My Sheep Listen to My Voice

John 10:22-42

Key Verse:10:27 “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

Last week we studied how and why Jesus is a good shepherd to us. He calls each of us by our own name. He knows all things and knows everything about us. He makes us lie down in green pastures and leads us beside quiet waters. Above all, he lays down his life for us. As he is a good shepherd to us, so we should be a good sheep for him. In today’s passage we’ll study how we can be good sheep of Jesus. When we become good sheep of Jesus, then we can be good shepherds like him.

First, Jesus’ sheep listens to his voice. (22-30) Look at verses 22-23. “***Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was at the temple courts walking in Solomon’s Colonnade.***” The Festival of Dedication was established to commemorate the rededication of the temple by Judas Maccabeus on Kislev (December) 25 in BC 165. The Jews call this *Hanukkah*, which means “to dedicate.” In BC 167 the king of Syria, Antiocus Epiphanes IV, captured Jerusalem and sacrificed a pig to Jupiter on the temple altar. Judas Maccabeus revolted, recaptured Jerusalem, and rededicated the temple. The Jews also called it the Festival of Lights, and they lighted eight lamps in their houses for eight days to commemorate the miracle of God, who had continued the lamp in the temple for eight days with only one day’s supply of oil.

At the Festival of Lights, Jesus was walking in Solomon’s Colonnade. Solomon’s Colonnade or Solomon’s porch was located at the east side of the temple along the Gentiles’ court. It was built with columns and a roof, and many people gathered under the colonnade to avoid the heat and to meet people who came from around the world. Jesus’ walking in Solomon’s Colonnade reminds us of his words, “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*.” (8:12) People celebrated the rededication of the temple at the Festival of Lights; still, their hearts was dark and heavy. They were still in darkness, not because they had no lights to celebrate, but because they had no Jesus in their hearts. They did not know the way of salvation through the forgiveness of sin. No matter how many lights they decorated with in their houses, and no matter how bright were the circumstances they might have lived in, if there was no God in their hearts, they lived in darkness.

They were children of darkness who gathered in the colonnade to accuse Jesus. Look at verse 24. “***The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly***.” Here the word ‘to keep in suspense’ is *psyche* in Greek, which means ‘to annoy’ or ‘to doubt.’ Jesus annoyed the Jews because he didn’t identify himself as the Messiah. The motivation for their question was not so that they could believe in Jesus as the Messiah, but accusing Jesus as a sinner. If we don’t believe in Jesus, we are in suspense all the time. We become anxious, doubtful, and fearful. No matter how many books about peace we may read and no matter how strong tranquilizers we may have, if we don’t know the truth, we are in suspense with anxiety and fear. Dr. Samuel Lee often said, “Unbelief is a disaster.” Faith in Jesus is the key for peace and secret for blessing. So Jesus said, “*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*.” (Jn 8:31,32)

How did Jesus answer them? Look at verses 25-30. “***Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you did not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them; and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father; who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one***.” Jesus rebuked their unbelief. Jesus told them many times that he came from the Father to do his Father’s will, but they did not believe in him. Jesus performed many signs and wonders; still they didn’t believe in him. They didn’t believe in Jesus, not because there was little evidence about Jesus, but because they decided not to believe in Jesus. No matter how hard we work to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, if they decide not to listen to our message, we can’t change their minds. Jesus said that they didn’t listen to him because they were not his sheep. They didn’t respond to Jesus’ voice because they had no ear to hear his word.

We are Jesus’ sheep. Jesus said, “*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me*.” Sheep are near-sighted animals, but have the capability to distinguish a shepherd’s voice from the voice of a stranger. Their ears are always listening for their shepherd. They listen to their shepherd’s voice, but not to strangers. When they hear the shepherd’s voice, they follow him. As Jesus’ sheep, we must open our ears to hear Jesus’ words. Whatever we do and wherever we go, our ears have to be open to hear Jesus’ words. Personally, I struggled to hear Jesus’ voice while preparing this message. I needed to hear the voice of Jesus and deliver his message, not my own word or message. This is why the servant of God’s word must kneel down and pray to respond to the voice of Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

Do you want to become a good shepherd? Be a good sheep of Jesus first! In order to become a good sheep of Jesus, we must listen to his word and follow him. The problem of the stubborn and unbelieving Jews was their spiritual deafness. Their ears were opened, not to Jesus, but to demons. They listened to the voice of demons, such as the voices of jealousy, pride, hatred, self-righteousness, and murder. Who are the good students? What is their secret to maintaining good grades? It is listening to the words of their teachers and the lectures of their professors attentively and carefully. Those who think about other things or are distracted by something unrelated to the class cannot expect good grades. They should turn off their phones and pay attention and take notes!

