

(PP1) The JESUS we never knew x38. Sunday 17th September_2017.

Read:

John 10: 1 - 6.

AIM for this year and this theme: for each of us individually and together to become better friends with JESUS. That is the real Jesus – not the Jesus of sentiment or others invention. To do this we need to be able to recognise and follow his voice.

There is a need therefore to get to know the historic Jesus but also to get to know Jesus experientially and in practice in our day to day relationship. In knowing Jesus, we get to know the Father God and the Holy Spirit with who he is One. Through Jesus we enter into relationship with the living God and are enabled to worship and enjoy God and also to serve God.

(PP2) JESUS: to know, to love, to follow his voice.

So, let us start with a significant claim of Jesus. People came to Jesus with all sorts of questions but some of them came asking like the rich young ruler how they might gain eternal life. It seems to me in **John 17: 3** that Jesus gave a clear and specific answer to what eternal life is: ***“Eternal life means knowing you the only true God, and knowing Jesus Christ who you sent.”***

So eternal life which we can enter into now is about relationship with the Father God and Jesus, God the Son. It is not just about doing religious things or serving others (important as these may be) – it is essentially about a relationship with God out of which many things will spring as fruits of that relationship.

It is not enough to simply know the facts about Jesus – that will never satisfy the human heart or God’s heart - but it is about relationship with God. It is about choosing to respond to Jesus – to receive him and actively believe and trust him (*John 1:12*). Jesus came in such a way into the world – as Son of Man, as fully human that we can approach God through him – he is truly the Way and the way to Fullness of life.

PRAYER: that I may with God’s grace come to know Jesus more deeply and intimately, and so love him and be enabled to follow him. Amen.

Pray for the grace to know the voice of Jesus and to follow as he leads us out.

Pray for the grace NOT to follow any voice which takes me away from Jesus.

Pray for the grace to enable others to know and follow the voice of Jesus only.

(PP3) John 10: 14. Jesus: I am the Good Shepherd. Today – to know, to love, and to follow the voice of Jesus.

For hundreds, if not thousands of years God’s relationship with his people has been described as that of the relationship of the Shepherd with his sheep. God’s faithfulness

has often been matched by the opposite tendency of us sheep to stray, to get into danger and not be able to find our way home to Jesus. The Shepherd has had to go looking for the lost sheep who don't necessarily want to be found.

(PP4) To know God deeply and intimately. Throughout the whole of Scripture – both The OT and The NT relationship with God is described in the deepest and closest of terms: descriptions of God as Family/ father, Lover and husband, and Jesus as Brother and Friend are used. But here the figure or metaphor used is of the Shepherd and the sheep and as we see the Disciples did not necessarily understand (v6) his taking up the description of himself as the Good Shepherd or understand the implications of what he was talking about. So, Jesus carries on to explain further what he means.

The Good News translation says Jesus uses a “parable” – the word is *paramia* which can be translated parable but better translated here as a byword or a maxim – a proverb or a figurative way of speaking.

- He calls his sheep by name
- His sheep know his voice and
- He calls us and leads us out

REMEMBER and rejoice (how important are these things to you?)

All this is a description of a relationship that can be very special and it's set against a much bigger understanding of the “LORD God being my and our shepherd and having everything we need” as is described in the 23rd Psalm. We have a special relationship with the same shepherd and so we are therefore in special relationship with one another – we are a flock (v16) and can move together as well as being cared for individually.

In Scripture and history, the figurative use of the shepherd and sheep relationship is used of Rulers and their subjects. So, David was a *shepherd King* – not just because he had been a shepherd but because he protected and lovingly cared for his people Israel. Jesus was another King “like David” – he too was a greater *Shepherd King*. The metaphor is also used of Spiritual overseers or shepherds and so God gives Pastors to care for and feed the flock of disciples who follow Jesus. (*John 21: 15 – 17 Peter; Ephesians 4: 11 and 1 Peter 5: 1 – 4*).

