Listen to My Voice

4-25-21

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Welcome to this fourth Sunday of Easter. Including Easter Sunday, there are seven Sundays of Easter followed by Pentecost on May 23rd.

Before we start talking about sheep and shepherds, I noticed this week that the lectionary includes, in addition to our reading from John, the continuation of the story from Acts of the Apostles that Bishop Palmer shared.

* Recall Peter and John on their way to temple. At the beautiful gate they encountered a crippled beggar who they healed.
* Next part is they go on to tell the people about Jesus and by his power (not theirs) the beggar was healed. BUT they did it in the Portico of Solomon, also known as Solomon’s Porch on the east side of the temple, court of the Gentiles/outer court/Women’s Court.
* A common area but part of the temple complex AND Peter and John were arrested by the Temple Captain and the Sadducees as they “were annoyed” because they were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead.” (Acts 4:1-22)
* They thought they were rid of this Jesus problem; they were wrong. They didn’t seem to realize it was already too late to stop it! Peter and John knew the Voice of the Good Shepherd and were helping others to know his voice.

Lord may the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my mind, and the words and thoughts of all gathered here be acceptable in your eyes or made acceptable through our Lord Jesus. Amen

Shepherds and sheep; Call to Worship was contemporary version of the 23rd psalm (also on the lectionary for this Sunday)

* Psalms are poetry and music
* KJV was translated into common day English 500 years ago from Greek, but the scholars who did it worked hard to preserve the rhythm of the poetry.

Gospel lesson John 10:11-18.

* John is unique among the 4 gospels
* Matthew, Mark & Luke synoptic gospels very similar written around 70 – 90 A.D.
	+ Mark written first in early 60”s A.D.
	+ 80% of Mark in Luke
	+ 75% of Mark in both Matthew and Luke
* John written sometime after 90 A.D.
	+ 92% of John not found in synoptic gospels
	+ All four have same general story of Jesus life, death & resurrection
	+ John is less of a biography of Jesus and more focused on conveying the spiritual significance of Jesus’s life
	+ Adam Hamilton’s Making Sense of the Bible, “If I’m looking for answers to questions of when, what and how, I look to Matthew, Mark and Luke. If I’m interested in answers to questions of who and why, I turn to John.”
	+ So, it’s in John’s way of writing less literally, and more figuratively so that we might fully understand the profound significance of our relationships in Jesus we go to the Good Shepherd.
* Gospel reading starts at v. 11 where Jesus declares himself to the Good Shepherd.
* Shepherd and sheep metaphor appears throughout old testament history
	+ Go back to 10:1 to get a more complete picture READ John10:1 – 6
	+ Similar imagery & prophetic Micah 2:12-13 p.852
	+ READ John 10:7-10
	+ God taking over Jeremiah 23:1-4 p. 711
	+ READ John 10:11-18
	+ Affirming in a new way what is said at Ezekiel 34:34:16. Similar images as 23rd Psalm
* Back to what Jesus said in John 10:11-18 Three Points
	+ First, Jesus establishes a community of understanding and purpose between himself and his disciples after the likeness of his unity of will with God
		- Hired hands don’t own the sheep but HE does
		- Those sheep, they know his voice and they will listen!
	+ Second, Jesus will bring into the flock those who are not within the fold of Judaism
		- “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.”
		- “So, there will be one flock, one shepherd”
		- Within Christianity we may have one flock but there are many folds even within the UMC. We need to work together.
	+ Third, Jesus speaks of his own free will to lay down his life, not in futile self-sacrifice, but in a victorious act of obedience to God’s command – the fulfillment of God’s loving purpose
		- Listen again to Jesus’ words
		- “For this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father”
		- Later, the authorities would think that by crucifying him they would eliminate another troublemaker, another “wannabee”.
		- Instead, they played right into God’s plan
		- The problem didn’t go away as we saw in the Acts story of Peter and John curing a cripple and the authorities were at a loss for what to do about it!
		- Again, by the time of Acts, when Peter and John were told not to talk about Jesus, it was already too late to stop it
	+ One last point, after Jesus finished what he had to say about the good shepherd and God’s commandment, hear the following from verse 19
		- Again, the Jews were divided because of these words. Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and is out of his mind. Why listen to him?” Others were saying, “These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”
	+ We live in a time when we are bombarded by ideas, information, and what some say are truth and others say are false truths. Just like in those days in Jerusalem:
	+ Just who do you believe?
		- Cable news from the radical left or the radical right?
		- Political figures who talk about what they are against and not what they are in favor of?
		- Some see the mission of the church as a “proclaimer of the Good News” one person at a time and stay out of politics
		- While others see the mission in the Social Principles, and active involvement in issues such as poverty, affordable housing, racism, and equal justice: even voting rights?
		- Through all this we must listen for the voice of our Good Shepherd
	+ It’s about the flock; growing the flock and caring for the flock
	+ It’s about those of us in the flock listening to the voice of the Shepherd, learning and doing God’s will
	+ Jesus says, Listen to my voice
* Source: An Ancient Collect, Sixth Century
* Source of this version: Freely modified from  [Prayers of the Middle Ages, edited by J. Manning Potts](https://www.ccel.org/ccel/potts/prayermiddle.txt)

[**For the Loving Care of the Good Shepherd**](https://acollectionofprayers.com/2016/07/25/for-the-loving-care-of-the-good-shepherd/)

O Lord Jesus Christ,
good Shepherd of the sheep,
you came to seek the lost
and gather them to your fold.
Have compassion on those who have wandered from you.
Feed those who hunger,
make the weary lie down in your pastures,
bind up those who are broken in heart,
and strengthen those who are weak,
that we rely on your care,
find comfort in  your love,
and abide in your guidance to our lives’ end;
for your name’s sake.
Amen.