning's Scripture
Jesus calls himself the gatekeeper
As well as the gate for the sheep.

He also calls himself the good shepherd.

In the previous chapter
Jesus healed a blind man on the Sabbath.

This really annoyed the religious leaders.

The Pharisees claimed THEY
Were the “pastors of the church.”

And if anyone was going to heal someone
It would be THEM
Not some upstart from the back woods of Galilee.

AND it was not going to happen on the Sabbath

In their eyes, Jesus was the thief and robber
Who had his eyes on THEIR flock!

But Jesus, in his own defense
Stated a robber never goes through the front door!

Jesus says a thief **climbs in by another way.**

The one who enters through the gate
Is someone, not only the watchman knows
But the sheep know as well!

The warning here is clear.

A lot of voices call for a person’s allegiance
Only one will lead you to abundant life.

The others voices lead to death and destruction.

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The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd.

The gatekeeper opens the gate
And the sheep hear the shepherd’s voice.

The shepherd calls them by name
And leads them out.

The sheep follow him because they know his voice.

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In West Africa where Judith is from
There is a nomadic tribe called the Fulani.

They carry all their possessions
On the backs of a few cows or camels
As they move from place to place
In search of grass and water.

They know no boundaries
Passing from Niger to Nigeria to Chad and back again.

When they are in seasonal migration
There may be several thousand cattle
With dozens of families
traveling together from place to place.

I've had to stop my car and wait
As they crossed the road.

It is a striking scene reminiscent of Biblical times.

Anyway, after traveling through the bush all day
The families come together to set up camp.

The women set up their crude tents
Collect firewood and water
And start the evening meal.

The men cut thorn bushes to make an enclosure
Where the livestock will spend the night
Relatively safe from hyenas and lions.

In the morning when they break camp
They will open the thorn enclosure

And each of the shepherds
Will call out their own animals
Using their distinctive call.

The animals will come out and head toward their owner.

When all the animals are separated
They head off for their day of travel.

So, too, shepherds in Palestine would call out their animals
From a night's rest in a community pen.

Hearing their masters' voices
The livestock would come out
And move in the direction of their owner.

The Bible is filled with verses relating to sheep

Mark 6:34 NLT

³⁴ Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

As I said earlier, sheep are easily led astray.

In today's world, a lot of voices call for a person's allegiance.

But only one voice lead can lead to an abundant life

The voice of Jesus.

Jesus, in his Sermon of the Mount

Reminds us that there are a lot of competing voices

Even within the Holy Scriptures

But with the authority given to him by God

Jesus challenges us to pay heed to his voice.

Matthew 5:21-22 KJV

²¹ Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

²² But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment:

Again, Jesus teaches to listen to his voice.

Matthew 5:38-39 NIV

³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'

³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

If every Russian Christian soldier
Took seriously the voice of Jesus
And lay down their weapons

The Russian president would not be capable
Of launching his invasion in Ukraine.

Christians fighting Christians.

Where is the voice of Jesus in that?

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In the real world, followers of Jesus
Are bombarded by competing voices.

And we see it clearly in the American church.

According to Zack Harrel, Baptist Church minister

Our hearts will be formed by the voices we listen to most. I fear we are listening to the louder voices of cable news much more than we are listening to the voice of Jesus.

The voice of hyper-partisan politics disciplines us to be motivated by fear and anger and convinces us everyone and everything is a threat.

The voice of Jesus calls us to love, hope and joy and convinces us everyone is made in the image of God and deserving of the dignity that truth entails.

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The Brethren listen to the voices in the Bible
Through several intentional filters.

They filter what they hear in the Old Testament
Through the voices from the New Testament.

And they filter the voices in the New Testament
Through the voice of Jesus.

For of all the voices vying for our attention in the Bible
The voice of Jesus needs to be heard above the rest.

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And in my opinion, that is the whole reason for Bible study.

I mean we all have an inkling what the Bible says
From our childhood memories
Of Sunday school and VBS.

From the preachers pontificating on their scripture lessons

We come to believe we know
What Jesus says about certain topics.

Over time, though, we begin to listen intently
To the voices around us.

From church leaders
From radio talk shows
From CNN or Fox
From our government leaders
To all the voices on social media.

And in the din of all these competing voices
Vying for our attention

We think we hear the voice of Jesus speaking through them.

Their voices become the voice of Christ.

Beware!

John 10:12 NLT

¹² A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock.

Many, many church leaders and Christians
Who claim they're speaking on behalf of Jesus
Are not.

But you might not know that.

You just might be one of the sheep
Following that goat to slaughter.

Be biblically informed and knowledgeable
Specifically listening to the voice of Jesus
Within the Holy Scriptures.

Because, we can absolutely depend on the words of Jesus
Above all other voices.

Those who hear his voice and follow his leading
Will find themselves in green pastures
They will be led beside still waters

John 10:14 NIV

¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—