

**“The Sheep Hear His Voice”**

**John 10:1-5**

<sup>1</sup> “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

*From the Website of the Episcopal Church USA "[Christianity is] not about having answers as much as it is about engaging a story. It is about your story and how your story connects to an ancient story of desert wanderers that, in time, came to see that humanity and this energy they called God mingled and existed through Christ and thus, exists in all of humanity."*

*From the Gospel of John [19:33, 37-38]* <sup>33</sup> So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him...<sup>37</sup> “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world— to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” <sup>38</sup> Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

**Can you tell the difference, between the voice of the stranger and the voice of the shepherd?**

*From Author and Yale University Professor Harold Bloom: “We know nothing verifiable about what Jesus taught. We do not even know that he perhaps was born...and supposedly was crucified...I suspect that as lore has it he had the wisdom to escape execution, and then made his way to Greek North India where some traditions place his grave.” (Harold Bloom)*

*From Peter’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle: (2 Peter 1:15-16, 19-21)* <sup>15</sup> I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. <sup>16</sup> For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty...<sup>19</sup> And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, <sup>20</sup> knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

**Can you tell the difference, between the voice of the stranger and the voice of the shepherd?**

*One's educated, one has been to school  
Who is the genius, who is the fool  
Well, it's hard to tell one from the other  
They both have all the answers*

“The living Jesus of the Gnostic texts speaks of illusion and enlightenment, not of sin and repentance like the Jesus of the New Testament. Instead of coming to save us from sin, he comes as a guide who opens access to spiritual understanding.” (*Elaine Pagels*)

“<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ” <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (*Genesis 3:1-5*)

### **Can you tell the difference, between the voice of the stranger and the voice of the shepherd?**

*From Dan Brown’s best-selling book, “The Da Vinci Code”* “Early Jews believed that the Holy of Holies in Solomon’s Temple housed not only God but also his powerful female equal, Shekinah. Men seeking spiritual wholeness came to the Temple to visit priestesses – or *hierodules* – with whom they made love and experienced the divine through physical union.”

*From Paul’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:1-4)* <sup>1</sup> I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

### **Can you tell the difference, between the voice of the stranger and the voice of the shepherd?**

*One gives a promise and the other his word  
One is a teacher and the other is heard  
They're both calling your name,  
And the offer's the same, But only one delivers*

*From Disciples of Christ professor Richard Allen (Preaching: An Essential Guide)* “A text [of the Bible] invites its readers to believe its claims about God, the world and humankind. Contemporary people must decide the degree to which the claims of a biblical text are authoritative for them.”

*From John’s Gospel, Chapter 5:39-47: Jesus says:* <sup>39</sup> You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, <sup>40</sup> yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life... <sup>45</sup> Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. <sup>46</sup> If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. <sup>47</sup> But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”

**Can you tell the difference, between the voice of the stranger and the voice of the shepherd?**

“The moment God and Jesus came into mutual identity was not at the resurrection, as Paul had thought, nor at baptism, as Mark had believed. It was not even in the moment of conception, as Matthew and Luke had suggested. God was in Christ or Christ was in God from the beginning of time. Who is right? Perhaps they all were. Who is literally correct? Perhaps no one is.”  
(John Spong, “Living in Sin?”)

*From the Gospel of John, 20:30-31:* <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)

**Can you tell the difference, between the voice of the stranger and the voice of the shepherd?**

*A loving smile and a counterfeit grin  
With open arms one is taking you in  
It's give and take, and your heart's at stake, well  
But who's the giver and taker?*

*From Christian author Stormie Omartian, (Praying God's Will For Your Life)* “There is nothing magical in the wine, grape juice, bread or cracker of communion. The power lies in our participation. That's why it's good to take communion regularly...If you can't get to a communion service in your church, then do it at home by yourself.”

*From Paul's Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 11:17-, 20-21, 29-30)* <sup>17</sup> But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse...<sup>20</sup> When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. <sup>21</sup> For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal...<sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. <sup>30</sup> That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

**Can you tell the difference, between the voice of the stranger and the voice of the shepherd?**

*From the mouth of Joel Osteen, Television Personality and Author:* God wants us to prosper financially, to have plenty of money, to fulfill the destiny He has laid out for us.

*From the mouth of Jesus of Nazareth:* <sup>33</sup> I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, I have overcome the world.”

**Can you tell the difference, between the voice of the stranger and the voice of the shepherd?**

One is a lover, one would love to be  
Which is the romance, and which is fantasy?  
They don't give up when your mind's made up  
No, no, you keep choosing over and over

How long, How long will you suffer  
Caught between the pleasure and the grief?  
How long, how long  
'Til you recognize a lover from a thief?

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

Amen.