

My sheep listen to my voice – John 10:22-30

Dear Friends in Christ:

I think you have noticed while you are driving that some cars which are in front of you have all kind of stickers. And there are some stickers which make us laugh. For example the one which says ***“Do not follow me—I am lost, too!”***

Now that bumper sticker does not mean a whole lot when I am driving down the streets of London. For the most part, I can find my way around the city quickly and efficiently. But it would be a totally different thing if I were driving in a strange city, like Toronto—and the person with that bumper sticker were the one assigned to lead me through the city!

A week ago my wife and I and my children and a friend drove to Toronto. I do not like to drive in Toronto, but my birthday gift was to watch a baseball game between the Blue Jay and Houston so I had to go. So I put the address in my old GPS and we went to Toronto. I followed my daughter’s car, but when we enter Toronto things did not look so good. Traffic was really bad.

I was following my daughter but other cars went in front of me and at the end I was not able to see her car, I lost her. So I followed my old GPS and finally, after an hour driving on Lakeshore Drive, I was able to reach the stadium. Then my children and their friend arrived to the stadium.

Friends in following my daughter car, my wife and I did not pay attention to the landmarks around us, for we were concentrating in my daughter’s car. We really did not know where we were—and we did not know how to go to the stadium, but thankfully my old GPS took us to the stadium and we were able to watch a baseball game, which was fun.

In our text today we have the assurance that the Good Shepherd is with His people, to lead them to the joy of eternal life. As we continue to proclaim the full message of the new life in Christ, as the angel bid the disciples to do, we look today at resurrection living as following the shepherd—the Shepherd who is the way to life with God in all its fullness.

There a child’s story called the Pied Piper of Hamelin. The people of Hamelin, overrun with rats, offer a bag of gold to anyone who can get rid of the rats. A piper offers to do the job, and successfully lures the rats into a mirage of cheese, which disappears.

The citizens, disappointed that all he did was play a tune, offer only pocket change. The piper, angered, plays a new tune that has all the children of the city follow him, and he led the children away as punishment on the people for their dishonesty.

Friends, just because someone wants you to follow them does not mean that you should. But there are many voices, many pipers in our world today, and they all call us to follow them.

For example, the New Age movement is a conglomeration of beliefs rooted in Eastern mysticism. Things ranging from meditation to occult practices can all fall under the umbrella of New Age. Although it is difficult to define at times, which is why its followers rarely label themselves as such, this unbiblical worldview has permeated America, including the church.

While nowadays eight-in-ten Christians say they believe in the God of the Bible, six-in-ten believe in one or more of four predominant New Age beliefs, including the belief in psychics, reincarnation and in astrology. Even though some of these can be easily identified as contrary to biblical truth, there are other beliefs within New Age that have subtly entered the church.

The followers of this false teaching hear the voice of someone whom they really did not know, and they gladly followed this movement, becoming converts, if you will, not realizing that they were following someone who was just as lost as they were.

But there are countless false teachings and shepherds in our world today, all doing the same thing; all calling us to follow them.

Look at the number of young people who have become involved in the drug culture or in sexual promiscuity, because of the voices of our world that say these things are acceptable or even good. Or worse, we hear of young people who commit acts of violence, or who commit suicide, because of something they have learned through music, through movies, through games.

There are voices calling us to forget God, because they say God is dead, but they are wrong! There are thousands of different philosophies and religious ideals, all of which claim to know the way, but which are leading people straight to eternal condemnation.

The Pharisees, who came and asked Jesus to tell them plainly whether or not he was the Christ did not really want to hear that He was the messiah. Even if He did tell them He was the Messiah, they would have accused Him of blasphemy. They did not want to follow Him. They did not believe in Him! They thought they knew the way, and that people should listen to them and follow their teaching.

The reason they were so upset with Jesus was that He was trespassing on their territory. People were listening to Jesus. They were following Jesus. And that irritate the Pharisees. At times you can almost hear them saying, "*Do not listen to Him! Listen to us! We are the ones who will lead you to the life God wants you to have!*"

Jesus once called the Pharisees blind guides, because they led the people astray. They were not leading them to God and the forgiveness and life only He can give. They were leading them away from God's love and grace. But Jesus had come to be the Shepherd who would lead His people to God's grace. He would be the One to bring them to eternal life.

During World War 2, a group of people were trying to make their way through enemy lines to safety. The journey before them was quite treacherous. Land mines covered much of the land, and were a hidden danger. The soldiers watching for them would pose another danger. But these people were fortunate to have a leader who was familiar with the area. He knew where the mine fields were - and how to avoid them. He knew where the soldiers would most likely patrol. He was confident that he could lead the people to safety if they would follow him.

There were some who decided to set out on their own. They were either captured or killed. But those who followed this one man made it to safety. They travelled through swampy areas and across dangerous trails. They had to crawl through thorny bushes rather than travelling the paved roads. There were times when they went hungry; times when they were thirsty; times when they were cold and wet - but they arrived safely. And it was all because they followed the right leader.

We need to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd as He calls us to follow Him, that He may lead us to eternal life. He says: ***My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.***

What a difference this is from the misguided, blind and lost shepherds of this world!

The way Jesus leads is not always easy. He leads us by way of the cross—that cross that reminds us of the sin and shame of our lives, and just how much we deserve to perish. But the cross also reminds us of the Sacrifice the Shepherd made for His sheep. He gave Himself in our place, and suffered the pain that we endured, so that He might call us to something better: to the glory of life we have through His resurrection.

That wonderful description of heaven in the epistle lesson today—that talks about the life that waits for us. That is where our shepherd leads us. No matter what the path before us may hold, as long as we follow the Good Shepherd, who leads us on the right path, we will come to heaven's glory, where we will live in the joy of His presence forevermore.

If you know and follow Jesus as Shepherd you will be able to flee from untruth and ungodly belief systems.

Someone once told the following: A friend, who was traveling in the East, heard that there was a shepherd who still kept up the custom of calling his sheep by name. He went to the man, and said: "*Let me put on your clothes, and take your crook, and I will call them, and see if they will come to me.*" And so he did, and he called one sheep, "Mina, Mina," but the whole flock ran away from him. Then he said to the shepherd: "*Will none of them follow me when I call them?*" The shepherd replied: "*Yes, sir, some of them will; the sick sheep will follow anybody.*" (From a sermon by Tim Spear, The Shepherd's Voice, 9/6/2011)

Friends when Jesus ate dinner at the home of a tax collector named Matthew (Matthew 9:9–13), the Pharisees questioned why He ate with such sinners. Jesus answered, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. In this metaphor, Jesus compares Himself to a doctor who had come to help those who are sick. So let us follow that excellent Doctor and not others who will give us the wrong medicine.

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." The God of Grace, the Good Shepherd, who has called us to be His sheep through our baptism, is the same Shepherd who calls us to follow and receive His forgiveness.

Do you hear the voice of the Good Shepherd calling to you? Or is His voice drowned out by all the other voices of the world?

As we listen to His voice, as we trust in His guiding, He brings us to the safety of His perfect pasture – and to the life of peace and rest, free from the pains, the terrors or the dangers of this world. And nothing can take what our God gives to us. It will be ours forever. Amen.