

The Voice That Leads and Holds Us

John 10:22–30

Today is Mother's Day. . . A day we give thanks for the women who have raised us in the faith. Guided us with wisdom. Shown us untiring love. And as we turn to John chapter 10 verses 22–30 this morning, we see another kind of love. Divine love. The tender, yet strong and protective love of Jesus our Shepherd. Let's read from God's Word:

"At the time of the Feast of Dedication which took place in Jerusalem, it was winter. And when Jesus was walking in the Temple in the colonnade of Solomon, the Jews gathered around Him and said to Him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us, plainly!' Jesus answered, 'I told you. And you do not believe it. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about Me. But you do not believe it, because you are not among My sheep. My sheep hear My voice. And I know them. And they follow Me. I give them eternal life. And they will never perish. And no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. And no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.'" (John 10:22–30, ESV)

The setting for this lesson is important! It's in The Temple in Jerusalem. At the Feast of Dedication during what we now know as Hanukkah. It celebrates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after its damage by foreign powers, making The Feast of Dedication a feast of forgiveness. Revival and hope. And Jesus chose that moment to speak of true dedication not just of a building. But of lives entrusted to Him. And the people asked Him *"as He was walking in the Temple in the colonnade of Solomon,* a covered walkway with over 100 marble columns 30 feet tall on the eastern side of the Temple, *"If you are the Christ, tell us, plainly!"* But that's what Jesus had been doing! Through His teachings, His healings, and using His authority over sin and death.

For example, He had healed a paralyzed man when *He returned to Capernaum. It was reported that Jesus was at home, and many were gathered together so that there was no more room. Not even at the door! Jesus was preaching the Word when they brought to Him a paralyzed man carried by four men. And when they could not get near Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Jesus, made an opening, and let the bed down on which the paralyzed man lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."* Now some Scribes, closely associated with Pharisees and religious leaders whose main role was to write, copy, and interpret sacred texts, laws, and important documents important to Jews, were sitting there. In their hearts, they questioned what they just heard. One said, *"Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"* And immediately, Jesus knew in His spirit that they questioned what He had just said, and He said to them, *"Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."* And the man rose immediately, picked up his bed, and went out before them all. They were all amazed and glorified God, saying, *"We never saw anything like this!"* (Mark 2:1-12) Jesus healed that man to prove His Divine authority. Which proves, Jesus doesn't just heal physically. *He forgives sin!* Something only God can do!

. . . And when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He called Lazarus by name to come out of his tomb after four days of being dead. Again, He said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he dies, yet shall he live."* (John 11:1–44) That shows Jesus had the power not just to speak about life—but to give life. Even over death!

. . . And Jesus was moved by compassion when He raised the only son of a widow in Nain, which is one of the most touching and powerful miracles Jesus performed. Here's how it happened. It's in Luke 7:11–17 and is a moment that emphasizes Jesus' Divine authority and His deep compassion for human suffering. *"He went to a town called Nain. And His disciples, and a great crowd went with Him. And as He drew near to the gate of the town, someone who had died was being carried out. He was the only son of his mother. And she was a widow. A large crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion for her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' Then He went over and touched the bier, which was a wooden stretcher or plank, not a closed coffin, used to carry dead bodies to their burial place and was being carried by several men. The body was wrapped in a shroud and lay on top of the bier. The bearers stood still. And Jesus said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise.' And he sat up and began to speak. And then Jesus gave him back to his mother."* When Jesus touched the bier, it was a bold act. Touching the dead made one ceremonially unclean. Temporarily unfit to participate in worship or enter The Temple. It wasn't about sinfulness. It was about being ritually "unready" to approach God. And when Jesus said, *"Young man, I say to you, arise,"* (Luke 7:11–17) it was Jesus' Word *by itself* that reversed death and restored hope.

So, when Jesus answered the people in the Temple as to who He was, He said, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them. And they follow Me."* (v. 27) *It was the Voice of the Shepherd speaking.* And just as a mother knows the cry of her child and can pick out her baby's voice in a room full of noise, Jesus knows His sheep. He speaks. And those who are His recognize Him. Not just with their ears, but with their hearts, turning this lesson into more than just a checklist of

religious duties, into how you can have a connection to the Good Shepherd whose voice calms storms. He calls the dead to life. And He will guide you through your deep valleys.

