

Recognizing Resurrection—In His Voice

John 10:1-10

May 3, 2020

Beargrass Christian Church

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. This is the first Sunday of May—usually we are horsin’ around.
 - 1. But the Derby has been delayed, so we will have to wait.
 - 2. And some of you are used to me trotting out painful pony puns on Derby weekend, but you will have to wait for that too.
 - 3. And our text today mentions sheep—not horses.
- B. But as a pun-loving pastor, there is some potential in the pasture.
 - 1. Dare I pull the wool over your eyes and add a few ovine lines?
 - 2. I could tell you that a sheep’s most common traffic violation is a ewe-turn and that their favorite truck is a Dodge Ram.
 - 3. Beloved sheep songs included “I Only Have Eyes for Ewe,” “The Bleat Goes On,” and “Wooly Bully.”
 - 4. Favorite Christmas songs include “Fleece Navidad” and “I’m Getting’ Mutton for Christmas.”
 - 5. But this is shear nonsense—a ba-a-d thing to do in a sermon...so I won’t.
 - 6. I might have to go “on the lamb”—so I will pass on the puns.
 - 7. Let’s turn our attention to today’s text from John 10.
- C. Our current sermon series is called “Recognizing Resurrection.”
 - 1. We have thought about seeing signs of new life through our tears, in God’s wondrous creation, and despite our doubts.
 - 2. Today we will think about hearing the “Voice of our Shepherd.”

II. JESUS SAYS, “MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE.”

- A. Sheep recognize the “language” of their shepherd.
 - 1. And they are gregarious—they are social animals.
 - 2. The flock that will graze together, stays together.
 - 3. They sense that there is security and safety in numbers.
 - 4. A de-flocked sheep will keep repeating high-pitched bleating!
 - 5. They do not like to be lonely—they have FOMO.
 - 6. Together, they follow the shepherd’s voice.
 - 7. Listening is a key component in this relationship.
- B. Sheep also have keen hearing—they had “Caller ID” and voice recognition software long before we ever thought about it.
 - 1. And this makes it possible for them to discern the voice of their shepherd from other voices.
 - 2. They naturally follow the one they perceive to be a friend, particularly if food is provided (that sounds like our son!).
 - 3. Sheep aren’t as dumb as we think—unless they are scared.

4. Unfortunately, their reputation for stupidity comes from the fact that they are frightened of just about everything!
5. Fear causes a flock to unfold and disintegrate—and when sheep are driven apart, they become the most vulnerable to predators.
6. That is when the wolves and thieves and bandits and lions and tigers and bears often appear—oh my!

C. But I believe this is still a meaningful metaphor in multiple ways for most of us.

III. **SO, ARE WE LISTENING? DO WE HEAR THE VOICE?**

A. In the Bible God speaks directly with folks of all ages.

1. Some people read these accounts of hearing God's Voice as miracles that really did happen, but no longer take place.
2. Some see them as folkloric flourishes to ancient stories.
3. But do we hiccup when someone says they heard God's Voice?
4. It has been said: "When you talk to God, we call it prayer. But when God talks to you, we call it schizophrenia."
5. And yet, many of us believe that God still speaks today.

B. When we hear the Voice, we have a variety of responses.

1. We are usually "all ears" when the Voice offers comfort.
2. When life is tough, when we are hammered by horrible headlines, we are eager to hear the Shepherd's words.
3. "I am the Good Shepherd; I lay down my life for the sheep."

C. At other times we listen selectively or when it is convenient.

1. And sometimes we pay more attention to the cacophony of other voices around us that are competing for our attention.
2. For instance, are we weary of the COVID 19 discussions?
3. Sometimes it is just too much—too heavy—TMI and TMM...
4. Too much information—and too much misinformation—especially supposed cures.

D. Some folks have actually tried these bogus COVID-19 cures...

1. Drinking lots of water, gargling with salt water or vinegar...
2. Taking immunity boosting products, vitamins, teas, oils...
3. Inhaling hot air from a blow dryer— that got ½ million views!
4. Eating garlic—it doesn't work, but folks will stay 6 feet away...
5. Over 700 people are dead in Iran from using methanol...
6. Jim Bakker, a televangelist who spent time in jail for defrauding followers into supporting his extravagant lifestyle is at it again.
 - a. Holding a black bottle of "Silver Solution" he says: "We've tested this—it works on just about everything."
 - b. He is already being sued.

