

## John 10:22-30

### “Do we know which voice is his voice?”

It was winter. Jesus and the disciples were in Jerusalem for the festival that commemorated the dedication of the Temple. People still didn't know who Jesus was. They wondered if he might be the Messiah, but they did not know.

I wonder. Do we?

That day, in Jerusalem, Jesus used a metaphor. He stated who he was and what his life was all about when he talked about being the good shepherd. He said, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never die. No one can snatch them away from me.”

In John's Revelation, we discover a related metaphor. John describes the risen Jesus as “the Lamb of God, who is in the centre of the throne.” He says that this Lamb will be our shepherd, who will guide us to springs of life-giving water.

I want to expand on two things relative to our scripture passages. The first is to invite you to come and be led by the Lamb of God, to come and find your comfort and your hope in the Lamb at the centre of the throne of God, the Lamb who is our shepherd. Then, I want to urge each of us to consider that Jesus continues to challenge us today, to follow his example of shepherding, to offer the comfort and hope, the consolation and promise of the good news in, to and for the world around us.

So, who and what is this Lamb at the centre of the throne of God to whom we are to come, after whom we are to follow?

In John's gospel, Jesus said “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” “I know them.”

What a wonderful thought! How often do we ache to be known, to be understood, to have someone care enough to listen to our words, our hearts, our souls!

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never die. No one can snatch them away from me.” This is Jesus' promise to us - for this life and the life to come. Come and be led by the Lamb of God. Come and find your comfort and your hope in the Lamb at the centre of the throne of God, the Lamb who is our shepherd.

The second thing is how Jesus is challenging us, to follow his example of shepherding. We have received and continue to be given all comfort and hope, the consolation and promise of the good news of life and eternal life. Jesus is calling us, calling the church, to be a place where people are known, understood, heard - where they can find rest and comfort, meaning and purpose for their lives.

Revelation says that “They have washed their robes and make them white with the blood of the Lamb. That is why they stand before God's throne and serve him day and night in his temple.” [Revelation 7:14b-15a]

Henri Nouwen says: “Jesus, speaking about his own shepherding ministry, says, ‘I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep.’ (John 10:14-15).”

Then Nouwen continues, “As Jesus ministers, so he wants us to minister. He wants Peter to feed his sheep and care for them, not as ‘professionals’ who know their clients’



problems and take care of them, but as vulnerable brothers and sisters who know and are known, who care and are cared for, who forgive and are being forgiven, who love and are being loved.”<sup>1</sup>

Jesus is calling us, calling the church, to be a place where people know and are known, by name and by heart; where people are understood and seek to understand; where everyone gives the other the benefit of the doubt as many times as needed; where forgiveness is practised, 70 times 7; where misunderstandings are cleared up before feelings are hurt or a spirit is wounded; where the well being of another is as important to me as my own; where each is encouraged, affirmed, supported, loved, appreciated; where each encourages, affirms, supports, loves, appreciates; where prayers are offered every day, by each one, for every other one; where people are heard and people listen; where people can find rest and comfort, meaning and purpose for their lives.

We are called to serve. We are called to be the body of Christ, the visible, physically present Christ, in and for the world. In the continuing vision in Revelation, we can see God’s divine intention for his world, and his mandate to us who follow him: “He who sits on the throne will protect them with his presence. Never again will they hunger or thirst; neither sun nor any scorching heat will burn them because the Lamb, who is in the centre of the throne, will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

There is a story of a little girl who was walking home from church one day with her father. She was very quiet and finally the father asked her what she was thinking. She said that she was wishing that she had all her father’s money - he was very, very wealthy. He chuckled a little and asked, “Why? What would you do with all that money?” She replied, “I’d help to answer all the prayers we said in church for the poor and the homeless and the hungry.”

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<sup>1</sup>Henri Nouwen from In the Name of Jesus, Crossroad, 1989, pp. 42-43.