

What is a Disciple? A Disciple Knows His Master's Voice

1. Review

- a. Week1 – Admirer vs. disciple
- b. Week2 – Count the Cost, Pick up your cross
- c. Week3 – Life long learning
- d. Today we are going to learn about sheep and how they are a lot like Christians. Open your bibles to John chapter 10, beginning in verse one:

2. John 10:1-5 *"I assure you, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! 2For a shepherd enters through the gate. 3The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they recognize his voice. They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't recognize his voice."*

- a. Let's take a trip to Palestine, a place that they herd sheep the same way that they did 2000 years ago. At night-time the sheep are gathered into a large pen or sheepfold. The pen would be brush or sticks that would be piled up in a wide circle, with just a single opening in one end. In fact, several flocks from several shepherds might share the same sheep pen. One of the shepherds would then sleep in the opening, literally putting his life between the sheep and the danger outside the pen.
 - i. At daylight, each of the shepherds would come to claim their sheep. The gatekeeper would allow the shepherd to enter the pen and to call his sheep. His sheep would know his voice because day after day out on the slopes of the hills of Galilee they would have heard him calling, singing and talking to them. Often, the shepherd would have a call he would give to rally his sheep. It was a distinct call, not unlike the call to "heel" for a dog.
 - ii. Interestingly, if someone impersonated the shepherd, that is, if they dressed up in his clothes and even impersonated this unique call, the sheep would not come to him. Why?
- b. The answer is found in verse 5 *They will not follow someone else; instead, they will run away from such a person, because they do not know his voice.*
 - i. The sheep will not go to him. In fact, they will run away from him!
 - ii. Why do they run away? Because they are not familiar with his voice.
 - iii. I think that some people run from God's voice for the same reason. They don't know His voice!

3. Today we are not only going to be learning about sheep but about the voice of God and about His desire to make His voice heard.

- a. You see, God has been speaking since before time began, speaking the very world and universe into existence. He spoke and said, *"Let there be light" and there was light"* Genesis 1:3.
- b. He then spoke each element of creation into existence.
- c. God then made mankind and spoke to him, giving him dominion over all of creation.
- d. God spoke to:
 - i. Adam before the fall and after the fall.
 - ii. Cain before and after he killed his brother Abel.
 - iii. Enoch walked with God...literally had fellowship with God.
 - iv. God spoke with Noah to preserve the world.
 - v. Our next record of God's talking with man is to Abraham, of whom He designates the father of nations. He and Abraham have several intense and long conversations.
 - vi. God speaks to Rebekah, mother of Jacob, then later to Jacob.
 - vii. He speaks to Joseph in his dreams and through Joseph as he interprets Pharaoh's dream.

- viii. Finally, Moses hears God's voice and is used to deliver the nation from the hands of the Egyptians and to birth a nation in the desert, the whole nation hears from God.
- ix. Later, judges and prophets hear from God, kings and ultimately Mary, mother of Jesus hears from God.
- x. Hebrews 1:1-2 *Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. 2 But now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son.*
- e. Not only does God speak but he puts on human flesh to speak directly and live before all humanity in the person of Jesus Christ.
 - i. He speaks through words, parables and finally through the cross where he dies for the sins of you and I.
- f. After Pentecost, God spoke to the people of the early Church, inspiring the New Testament as well as guiding Christians in the details of everyday life.
 - i. We see Philip, an godly but rather ordinary man, appointed as one who is called to wait on the tables of widows, hears from God in Acts 8:26-39. (we will look at this passage tonight).
 - ii. Over and over again, God speaks and still speaks to His people.
 - iii. **It is normal for God to speak to His people.**
 - 1. Not audibly in most cases, but He speaks through our hearts, our heads and our circumstances.
 - 2. I have been in conversations with people and have made a statement like "I feel like God is telling me to do such and such" and they look at me as if I need to be committed to Laurelwood.
 - 3. Now they might be right, I may not have all my marbles, but one thing I am certain of...God still speaks to His people.
 - 4. It is one of the most consistently witnessed phenomena in the bible.
 - 5. It is one of the most profoundly testified to event in Christian History.
 - 6. Through many different means, God speaks to His people.
- 4. Now the opposite is also true. **It is abnormal for God's people to not know His voice.**
 - a. When Jesus in John 10 said, *"I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me"* He wasn't talking about sheep anymore. He was talking about His disciples.
 - i. He knows you and you know him.
 - 1. He doesn't mean just know our names, but knows us inside out.
 - 2. His voice is familiar to us.
 - 3. A key component to being his disciple is to be familiar with His voice.
 - b. If you are a born-again believer, the Holy Spirit of God dwells within you.
 - i. (In fact, if the Holy Spirit doesn't dwell in you, then you aren't a Christian.)
 - ii. And if the Holy Spirit dwells within you, you have the ability to hear the Good Shepherd's voice.
 - iii. Not only that, but you **will** recognize his voice!
 - c. I honestly believe that if you can't hear God then there may be something wrong with you.
 - i. If it is normal for God to speak to his people then it is abnormal for a Christian to not hear His voice.
 - ii. In Romans 8:14, *"they that are led by the Spirit of God are the Sons of God."*
 - 1. To be led by the Spirit of God means to be hearing the gentle prodding of the Spirit of God. "To be accompanied by and led by the Spirit of God."
- 5. **If you can't hear God's voice you may not be a Christian yet.**
 - a. John 8:47 *"Anyone whose Father is God listens gladly to the words of God. Since you don't, it proves you aren't God's children."*
 - b. Some people say, "I don't hear God's voice."