7. The Shepherd-in-Chief suggested ingesting or injecting bleach.

8. A lot of "sheeple" ended up in already overcrowded hospitals.

E. We hear voices of preachers, politicians, performers and all kinds of people.

1. We are bombarded by ads and appeals from all over the place.

2. And most of us rarely experience real quiet—our technological gadgets and devices and phones give us 24-7 surround sound.
3. Do we listen to Alexa or Siri more than the Shepherd?
- F. Alexa alone already works with more than 20,000 smart-home devices representing more than 3,500 brands.
 1. Her voice emanates from more than 100 third-party gadgets, including headphones, security systems, and automobiles.
 2. “Alexa, we know that you’re listening. Can we trust you!?”
- G. Henri Nouwen says that we are to help each other focus on the real, but often hidden event of God’s active presence in our lives.
 1. Our challenge is not just to be busy, but to keep from being so busy that we can no longer hear the Voice of God.
 2. There are too many others competing for our attention.
 - a. There is a voice that says, “Prove that you are a good person.”
 - b. Another voice says, “You should be ashamed of yourself.”
 - c. There is a voice that says, “Nobody really cares about you.”
 - d. Another says, “Become successful, popular and powerful.”
 3. But underneath all these often very noisy voices is a still, small Voice that says, “You are my Beloved; my favor rests on you.”
 4. That is the Voice we really need to hear—but it requires solitude, silence, and a strong determination to listen.
 5. Prayer is listening to the Voice that calls us “Beloved.”
- H. We have to be intentional about listening for the Voice.
 1. And not just for our own spiritual health and well-being.
 2. We are also called to listen and follow him in service.

IV. WE ARE TO ARISE AND LISTEN AND LISTEN AND ARISE!

- A. A woman shares these thoughts about our need to also respond.
 1. She talks about folks for whom only their lives matter.
 2. Other people’s suffering lies beyond their awareness and care.
 3. She describes this condition as “moral deafness.”
 4. We become numb to the needs of the folks around us.
 5. Are we listening—or are we too busy to be bothered?
 6. Are we looking for the next diversion, planning the next event, considering the next purchase, responding to the latest post?
- B. A pastor was teaching children about the 23rd Psalm.
 1. He explained that sheep need guidance and that a shepherd’s job is to stay close to the sheep and protect them.
 - a. He pointed to the little children in the room and said that they were like sheep and needed lots of guidance and care.
 - b. Then he raised his eyebrows, pointed to himself and asked: “So, if you all are the sheep—then who is the shepherd?”
 2. Without hesitation, a girl said: “Jesus. Jesus is the shepherd.”
 - a. This was not the answer the pastor expected.

- b. So, he asked, “Well, who am I?”
 - 3. She said, “I guess you must be the sheep dog.”
 - 4. The little girl was wise beyond her years—Jesus not only needs the sheep to listen—but sheep dogs and more shepherds.
- C. So many of you are so good at recognizing the Voice.
- 1. You are tuned in—you are on the same spiritual wavelength.
 - 2. The Shepherd calls, you hear, and you follow—you get it.
 - 3. And a number of you who have shared stories and examples.
- D. A church member sent me a picture of a profound poster.
- 1. The message said: “Let us visit the lonely, feed the hungry, house the homeless, stop the killing, and heal the sick.”
 - 2. “After that, we can sit around and argue about religion.”
- E. Former Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy, wrote a new book, “Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection.”
- 1. He describes another scourge in our country—loneliness.
 - 2. He says that as a society, we have never been so isolated.
 - 3. With the lockdown, many go days or weeks without seeing anybody—especially if they don’t have tech connections.
 - 4. Adults with strong social connections are 50% less likely to die prematurely— he says loneliness has the potential to kill.
 - 5. But connection has an even greater potential to heal.
- F. A journalist wrote: “Much has been written about the destructive effects of social media—but it can also be a source of comfort.”
- 1. “I know because I have experienced those comforts firsthand.”
 - a. “My mother has COVID-19 and is fighting for her life.”
 - b. “I just tweet about politics, but these are desperate times.”
 - c. “So, I tweeted ‘My 91-year-old mom is in the hospital and I would be grateful for your prayers for her.’”
 - 2. “Immediately, the spiritual floodgates opened, as my feed filled with messages of empathy, love and compassion.”
 - a. “Kindness poured in from supporters and antagonists alike.”
 - b. “One person wrote: ‘I despise your political perspectives, but I pray with every fiber of my being that your mom is OK.’”
 - c. “I got ‘praying hands’ emojis from folks of many faiths.”
 - d. He said: “In our common struggles we found common ground.”
 - 3. “One study showed that including strangers in your social network can hurt self-esteem—and that may be true.”
 - a. “But this week my family and I were enveloped in the compassionate embrace of countless people we didn’t know.
 - b. “Over 2 ½ million people saw my tweet—and over 250,000 engaged—reading, liking, responding or sharing it.”
 - 4. “To all who are praying for my mom, thank you.”
 - 5. “I am so glad, because I believe in the power of prayer.”

- G. Friends, these “lockdown days” can be lonely and tough.
1. But they also provide some unique opportunities for us.
 2. We can spend more time in prayer, listening for the Voice.
 3. We can let our voices become pathways for God’s Voice to be heard.
 4. We don’t have to make headlines to make a difference.
 5. Great love and care can be communicated in calls and cards and notes and letters.
 6. And we now have a wide array of digital devices, which when used wisely and well, can virtually keep us connected.
- H. So, listen up!
1. You are loved...
 2. Rise up and share the love.