

Oak Grove Presbyterian Church

Kate Lindberg

August 21, 2022

John 10: 11–18

Context: We are continuing with our series focusing on the “I am” statements that Jesus made which are found in the book of John. This morning we are going to be hearing about Jesus being the Good Shepherd. Our Scripture today starts in Chapter 10, but to give you some context, we are going to go back to the previous Chapter in the book of John. Chapter 9 is where we see Jesus healing a blind man. Jesus spits onto the ground to get the dirt wet enough to make mud and then puts this mud on the man’s eyes, and upon washing it off, the man could now see. This upset the Pharisees, and then began a conflict discourse that ended that chapter and Chapter 10 begins out of this same conflict. Early in Chapter 10, Jesus says that the sheep follow the shepherd because they know his voice, and that they will not follow a stranger because they do not know his voice.

The Gospel according to John: beginning at the eleventh verse

Scripture: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸ 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.
Amen.

Sermon:

Let us pray together:

Grant us O Lord to hear Your Voice

And in hearing Your Voice to love Your Word,

And in loving Your Word, to do Your Will.

In Your Holy Name we pray- Amen.

I have this Daily Devotional that I absolutely love- now as much as I love it, I don’t always remember to do it nor do I always make time to read from it every day- which I guess takes away from the “daily” part of it. Also please don’t tell my committee that this seminarian doesn’t follow her devotional to a T...I’d greatly appreciate it.

But anyway, this book is called *Solo*, and it is produced by the Message Bible. The Message is a translation that I enjoy for several reasons, but one is that it is written in a very accessible

manner, it was written for the purpose of being a reading Bible- one which connects the people of today to the ancient text. This devotional follows the classical style of Lectio Divina, where you read, think, pray, and live the Scripture. This model is designed to have us invite God into our spaces. This is not so much a check-list devotional where you are “doing things” or actively trying to think of moments you “saw” God. Rather, this is a practice that really leans into listening and silence. Eugene Peterson, author of the Message translation, a Presbyterian minister, scholar, and theologian, called the Bible, “a book that reads us even as we read it” He says, “It’s an uncommon sort of Book that requires an uncommon sort of read”. That’s where the practice of Lectio Divina enters and allows for some guidance when interacting with Scripture. And although I confessed to you that I don’t always read from this devotional, I did for today’s Gospel reading, and let me tell you, there are some questions on which to dwell. I would like to ask you to take these next few minutes to think about the following four questions: What do you make of the centrality of “knowing” one another? We read the word “know” four times in two verses, Jesus knowing his sheep, the sheep knowing Jesus. The Father knowing Jesus, Jesus knowing the Father.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd does the following for the sheep.

Call his own sheep by name

Lead them out

Know his own sheep

Put the sheep before himself, sacrificing himself if necessary

Gather and bring other sheep to the folk

Which of these do you most need for Jesus to do for you today?

The sheep recognize Jesus’ voice and respond by following him and knowing him. How do you need to respond to Jesus today?

How are you growing in your capacity to recognize his voice?

Now, I know I just asked you a bunch of questions, and now just let them enter into your mind. Let your thoughts run over them, inviting God into this space and not trying to hold too tightly to any one question in particular, but listen to where you are called today.

In this morning’s Gospel reading, Jesus shares three different ways that he is the Good Shepherd. The first being that Jesus lays down his life for the sheep. The second, Jesus knows his sheep, and the third that Jesus conquers death for the sheep.

I am drawn to thinking about the idea of “knowing” and these deep relationships that we see here. Perhaps that is due to the fact that we are two and a half years into this time of pandemic, where it seems like many relationships have struggled. We’ve had major milestones occur in what feels like and quite literally was isolation. We’ve had babies born and folks enter into God’s eternal kingdom, unable to celebrate and mourn together. People who have moved and started new jobs, kids going off to college, to have events such as these take place in a time of worldwide pandemic is simply not conducive to relationship building. So while we may struggle in this time to build those deep, everlasting relationships with our new neighbors, colleagues, and classmates, our relationship with Jesus is one that we can count on. Jesus knows us, knows me, and knows you. We serve a God who knows us fully and completely, one who loves us just as we are.

Let's reread verse 14: I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.

In the fourteen short words found in verse fourteen, we can take so much comfort. We can take comfort in knowing that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Jesus is someone who guides us and leads us. This imagery of shepherding a flock is found all throughout the Bible. Now, relating to this image of being a shepherd probably lands a little differently reading it in 2022 in Bloomington than it did in its original context, however, it is still a cherished and important metaphor illustrating the relationship between Jesus and ourselves.

What I have learned about flock and herd animals, is that sheep need to be called and guided. They are not like cows that can just be pushed and corralled. Sheep recognize their shepherd's voice and will not follow a stranger. This was also mentioned just before our reading today. In chapter 10 verses 3-5 say, "The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers."

This is a very intimate and connected relationship. There's an example that I came across while doing some reading for this Gospel that used babies to magnify this point. If you had a bunch of crying babies in a nursery, a parent would be able to pick out their baby's cry, and on the flipside of that, a crying baby is able to recognize their caregiver's voice, for parent knows baby and baby knows parents.

The last two questions that I had asked you earlier from this Lectio Divina focused on recognizing Jesus' voice and following Jesus, just as the sheep were able to recognize their shepherd's voice and they responded by following him. This makes me think about how many voices we have constantly bombarding our minds. We have various news outlets, politicians and celebrities, friends and family, and not to mention we have millions and billions of people on the internet sharing anything and everything. There are so many voices that it can be hard to hear the one which we should follow. I suppose that's one reason why I have fallen in love with this devotional and practicing Lectio Divina, because it is making me stop and silence everything and everyone. I have to silence my responsibilities as the youth and young adult coordinator here, silence the intruding thoughts about what schoolwork has to get done next, silencing my to-do list. By muting all of these other things, we are creating a focused and intentional environment to listen. To invite God in and let God move us in ways which we need to be moved. This allows us stillness to better hear and recognize Jesus' voice.

I'd encourage you this week to take time to do some silencing and see just what you end up hearing.

For the Good Shepherd knows you, and you know the Good Shepherd. So go, listen and follow.

Amen.