- i. Then I ask, “Have you been born again? Have you come to the place in your life where you have asked Jesus to forgive your sins and to be your Savior and Lord?”
 - ii. You see, we are born “dead” toward God, our spirit is alienated from God because of sin.
 - iii. Jesus came to restore that relationship that God intended for us to have with Him and died upon a cross to pay the penalty of your sin and mine.
 - iv. In so doing, he restored our relationship with God back to what God had intended in the beginning...which is that of an intimate relationship.
- c. In Scripture, Jesus says, “*My sheep know My voice*” (John 10:27).
- i. If you don’t know His voice it is possible, even likely that you do not know Jesus as your Savior.
 - ii. You may only know him as a historical figure, a concept or an idea.
 - iii. If you don’t hear His voice, you probably don’t yet know Him as a living being, who speaks still today.
 - iv. Maybe you have never come to the place in your life where you acknowledged your sinfulness, your alienation from God and asked Jesus to forgive you and enter your life.
 - v. If this is describing you today, then today you will have an opportunity to receive Him as your Savior today.
 - vi. There is no greater joy and experience than to hear the voice of God, not speaking with wrath and rage but with the love and tenderness of a father.
- d. Lets pause and take that opportunity right now:
- i. If you do not know Jesus as your personal Lord and as your savior, if you have never heard His voice or trusted Him for your eternal future, then I invite you to pray this prayer with me.
 - ii. **Oh God...I confess that I have only known about you. I confess that I might have even been running from you. I confess that I may have been trying to live life on my own. But today, God, I ask you to change that. I acknowledge my need for a Savior. I cannot pay the price my sin deserves, but Jesus did. I choose to receive the free gift of Forgiveness that Jesus offers this morning. I renounce my self-led life and choose to live for you. Come into my heart, change my life, I surrender. Amen.**

6. If you are having trouble knowing whose voice you are hearing, you can know by simply looking at what that voice is urging you to do.
- a. This is because **We follow the voice of our master.**
 - i. Whatever is our master, it whispers to us day and night. It is the predominant voice in our lives..
 - ii. Look at what controls you? Lust? Food? Gossip? Greed? Success? Self?
 - iii. Whatever controls you is your master. Its voice rules.
 - iv. But if the voice of Jesus controls your behavior, then your master is Jesus.
 - b. You may have become a Christian years ago, but have lost your way.
 - i. You see today that you have been listening to and following other voices other than God’s.
 - ii. You can change that today. Later in our service, there will be a time for you to respond.

7. Lets look at some of the barriers to hearing the voice of God:

- a. **Sick Sheep will follow anyone**
 - i. A man who was traveling in the East, heard that there was a shepherd who still kept up the custom of calling his sheep by name. He went to the man, and said: “Let me put on your clothes, and take your crook, and I will call them, and see if they will come to me.”

And so he did, and he called one sheep, “Mina, Mina,” but the whole flock ran away from him.

