

### **John 10:1-10**

*Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.*

*So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."*

Good morning. I would like you to listen to something. We're going to have to be pretty quiet for just a second. (Activate high pitch dog whistle. 20k mhz). Did you hear that?

Let me put it up next to the microphone. How about that? Did you hear that?

Well, don't feel bad. I can't hear it either. The truth is that we were not created to hear that frequency. How about this one? (9K mhz) Now, that one is easier to hear. You see, the first tone that I played is at a frequency that is above human hearing. Now, if your dogs were here, their ears would be perked up and they would be looking around. Dogs, and I'm sure other animals, were created with a special, expanded sensitivity to hear those higher frequencies. It was as if it was necessary for them for their safety and for their health. Humans, however, typically can't hear it.

Although we are not able to hear those higher frequencies, I do believe that we were given special hearing sensitivities also. But unlike dogs, our special hearing opens up to us a spiritual perception which we need for our safety and our health; for our meaning and for our purpose. We have been equipped with the special ability to hear and recognize our shepherd.

And, like so many other things, Jesus wants us to know that we have deep within us this ability, and so he puts it into a story or a parable. That is what we heard about in the story Jesus shared about the sheep in the sheepfold. Jesus said, "The gatekeeper opens the gate for the Shepherd, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because

they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

Have you ever seen a real-world demonstration of what that actually looks like? Multiple flocks are all herded into a communal pen for the night and then in the morning the shepherds come and call their sheep and amazingly the flocks divide themselves and follow only their shepherd. Wouldn't it be great, if it was just that easy for us? THE Shepherd calls, we follow, and out into abundant pastures we go. If I were to imagine what it is like, I would think that THE Shepherd's call brings on a peace and a level of comfort that draws his sheep to him.

But, here is the thing with our passage them morning. It tells us that there is a true path and a false path. It is both a story to help us to understand this ability that exists within us to hear our shepherd, as well as warning us that there are those who would come to us like thieves.

You see, so many of us have a hearing problem and because of that problem we are exposed to a significant danger. Humanity has clouded its hearing so much so that we can be called off into deadly directions. I know that that is a message that we really don't want to hear. We like only stories that lead to happy endings. The fact is, however, that along with The Shepherd that we have been designed to hear, there are so many other great sounding so-called shepherds calling out to us from over the wall or in the background. And they are all sound so good. They all sound so tempting.

Follow me and I will set you up in a position over others and give you power over them. Let me be your shepherd and people will do whatever you say and serve you in all things. Pretty enticing, right? That sounds very tempting.

Follow me and I will fill your houses with treasures that will feed your egos and amaze your neighbors. You'll be the house where everyone wants to be. You'll be that person that everyone wants to be. You'll be the envy of all you know you or know of you.

Follow me and I will make you a sports star, or a fashion model, or the guy that all the ladies want to be with, or the winner of a reality TV show. Follow me and I will give you all that the *world* has to offer. Follow me and you will be “happy” beyond your *earthly* imagination. You will have it all. You will be it all.

But Jesus has a warning for us today because, as with most parables, there are choices to be made. We want to focus on just the good part of the message, but we cannot forget the other side. He is telling us through a parable, through a story that is relatable to human life, that our hearing has become so clouded that we are in danger. He is warning us that these false shepherds that come at us from over the wall, these thieves that only desire to take us away from the abundance of the true shepherd, these liars that paint for us a false reality, they are all strangers. They are all strangers that are supposed to repel us. They are all strangers from whom we need to run.

When we hear their voices, we should be hearing the dissonance from the sound of creation. The sound of those shepherd want-to-bes should contrast with the peace and joy that God made us for. What they offer will not bring us to fullness. What they promise will not guide us on the right path. They will only serve to deceive.

Here's the thing. We live in a world that is constantly telling us that we need to find our voice. You've heard that guidance, right? Find your voice. Dig deep within yourself and find your voice and scream it out to the world. Reach down into yourself, decide what you want and who you want to be, and go and make your mark on the world. The thing is, there is nowhere that I find that kind of teaching from Jesus. What I do find is Jesus telling us that we need to find our hearing.

He is teaching us that we need to find our special, expanded, enhanced hearing because The Shepherd, our true and good Shepherd, is at the gate calling to us. We each need to find our hearing because THE Shepherd has a plan for each of our lives that he is right now, right here, telling you about. Right now, right here, he is leading you it, if you will hear and follow.

As the church, as Redeemer, we need to listen to THE Shepherd together, as sacred partners, because God has a mission for us. He is at our door telling us about it right now. It is the mission for us to bring the good news that The Shepherd is gently calling all people, everyone, to an amazing pasture especially made for all those who will hear and follow the one true Shepherd, the one true gate that leads to life.

How is it that Jesus so often puts it? Those who has ears, let them hear.

Amen