



The Westminster Pulpit

Sermons Preached at Westminster Presbyterian Church
3900 West End Avenue Nashville, Tennessee 37205-1899

“Hearing voices?” **Sermon on John 10:22-30**

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Fourth Sunday of Easter
May 8, 2022

As we enter John’s Gospel once again, I will remind you that it is a Gospel in two time zones – earthly time and eternal time.

So, it is here in this text for today that you learn it is winter, and we are in the temple at the time of the “festival of Dedication.” The Festival of Dedication is a celebration of a moment in time, about 150 years before Jesus arrived on the scene, a time when the Jewish people were able to take back the temple from the Greeks. Throwing out the Greek idols, they relit the fires of the great candlesticks in the temple. The light of God shone once again; it’s a day of celebration, dedication. It is called Hanukah today.

It is a story of Jesus at the time of a celebration of a temple dedication. But it is written down about 30 years after the Romans have torn down the temple in the year 70.

It changes the story even more if you remember that in Chapter 2 of John’s Gospel, Jesus cleanses the temple and then says, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” “You can’t rebuild a temple in three days, it took 46 years to build this temple.” Jesus was talking about the temple that is his body. And John writes, “After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.”

In John’s Gospel, Jesus is always present with us. His disciples hear his voice. So, hear his voice...

John 10:22:30

²² At that time the Festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. ²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." ²⁵ Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you do not belong to my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, in regard to what he has given me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ The Father and I are one."

"My sheep hear my voice." Present tense, spoken to those early believers, probably around the year 100, which means if you are counted as sheep, you hear his voice. It speaks to us today; you know what it sounds like. I know exactly what it sounds like. It sounds a little off-key. Let me explain.

I recently expressed condolences to one of our members, Karen Miller, on the death of her mother and Karen wrote back, "When Mother was discharged from the hospital to hospice at home, my daughter, McKensie flew in from LA to be with us. She had a playlist of her Mimi's favorite songs. On the third day of hospice, Good Friday, McKensie was holding her right hand, I was holding her left, and we were singing, occasionally laughing at how off-key I was. When we sang *Here I Am, Lord*, a song that was special to Mother because of Westminster, at the very last note, at 11:27 p.m., Mother passed away. McKensie and I both knew it immediately; it was total and complete. It was the most profound and sacred moment, and we are so grateful to have been with her."

Did you hear the times? On third day of hospice, on Good Friday, at 11:27 p.m. Earthly times. Yes. God's time-sacred moment. And then, just like John's Gospel, eternal time, sacred time, holy time, powerful time. Two time zones.

Karen went on to write, "When the seniors at Westminster sang the hymn this past Sunday, (earthly time) I couldn't help but think it was also Mother's last song, her "senior" song. Jesus' voice can be off-key, Jesus' voice sounds like a group of "Senior Highers" singing from the balcony."

My sheep hear my voice. Present tense. When we read about Jesus taking a basin of water and getting down on his knees to scrub his disciples' feet, you hear his voice in that text, but then you hear his voice in the doing of that text. When you fly in on the third day, on Good Friday, on the death of a savior day, you take your Mimi's hand and sing to her. And you experience resurrection...

You can hear his voice, "I give you this new Commandment: that you love one another, just as I loved you, you also must love one another."

My sheep hear my voice. Do you know what the voice of Jesus sounds like? You do if you're counted as sheep. I do believe the voice of Jesus has the same tone and modulation as a friend.

I sat down with a friend this week who shared a word of God with me. He said, "That God takes what is foolish to shame the wise." My friend talked about the cross of Jesus. He has had a revelation that the more you give away your life, the more life you receive in return. He was quite vulnerable with me. He said, "It's been like winning the lottery over and over again. My cup runneth over!" And his words sounded like the voice of a shepherd to me. I needed to hear those words of good news, that there are people in this world who live the commandment to love one another, and when they do, it feels so good. I took comfort that we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever and ever.

My sheep hear my voice. What are you hearing out there?

There are so many voices to listen to, and so many that make a living by scaring us to death. There are voices that say we are not good enough. There are voices that say we don't have enough, and they make you want, want, want. Are you tuning in to those voices? My sheep hear my voice. "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want."

If I were to take the time and look at the world right now, I might say that it all sounds pretty bleak. There's so much that is out of our control. It's helter skelter.

But in a moment of time, eternal time, we are going to be baptizing a number of people who are made in the image of God. They're not like you. I don't mean that you're not made in the image of God, you are. But these images of God are quite a bit smaller than you. That image of God is every bit like a baby. My sheep hear my voice, the voice of Jesus may sound like a baby.

You will speak eternal time. You will say that your love for these little ones does not expire. And these little ones will hear the voice of a shepherd in the same tone and modulation as your voice. They will hear Jesus in what you say and what you do. And in a blink of an eye, you will hear them singing from the balcony: Here I am Lord, I heard you calling in the night. I will go Lord. If you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart." And you'll hear the Shepherds voice on the very last note, at 11:27, sacred time.