- ii. Then he said to the shepherd: “Will none of them follow me when I call them?” The shepherd replied: “Yes, sir, some of them will; the sick sheep will follow anybody”
 1. One of the crucial problems of the church is that we have sick sheep.
 2. We have a number of people who thought that admiring Jesus was enough.
 - a. These followers of Christ thought that there wasn’t any work in becoming a disciple.
 - b. They thought that simply inviting Jesus into their lives was sufficient to change their lives.
 - c. They didn’t know that there was a long and hard road ahead. They rarely opened their bibles, they didn’t make a habit of studying and learning from other Christian.
 - d. So their minds were never renewed, they still have all of the old beliefs of their past, the wounds and the lies of their old life.
 - e. They are sick, malnourished, stunted in their growth.
 3. This may be describing you. You have only been an admirer of Jesus.
 4. To become whole you will need to become a disciple.

b. Stray Sheep won’t listen

- i. Did you know how the sheep in the Highlands of Scotland are rescued when they wander off and become stranded? The vegetation on those high places is pretty sparse. And yet, down on maybe a little cliff down below on a ledge down about ten or twelve feet is a little ledge that is grassy. It hasn’t been eaten because sheep don’t go down there. And some of them will smell that lush grass and they will go down on that ledge, jumping ten, twelve feet, landing on all fours like a cat and they will eat that lush grass. Well now, there’s no way they’re going to get back up by themselves. Soon their bleating is heard as they try unsuccessfully to return to higher ground.
- ii. The shepherd does not rush right over to rescue them. He just lets that sheep stay down there on that ledge below. There’s no way he can rescue it until all the grass is eaten and until the sheep begins to get hungry and thirsty. There’s no water there. Finally the sheep gets so weak that he can’t even stand up.
- iii. At that point, when he’s at the bottom of the barrel, the shepherd will come and will lower himself down over that ledge and rescue that sheep.
- iv. If the shepherd goes to rescue the sheep any sooner, he will startle that stupid sheep which will promptly jump over the ledge to its death.
- v. This is the Good Shepherd’s way. He has called to you. He is calling to you. You have wandered, and yet you wonder why he won’t just rescue you. It is because you haven’t come to the end of your rope. You aren’t done with trying to do things on your own. When you are worn out and ready to surrender, then you will find your rest.
- vi. Are you tired of wandering? Are you worn out yet?

c. No Ears to Hear

- i. Mark 4:9 *“Then Jesus said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear”*
- ii. This was one of Jesus’ favorite sayings: 15x in the New Testament
 1. He would say it so often that you would wonder “why does he keep saying that?”
 2. He was saying that if we don’t have ears to hear, we don’t yet belong to him.
 3. If we did, we would be clinging to every word He speaks to our hearts.
 4. **JOHN 8:31**—*“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”*
 5. Abiding occurs because we listen. It is the mark of a true disciple.

6. Are you a disciple or just an admirer?
7. Simply look at how you listen for the answer to this question.

d. **God's voice must be discerned.**

- i. "*A voice behind you saying, 'this is the way, walk in it'*" (Isaiah. 30:21)
- ii. Sometimes we only hear Him when he shouts at us.
- iii. We don't hear because of the NOISE in our lives.
- iv. We don't hear because we aren't listening.
- v. In the movie clip we watched, () we saw someone who didn't know how to listen to God's voice. God was speaking but he didn't know how to listen.
 1. You will learn how to sharpen your hearing with our "pathway to hope" classes offered on March 19th at 6:00 pm. "Hearing God" is one of 3 classes we are offering.

e. **We can plug our ears**

- i. Cf. Psalm 95:7-8 *For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts*
 1. Plugging our ears reminds me of the child who goes out to play. He knows his mother will call him in to get a bath before long. So when he hears the first note of her voice he puts his hands over his ears. Finally, after the exasperated mother comes outside and scoops him up in her arms to take him in for his bath she says, "Why didn't you come in?" to which he replies, "I didn't hear you."
- ii. Today, if you hear His voice...do not harden your hearts, do not plug your ears.
 1. God may be calling your name today.
 2. He may be calling you to a relationship with him today.
 3. He is inviting you to be forgiven of every sin you have committed.
 4. Will you stop running from His voice?

f. John 10:27-28 *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.*

- i. Is God is calling your name today.
- ii. He offers eternal life and forgiveness and healing and says "you will never perish and no one will snatch you out of his hand."
- iii. He offers you something that you cannot do for yourself.
- iv. You have a Good Shepherd in Jesus who has laid down his life for you!
- v. He is calling you by name.
- vi. Will you respond?
- g. Maybe you have been a Christian for a long time but never or rarely heard his voice.
 - i. Why not commit today to learning how?
 - ii. Why not commit today to say "Yes" I will hearken to your voice!

8. In just a moment we will be having a time of ministry and response. If God is speaking to your heart, do not hesitate. Respond to His voice. Come forward for prayer or to kneel at the altar. Turn from the wandering and return to His voice. Won't you come? Don't even worry about the person next to you, just slip out and come forward. We are here for you. Won't you come?