OT examples of true shepherds: Psalm 23; Eccles 12: 11; Isaiah 40: 11 (shepherd YAHWEH protects mother sheep especially those heavy with young); Jeremiah 31: 10; Ezekiel 34: 23; 37: 24.

John 10 Jesus is at great pain to explain that he is the Good Shepherd and I am sure that is because God's people Israel have experienced bad shepherding and the flock has been fleeced of wealth through the Temple and teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees.

OT examples of false shepherds: Isaiah 56: 10,11; Ezek 34: 8,10; Zechariah 11: 15, 17.

Jesus viewed the crowds and individuals as *sheep without a shepherd* – and for this reason he had compassion – his guts went out to them. (Matt 9: 36 and Mark 6: 34). This is a very strong emotion.

Jesus fulfils all the responsibilities of a true shepherd – he is not a hireling and he is prepared to lay down his life protecting with his rod (club) and staff – to protect us from ourselves when we stray into danger e.g. fall in the water or from enemies: snakes, bears, lions and so on. (Dozens of sermons on this shepherd sheep relationship e.g. Phillip KELLER “*The Shepherd Trilogy*”) **But I want to focus today on knowing, loving and following Jesus because we recognise his voice, and he calls us by name and leads us out.**

(PP5) HOW do I recognise his voice?

He was there at my birth – my natural water birth but also my Spirit birth and deep within me is the “WORD of GOD” – that recognises the voice of Jesus.

Remembering and relishing the voice and what Jesus has said to me e.g. last week, “*I love you*” and “*You are my friend*”...or today “*You know my voice*”.

As my life in Jesus progresses and the relationship develops over the years I have many treasured memories that I need to actively remember and relish. (E.g. at the LORD’S Supper – in remembrance).

I need not fear (Jesus has said this to me e.g. upper room *John 21* – but there are other voices I should be suspicious of and actively refuse to listen to. (Sheep will not lie down unless they are free of fear. *Max Lucado; “Safe in the Shepherds Arms”.*)

“Shepherding” is a metaphor for taking sheep out of the fold – it’s not by stay in the fold/ pen that sheep thrive – we need to be lead out by the shepherd.

Sometimes the shepherd walks in front and sometimes he walks beside – he leads in the East rather than drives. (He does use his staff – long pole to “comfort” and direct the sheep out of danger. He also uses it to separate the heavy fleece and pick off ticks and check any injuries. He leads with his voice. In the fold sometimes different flocks are mixed up but as soon as the shepherd calls his sheep there is a separation and his sheep won’t follow an unknown voice (which is sound advice for us). There is no need for fear of we follow the Shepherd Jesus.

Are you hearing Jesus – or are you ignoring his voice? Do you remember what he sounds like and what he has said to you? (Do you repeat it so you don’t forget it?)

Jesus is often on the move so when we are not resting with the Shepherd we need to be following. (Have you strayed? Are you in danger? Are you being consoled by his voice?)

How well do you know Jesus? Can you discern his voice in all **the NOISE of the world** and all the voices that shout? Sometimes when God can’t get our attention in the

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busyness of each day he resorts to using dreams and visions and even waking us at night. (E.g. Samuel in the Temple as a boy: 1 Sam 3: 2 – 11).

Creating space, stillness, silence so can hear. *Mother Teresa of Calcutta (urban saint wrote) "We need to find God and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence ...The more we receive in silent prayer the more we can give in our active life...The essential thing is NOT what we say, but what God says to us, and through us..."*

Jesus wants us to take time to listen to what he is already saying and has already said to us. We are missing out if we do not understand this. Eastern shepherds love their sheep enough to even play with them: pretending to run away – the sheep run after the shepherd and surround him and jump and twist in delight. **When was the last time you ENJOYED God's presence with you?**

How eager are you, am I to **be with the shepherd?** *My sheep know my voice and will not follow another...*