

Easter 4 – April 30, 2023 Good Shepherd Sunday  
Text: John 10:1-10  
Theme: HEAR – KNOW - FOLLOW

**Today is Good Shepherd Sunday. We celebrate it every year on the fourth Sunday of Easter. This is the day we remember the metaphor our Lord used in reference to His relationship to us. We are like sheep and He is the Good Shepherd.**

**There is no doubt of His goodness. If we understand nothing else about Jesus, we understand that He chose to die on the cross in our place so that we could inherit paradise and be spared from an eternity in Hell. There is not more good that can be done than giving your life and soul for the sake of another. But the shepherd being good does not always entice sheep to follow. Sometimes we sheep choose to wander toward that which is bad.**

**Why do pretty girls love bad boys? If you were a nerdy boy like me in High School who made good grades and tried to keep the rules, you remember how frustrating it was when the girls ignored you and flocked to the boys who were smoking behind the dumpster and using their math books as a door stop. Why do little children do dangerous things when their guardian's back is turned? If you have ever worked with children, you know the gleam they get in their eyes when they are about to do something they know is wrong and dangerous. Why are drugs and alcohol so enticing? We**

**don't live in the dark ages and even the most uneducated people know the dangers of misusing drugs and alcohol. Why would anyone ever get drunk or shoot fentanyl? Why are we so drawn to the bad when we know what is good?**

**The first thing Jesus calls us to do today is to hear Him. Jesus says,**

**"The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." Listen to His voice! That's not always easy for us. Sometimes the world is a very loud place and seeks to drown out Jesus with its noise. Before you can hear Him, you might have to shut down some of the noise around you. You might have to carve out a quiet place and a quiet time to listen to Jesus. We are often our own worst enemy. I have heard people complain that they can't hear Jesus' voice while they insist on standing in front of a roaring worldly jet engine even as they complain. "I don't get anything out of church," they say as they scroll on their phones during the sermon. "The hymns are boring," they say as they shut the hymnal and stare blankly into space. "The Bible is too hard to understand," they say as they use it to keep the coffee table level, and I agree, it surely is hard to understand if you never open it. Shut it all down! Get away from it. Whatever is drowning out Jesus needs to be shut down, even if it makes you money, even if it gives**

**you control or power, even if it seems pleasurable. It's not worth losing Jesus' voice in all the noise.**

**Second, having heard Jesus' voice, He calls us to know it.**

**Jesus says,**

**"When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."** Knowing Jesus' voice is not the same as hearing Jesus' voice. Knowing implies relationship and a relationship of any kind requires action. If you want to have a relationship with someone, it requires that you participate in that relationship. How many marriages survive when one party has checked out and no longer strives to be in the relationship? Beware, because Satan will try to mimic the voice of the Good Shepherd in hopes of leading you in the wrong direction. It will take some practice and some time to learn to know Jesus' voice and you will make some mistakes along the way. But the Holy Spirit will always lead you back to His voice if you persist in studying the Word of God and receiving the body and blood of Christ. If one does not study the Word, one cannot know the voice. The voice itself creates faith but every human being has the power to dismiss the voice and so diminish the faith. All we can do is continue resolutely speaking God's Word so that His voice is there and the Holy Spirit has the opportunity to create and strengthen

**faith. The more one studies the Word, the clearer the voice becomes.**

**There are many Christians who are sadly misled by Satan. That's why St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:18**

**"For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized." While we would love for all Christians to be unified, when there are those who do not follow the Lord's teachings, we have no choice but to break away from them. These are Christians who are being misled by Satan. They believe that they are following Jesus but they are not following His Word. They are following words of a group of human beings who change what Jesus says to accommodate what they want? Jesus' Word is divisive. It will divide those who hear it into those who follow and those who seek a different way. There is nothing we can do about that. So, we preach the truth and let the Holy Spirit work as He sees fit and that brings us to our third point.**

**Having heard the voice and having come to know the voice, Jesus says to follow him, Jesus says, "the sheep follow him, for they know his voice." Having heard, we are empowered to follow because Jesus never commands us to do anything that he does not**

**give us the ability to do. Here is where the Book of Acts comes in today. We are given the model for following the voice. Luke tells us in Acts,**

**“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.”**

**How did they follow the Good Shepherd? They worshipped together and communed together and that is how they were empowered to follow the voice of the Good Shepherd. They were able to let go of their possessions and give away the proceeds for the good of the community which was the beginning of the Church. They were able to receive the Word and the body and blood with glad and generous hearts. Acts doesn’t even mention the persecutions they endured because that’s how little it mattered to them. They lived their lives praising and worshipping God and what**

**did God do for the people who had heard Him, known Him and followed Him even in the midst of persecution? Luke tells us,**

**“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” If the Church is not growing, it is only because the people are not hearing, knowing and following the Good Shepherd. We are not called to control how fast the Church grows or when it grows but we are called to hear, know and follow and we do that only by faith. Where God’s people are gathered together, doing the Work of the Church, there is the Good Shepherd among them bringing His will to bear upon this unwieldy world. Never fear that where His Word is purely taught and proclaimed, there He will be in the midst of us and that will bring His blessings of faith growth and physical growth raining down upon His Church.**

**Watch and see. The Good Shepherd is at work here at Trinity. Blessings are here now and more are coming.**