But what describes the sheep of Christ? They hear His voice! They are known by their name. They follow Him. You see, sheep follow their shepherd by instinct. There is a closeness there. And trust by which they are guided and how they react to other sheep and respond, other than just by signals. Here's how it works. Sheep can recognize faces. Both human and animal. They remember them. Sheep raised by a shepherd become familiar with his voice, his scent, his presence. Sheep learn and respond to their shepherd's voice and calls. Their feeding and care create a strong positive relationship. And sheep are flock animals. They just naturally follow one another. The phrase "*follow the sheep over the cliff*" is often used to describe how blindly following others often leads to danger or destruction. Sheep being flock animals sometimes follow one another without individual judgment. Even into harm! If a trusted member of the flock begins to follow the shepherd, then the other sheep will fall in line, as shepherds lead by walking ahead of them and calling to them. Then, over time, sheep learn daily routines, like grazing times, when to return to a pen. Following the shepherd is part of that. The shepherd offers his sheep protection. Jesus said, "*I give them eternal life, and they will never peris. And no one will snatch them out of My hand.*" (v. 28) That's a promise for you to hold onto!

In this world of instability, in a life filled with uncertainty, Jesus gives what nothing, or no one else can: ***eternal life***—secure, unshakeable, and sealed by His Word. And what Jesus gives, He does *not* take back! What He holds, cannot be taken from Him! And then He says something even more astonishing: "*No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.*" (v. 29–30)

Now, that's not just comforting—it's Christ power! Jesus is not merely God's messenger. He is God Himself! The security of the sheep rests in the power of the Holy Trinity. By the Holy Spirit we are held by the Son of God in the strength of the Father's eternal embrace. And on this Mother's Day, some of us feel the joy of having family near. While others feel the ache of loss, longing, or absence. Regardless of where you are, this passage speaks to all of us: To the mother who is weary—He sees you and knows your voice. To the one who never knew a mother's love—His love is enough. To the child who feels lost—He is still calling your name. To the believer who fears slipping away—Rest in His hands. You are safe! And in our lesson today, Jesus doesn't just offer answers. He offers Himself. And in Him, you are known. You are loved. And you are secure. Tune your heart to the Voice of the Shepherd. Follow Him in trust, knowing that nothing—*nothing*—can snatch you from His hand. Tuning your heart to God's voice is about developing your spiritual understanding. Calming your distractions. Building a deeper relationship with Him. And since God often speaks through His Word, regularly read your Bible, because it helps you recognize who He really is. His promises. His path for your life. Think about what God might be saying through a passage like, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*" (John 10:27)

Yes, the world is noisy place. Learning to be quiet will help you hear the still, small voice of God. So, set aside moments of privacy. Practice thoughtful prayer. Or quiet listening, which is deliberately silencing your thoughts about what's around you. And any distractions like a tv or cell phone. Become more receptive to God's voice. It's not about trying to "hear" something. It's about being *still enough* to be open to God's guidance in your heart and spirit. Speak with God by making your prayer a two-way conversation—not just talking to Him. But listening to Him. Ask God to speak to you. Be open to hearing something unexpected or challenging. Sometimes, God's next word comes *only* after you obey the last one.

So, stay faithful in the small things. Line up your life with Biblical truth because the Holy Spirit nudges you gently—with peace, or even judgement. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you every day. And be aware of what brings a sense of peace to your spirit because God can speak through others. So, talk with mature believers or teachers. Test what you hear against Scripture. Recognize that God speaks to you over time. And that you become spiritually aware by noticing how God constantly communicates with you through different means and different moments. Hear His voice! And follow Him!

Let us pray:

Gracious and loving Shepherd, We thank You for Your voice that speaks peace into our turmoil. For hands that hold us firmly. And for a love that never lets go. On this special day, we thank You for mothers who have nurtured us with patience, wisdom, and grace. Bless them with strength, joy, and a deep sense of Your presence. Lord, help us to hear You clearly. Follow You faithfully. And rest securely in Your care. May we live with confidence knowing that eternal life is not just a promise for tomorrow. It's a reality we walk in today, because of You. Keep us close, Lord, and let us never forget—we are Yours. In Jesus' name we pray, **Amen.**