

Why Listen to Him?
John 10: 14 – 20
April 11, 2010

(Read Scripture)

The Jews of Jesus' day were asking the question we all must ask ourselves, "Why listen to Him?" Speculation was raging about this itinerant teacher Who was attracting much attention, and the leaders of the religious life in Judea were under a great deal of pressure. The rank and file were looking to them to either endorse or reject Him; but there was political and religious risk in option A – reject Him and possibly anger the common folk who responded to Jesus' message of love, forgiveness, and justice, or in option B – give permission to those who wanted to follow Jesus' claim to be divine and likely lose power and influence granted them by their positions in the Jewish culture and rituals.

Jesus' response to such a question can be found in His claim to be the Good Shepherd. As the Shepherd must be prepared to do, Jesus says, "I am going to lay down my own life for the sheep, and I will take it back again." Jesus was saying He would accomplish the unthinkable – die for His followers and be raised from the dead. And that's exactly what He did on that Resurrection Sunday.

His death was no ordinary death, but then He was no ordinary person. Before He gave up His Spirit, He took upon Himself the sins of the world and paid the penalty for you and me. He was laid in a borrowed tomb, and three days later He arose to live forever more.

So, why listen to Him today? Because He did exactly what He said He would do! Only one person has died and been resurrected as He, never to die again. And if I believe that today, and I do with all my heart, then I must listen to Him, for me He is my Good Shepherd. Yes, I should listen to Jesus!

If I am listening as I should be listening:

1. Jesus will tell me very clearly who He is (John 10: 14 – 15);

A. Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd." Reading this superficially, one might picture someone in a field guarding sheep, with all the usual images attached of the rote, tedious, even demeaning work watching dumb animals.

B. But when Jesus described Himself as the Good Shepherd, the picture is completely different for any knowledgeable Jew. Consider these Scriptural references:

1. **Genesis 49: 24**, "*...the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,*"

2. **Psalms 80: 1** "*O give ear, Shepherd of Israel, thou dost lead Joseph like a flock;*"

3. **Psalms 23: 1** "*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.*"

C. As early as the Book of Genesis, God described Himself as a shepherd. And so when Jesus said He was the Good Shepherd, He is proclaiming Himself not just as a leader of Israel but as God, and also as the Messiah.

1. Are you listening to Him? Do you recognize Him as Lord of your life?
2. Or do you see Him as some historical figure who lived and died two thousand years ago, and we get together to celebrate the exemplary life he lived?

Second, if I am listening as I should be listening...

2. Jesus will tell me very clearly who I am (v. 16); I believe He knows me better than I know myself.

A. I am pretty much a city boy, at least by Biblical standards. So when He refers to me as a sheep, I confess I don't have much of a reference point.

B. But Isaiah in the Old Testament sounds as if he knew sheep pretty well; here is how he described them:

1. **Isaiah 53: 6** *"We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."*

2. It sounds as if Isaiah is describing his readers as rebellious and stubborn; it sounds as if we have a choice to do it God's way, but willfully choose to do it our way.

3. Like sheep often do when left to their own instincts, we get off the best spiritual track more often than we stay on it.

C. Today, are you going to agree with God's description of us – rebellious, stubborn – or are you going to paint a different picture of yourself?

1. People who do not see themselves as spiritually rebellious and stubborn only need a part time God, or no God at all.

2. If you agree that you tend to be rebellious and stubborn, then you certainly will need Jesus' leadership in your life.

D. God's Word is very clear: He is either going to be a full time God in your life or He won't be your God.

Third, if I am listening as I should be listening...

3. Then the clear direction for my life is to know, to listen to, and follow Him (v. 14; John 10: 27)

A. Here is the Biblical flow chart for a healthy relationship with God:

1. Know – Him through Salvation

2. Listen – to the Holy Spirit Who comes to live in you once you are saved

3. Follow – you choose obedience over disobedience

B. You need all three disciplines in your life, *and* you need them in the proper order. To know and to listen are commendable, but if I do not then follow what I am hearing from the Holy Spirit is not good enough.

Do you have the right direction in your life? Are you engaged in an ongoing, developing relationship that is enlightening and informative; are you listening intently; and are you willingly following the direction you receive from the Spirit of God?

Let's pray!