

Do You Know Your Shepherd's Voice?

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Scriptures:

John 10:1-30

The last sheep had been counted and led into the walled sheepfold. Night was falling, soon the wolves would appear, hungry, hunting for their prey. The shepherd gathered his rough woven coat around him, staff in hand, as he lay down across the entrance to this place of safety for his sheep. His task now was to keep his flock protected from those nightly prowlers, to guard them against whatever predator might try to steal or kill them. He was their Good Shepherd, he was their Door to the Sheepfold. He was prepared to lay down his life to save his flock from whatever enemy appeared.

Being a shepherd in Jesus' day was no easy task. Put aside the idyllic portrayals of the pristine white sheep draped across the shoulders of the freshly laundered, straight out of the shower, elegantly robed "shepherd" we saw in Sunday School illustrations. These men were tough, they had to be. The terrain where they led their sheep was often steep and rocky, with gullies and craggy inclines where sheep could fall, be injured or lost and separated from the rest of the flock. And, in the strict societal hierarchy of that time, they were pretty much at the bottom of the heap. So, if things went wrong for them, no-one was going to speak up and defend them.

Yet, what they did is used by Jesus to describe Himself. He was so aware that these men knew every one of their sheep, they could recognise each of them. And, significantly, the sheep recognised and knew the voice of their own shepherd. This was so very important, with all the noise from the other shepherds calling out to the sheep, each sheep would only follow the voice of the one who they knew was "their" particular shepherd.

Jesus tells us that He is our Good Shepherd. That He knows us by name, that He calls us by name. His sheep hear His voice, they follow Him, He leads them, goes before them, and they will not follow the voice of strangers.

Do you know your Shepherd's voice? In amongst all the clangour and distractions of your life, do you hear Him calling you by name? Do you recognise Him above all the others enticing you to follow them?

Our Good Shepherd never ceases to call us, never leaves His post and abandons us to the terrors of the night or the cares of the day that would seek to destroy us. He leads and guides us around the rocky paths that ultimately lead to the greenest of sweet pasture. He rescues us when we fall, finds us when we lose ourselves and carries us when we are too weary to go on.

He is our tender, caring, strong Good Shepherd. But so very much more.

As our Good Shepherd, He willingly allowed Himself to be sacrificed in our place. No-one spoke up for Him or defended Him as the wolves rushed in and tore His flesh to shreds. He didn't lift His voice to defend Himself as the Chief Priests and their cohorts spewed lies and false testimony against Him. As our Good Shepherd, He became the Lamb sacrifice, the pure, unblemished Lamb of God. He paid the ultimate price that any shepherd could pay.

Yet if we fail to recognise the voice of our Good Shepherd, how can we expect to live in His sheepfold. When He calls, if we don't know it is Him, we will follow the voice of strangers, we will find ourselves in a lonely, dark place outside of the one place where we are safe, protected, nourished and loved for all of eternity.

Do you know your Shepherd's voice? Seek Him now, while He may be found.

Prayer: Abba Father, open our ears, our hearts, our minds to recognise the voice of Your Son as He calls us to follow. As You draw us, enable us to come to Him, our Saviour, our Good Shepherd.

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