

“Lord God, you have appointed me as Pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument – but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”

John 10

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.



Can you pick out a familiar voice in a crowd? Your family? Your favorite singer? Ed Sheeran? Billie Eilish? Your mom? I can recognize my mom’s voice in a church basement any given Sunday. I could recognize my dad’s voice on the football field 20-30 years ago as if it were today. I asked Ellie, and she could always recognize her mom’s voice; well, because she’d say it in Spanish.

The Good Shepherd today invites you to pick out His voice in all the noise, to love it, to trust it and be guided by it. Carrying the vocals today will be the Good Shepherd Himself, Jesus Christ. It is what He says that makes you long for His goodness, His shepherding, and for ...

THAT MOMENT WHEN ... YOU KNOW HIS VOICE

Jesus spoke these words to challengers, enemies, who did not trust in Him. They were not His sheep. Plain and simple, they did not desire His guidance or know His voice.

Jesus says, “*My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.*” See for yourself real sheep, if you want to understand Jesus. When a stranger calls, whistles, coaxes: Come sheep! Come sheep! Then sheep run and flee from a strange voice. The more you call, the more they run away. But where they hear the shepherd’s voice, they all run to it, for they know that voice. This is how all true Christians should live life; hear no voice but their Shepherd’s, Jesus Christ, as He Himself says.

In real life, how does the Good Shepherd know His sheep? How does Jesus know you? Jesus knows all, so He knows all His sheep. He can read the heart. He can sort it all out. Not only that, but He spent His soul in suffering for your sins. So yes, each believer in Jesus is eternally known and loved. You are known to Him and loved by Him.

But how do we know His voice? There are a great deal of voices out there, and it seems that more and more join in the noise. Voices in the news, voices on TV, voices at school, voices that often speak against God’s Word, and even lie about it, too. There’s the voice of the devil, accusing us. There’s the voice of the unbelieving world, trying to shuffle around our values. There’s the voice of our sinful nature, trying to hold our true self hostage in wickedness and sin. Talk about noise pollution! I read that enough constant noise can reduce your ability to learn and can lessen your lifespan. Spiritual noises, like temptations, unbelief, and false teachings are no different. It’s like bagpipes out there, with constant grating on the ears. You know enough not to follow those voices.

In the Shepherd’s Word, wherever and whenever it is spoken, the sheep hear His voice, and it sticks. His voice is inexpressibly sweet and attractive to hear, and we refuse to forget it. Believers in Jesus desire to know it and we drink it in. We crank it up like a classic, best-loved song on the radio.

Why do we do that? Because His voice told us the difference between right and wrong. His voice revealed Who He is to us. His voice taught us how to pray. His voice keeps us in check and corrects us on the path. His voice uttered cries of pain on the cross. His voice prayed and still prays for us. His voice said, "*Lazarus, come out.*" His voice forgives our rebellious sins. His voice says, "*You have peace with God.*" His voice is His Word. When you hear words of His Law and Gospel, it is the Good Shepherd's voice, the voice of Jesus Christ, who loved you and gave Himself for you.

This is how you know the voice of your great Good Shepherd. Now, you may have heard it, without knowing its exact sound. You may have heard Jesus even if you don't know whether He's a bass or a tenor. You may have heard the voice of Jesus even if you don't know whether He has a Jewish accent.

But you have known this voice through others. Maybe you have heard His voice through your friend, who confronted you that that thing you did, in word or action, was a sin, and you need to repent. You may have heard the voice of your Good Shepherd through the internet, where someone posted a lovely picture with a passage. Maybe you have even recognized your Good Shepherd's voice in your mother, when she demonstrated unconditional love, consoling you when you were hurt. Your Good Shepherd's voice will continue to speak to you through people, through print, and through your memory passages for the rest of your life.

I know that, because it is what He promises. He says about His sheep, *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.* Now you know Jesus is speaking according to the Gospel. If He were speaking according to the Law, He would warn us, "*If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you do not fall.*" For it is possible to fall to your Old Adam, to reject those promises and to deny the faith. But here in the Gospel with your Good Shepherd, there is no threat and no rebuke—only consolation and promise. Here in the Gospel with your great Good Shepherd, there is just the familiar voice of love and care. Here in the Gospel, your great Good Shepherd will not refuse to give you over to the enemies of darkness. He means to promise you His Gospel to protect, preserve, and save His flock. He will soothe you, speak kindly to you, and restore your soul.

This was the same voice that spoke your baptism to you, although it may have been through a pastor. This was the same voice that forgave you when you broke a toy or told a lie. This is the same voice that corrected you when you were going down the wrong path with your friends. This is the same voice that will call you back to this place, Sunday after Sunday. This is the same voice that will now tell you, "*Take and eat, take and drink, for the forgiveness of sins.*" One day, in the end at the gates of heaven, when you have been faithful, the same voice will say, "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*"

Could you pick out your mother's voice in a crowd? I bet you can. And if that's the case, you most certainly have learned the voice of Jesus, for the Holy Spirit has taught you. The voice is His Word and sacrament, and at His table, you are welcome to get far more familiar with the One who has selected you by hand, folded you into His flock, and made you His family; in His name, Amen.