



4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – Mother's Day – May 7-9, 2022

Preacher: Pastor Scott Oelhafen

Listen to the Voice of Our Good Shepherd Jesus

1. His voice we can trust 2. His voice leads to heaven

John 10: 1-10

***“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.” <sup>6</sup> Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. <sup>7</sup> Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.<sup>[a]</sup> They will come in and go out, and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10: 1-10***

In the name of the Good Shepherd Jesus, dear fellow sheep and lambs in God's kingdom,

God bless your Mother's Day (tomorrow). I know that Mother's Day isn't BIG on our church calendar. But, God has given every one of us a mom. And even if you are separated from your mom by distance or death, and there are those among us who wish to be moms, but haven't been blessed in this way yet, know God loves you. Moms are so important that God even compares a mother's love to His perfect love. In Isaiah 66, God's Word promises us: ***As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you ...***

Just picture what that kind of love looks like. Picture a four year old child at night. She's so scared by a noise she hears in the darkness that she cries out in terror. Now is there a difference between hearing the voice of caring mom who says: “It's okay honey, I'm right here to help you” or hearing a gruff stranger's voice saying: “Pipe down, kid”?

There's something comforting about mom's voice, isn't there? What she says makes a big difference. But, take that same kid, add ten years. When, mom tries to help that same 14-year old teen by telling her that boy she's interested in is no good for her, it's not so easy to hear. In fact, what would you expect that teen to do when mom tries to guide her? No way, she's listening, right?” In fact, mom's disapproval just makes that boy much more fascinating. So what happened? Same mom. Same kid. It's just that the kid started listening to another voice, even though mom was right there with her trustworthy voice. But, she and we don't always listen.

On this Mother's Day weekend – our Gospel lesson from John, chapter 10, focuses on one voice. It's the voice of our Good Shepherd, Jesus. Now get this. His voice is more



comforting than the best mom on earth. So Listen to the Voice of Our Good Shepherd Jesus. His voice we can trust. And His voice leads us to heaven.

Are you familiar with the ancient story of the sirens in Homer's epic poem, the Odyssey? You might think you don't know it, but if you've ever seen the movie "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" with George Clooney, you've basically seen what I'm talking about. Sirens were the women whose song lured Clooney and his friends down by the stream and robbed them blind. In the Odyssey, sirens were dangerous monsters that looked like beautiful woman who sang songs that lured sailors and their ships to the dangerous rocks. By the time, they realized the danger, it was too late.

In John, chapter 10, Jesus uses a similar picture of voices calling out to us. He compares the dangerous voices of this world to the calming voice of the Good Shepherd that is even more wholesome than mom's. Do you see the difference? In our reading, Jesus warns us about the thief who comes to harm the sheep. And Jesus doubles-down and reminds us He is the Good Shepherd who cares for the sheep. This timeless picture is simple enough. In our sermon reading, Jesus says: **He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out ... he goes on ahead of them and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.** As the perfect son of God, Jesus will never lie to us. And as our human brother, Jesus has come down to our level to understand what we need and give us exactly what we need. **So Listen to the Voice of Our Good Shepherd Jesus.** His voice we can trust.

So which voice are YOU listening to these days? You've heard the siren song of sin and you've heard the voice of the Bible. Which one lures you? Be honest. And then ask the bigger question: where does that voice lead?

Maybe you've been listening to the familiar voice of a friend, encouraging you to fit in, to go with the flow, even if you know it's not right. That voice promises popularity and camaraderie, a sense of belonging and family. It sounds sweet, but where does it lead? That sweet song soon turns sour as it so often leads to lies to cover up for sin, or even to compromise who you are.

Or it could be the voice of success masked as greed that says: "It's okay to give to God, just make sure you don't give too much. Take care of yourself first and have all you want before helping someone else." And that voice sounds pretty good and even reasonable and responsible. Where does it lead but to the rocks of dissatisfaction, envy, and to the dead bones of a selfish life, as King Solomon so aptly described in the book of Ecclesiastes: **a chasing after the wind.**

Or that siren song might be the voice of worldly wisdom that says: "You don't really believe the Bible, do you? No educated person buys into these religious fairy tales of God creating



the world, Jesus walking on water, or the resurrection from the dead.” Worldly wisdom promises proof and certainty but leads to dependence on the undependable, a life of fear and doubt, and finally the dry bones of a dying faith and an eternity separated from God. Certainly, these are not voices to trust.

But, the Good Shepherd's voice? His voice you can trust. So Listen to the Voice of the Good Shepherd. He's not like any of those other voices, those thieves and robbers who try to get what they want from the sheep. Rather, the Good Shepherd calls out to the sheep, that's you and me, for what He can give.

Look closer at our reading. Jesus adds to the picture with another GREAT I AM declaration. **“Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.** Can you visualize that? The sheep pen was like a cave, protected on all sides. There was only one entrance. And once the sheep were all safely in for the night, the Good Shepherd, would literally become the gate. He self-lessly placed his own body at the entrance risking his life so that no sheep could simply wander off and no predator could wander in.

Today, God's Word has sounded the alarm, warning us of those sirens songs playing to a crowd, playing to you and me. Though the songs are different, the meaning is the same: Satan wants in, **to steal, to kill, and to destroy.** He wants to divide, to confuse, to damn. That prowling predator wants a sheep-snack. He wants you and he wants me. And he has the bait. Satan knows our weaknesses and the songs our sinful ears like to hear. He has the teeth – the wages of sin is still death. But, remember, my friends, Satan still has to go through the Gate, through our Good Shepherd.

And Satan has tried. On every page of the New Testament, Satan tried to stop Jesus from His mission of saving the world. But, Jesus didn't listen to any of these siren songs and perfectly followed the Father's will in our place. Jesus even conquered death by placing His perfect body on the cross and into the cold cave of the tomb and rose from the dead, removing death's sting and power. Yes, Christ is Risen. He's risen indeed.

That's why our Good Shepherd is such an effective gate. That's why His voice leads us to heaven. In verse 10, Jesus promises: **I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.** When we follow Jesus, we most certainly getting a full life, not necessarily a life full of prosperity and possessions, but a life of real meaning, of real purpose, of God's real love and power right now as we listen to His Word.

And that's a voice worth listening to. Each week, we have the special privilege of coming to church to hear the sermon. The sermon isn't what the preacher feels like talking about. In the sermon, based on the theme of the day, God gives us his Law which shows our sins – it hurts, and is sometimes hard to hear. And in every sermon here at St. Paul's we hear the sweet Gospel message that clearly shows us we have a Savior who forgives us and wants us



back, even if we've wandered far from home. But, a sermon is more than just a pep talk, a half-time speech, or food for thought. It's God's voice actually speaking to us through the preacher that builds our Christian faith every time we hear it. And God's Holy Spirit works through the preacher's words to give each of us God's voice. So in every sermon, **Listen to the Voice of Our Good Shepherd. He calls His sheep by name.** He assures us of his love and forgiveness. God tells us he will never leave us or forsake us as defenseless sheep.

And where does His voice lead? Jesus answers that in John, chapter 10: ***I am the gate, whoever enters through me will be saved.*** That's a voice worth listening to. His voice leads us to everlasting victory and heaven.

You know how for a 4-year old, mom is the smartest woman in the world? But, by the time she is 14, she's the most clueless. And then another 10 years pass, it has reversed again? Yet, through it all, a good mom hasn't changed. She is who she is because she loves you and has your best interests in mind. Even more so, is the Good Shepherd. So whether we like what we hear our Good Shepherd telling us, his voice is one we can trust. So listen closely even as sheep, if they're smart, listen to their Good Shepherd. Amen.