Abraham was a good sheep of God who listened to God’s word attentively and carefully. His ears were opened for God’s message. So he went wherever God directed, and he did whatever God commanded. God blessed him to become a father of many nations. Moses was a man of prayer. He went to God and knelt before him whenever he needed God’s help. He struggled to listen to God’s voice in Egypt, in the wilderness, and at Mount Sinai. King David was a shepherd king. But he was a good sheep of God first. He prayed all the time to hear God’s message. In his psalms and hymns we see how David struggled to hear God’s word in all situations. Jesus is the champion for listening to his Father’s word. He prayed regularly. He frequently went up onto a mountain to pray. He listened to the Father and followed his way, to the point of death on the cross.

We need to exercise our listening to the voice of our shepherd Jesus. Through morning devotion, through meditation and Bible study, through obedience to his word, we must listen to him. When we don’t listen to him, we are listening to something else which deceives us and distracts us from him. Our future is determined by whom we listen to and what we hear. If you want to know who you are, check what you daily listen to most. There are many radio channels on FM and AM. We must adjust our channel for Jesus and stay in tune; 99.1 Joy FM or 91.5 FM Bott Radio Network, or The Word of God. Jesus said, “*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*” Jesus said earlier, “*Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed ever from death to life*.” (Jn 5:24)

What did Jesus promise his sheep? Jesus said in verse 28. “*I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.*” Jesus promised them eternal life and protection from their enemies. There are many wolves and thieves who are seeking the lives of Jesus’ sheep. They are like prowling and watching for a moment when the sheep get lost or go astray. But as long as our good shepherd Jesus protects us, they will not harm us. Jesus again repeated in verse 29, “*My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one*.”

Second, Jesus’ sheep appreciate the work of God (33-39) Right after Jesus answered, the Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him. (31) But Jesus said to them, “***I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me***?” (32) Jesus asked for the reason why they tried to stone him. They said, “***We are not stoning you for any good work, but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God***.” (33) They accused Jesus of blasphemy because Jesus said that he and the Father are one. They did not know who Jesus really was. They did not know that Jesus came from the Father. They had no idea about Jesus because they were not Jesus’ sheep.

How did Jesus respond to their accusation? Look at verses 34-39. “***Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are “gods”’? If he called them ‘gods’, to whom the word of God came---and Scripture cannot be set aside---what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.***” Jesus defended himself by quoting Psalm 82:6, which says, “*I said, ‘You are “gods”; you are all sons of the Most High*.” Jesus meant that the Scripture proves that the word ‘god’ is legitimately used to refer to others besides God himself. If there are others to whom God can address as ‘god’ and ‘sons of the Most High’, on what biblical basis should anyone object when Jesus says, “*I am God’s Son*?” (*The Gospel according to John*: D. A. Carson 1991) And Jesus appealed to them to believe in his works in order to know him and to understand what he said. All the signs and wonders which Jesus had performed in the Father’s name verified Jesus’ sonship and endorsed his Messiahship. In verses 23-38, Jesus repeated four times the importance of acknowledging the works of God. (23, 32,37,38)

Here we learn that Jesus’ sheep appreciate the works of God which were performed in His name. Sheep are not smart animals. They easily get lost because they don’t remember the route they used. So they need a shepherd who leads them. The Israelites were compared to stubborn and foolish sheep. They frequently forgot what God had done for them. They forgot how God had delivered them out of Egypt. They forgot how they had crossed the Red Sea as on dry land. They didn’t remember how they conquered Jericho when they obeyed the word of God. They were quick to complain and slow to listen. They provoked God to anger many times because of their unbelief. God called them a stiff-necked people.

Jesus’ sheep are different from these stiff-necked people. Jesus’ sheep are obedient because they remember their shepherd’s voice. They follow him. They remember how their shepherd has taken care of them day and night. They remember how they were rescued by their shepherd when they were surrounded by wolves. They remember their shepherd who found them when they were lost. Who was Jesus’ sheep in John’s gospel? The man born blind whose eyes were opened by Jesus was Jesus’ sheep. He remembered what Jesus had done for him. He gave thanks to Jesus and trusted in him to the end. He even risked his life to testify about Jesus as his Savior. Do you want to become a good shepherd? Remember what Jesus did for you when you were in need and in danger. Listen to his gentle voice and follow him. The Jews in today’s passage failed at following Jesus because they did not listen to him. They did not remember what Jesus had done for them. They remained in suspense and anxiety, without peace, because they were not Jesus’ sheep.

Today Jesus wants each of us to be a good shepherd for God’s sheep. In order to be a good shepherd like him, we must be a good sheep of Jesus first. Let us incline our ears and listen to him. Let us remember what God has done for us and trust him and follow him to the end. Let us read verse 27. “*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*” Amen!